

Superintendent Paul Diegnau Responds To An Article Published in Bluebird News

(Editor's Note: The following "Letter to the Editor" from Paul Diegnau, CGCS, Keller Golf Course, was in response to an article appearing in the February 2004 issue of the Bluebird News.)

Dear Editor,

I have been a Golf Course Superintendent for twenty-one years and was a Master Gardener for five years. During this time I have been exposed to a wide range of opinions pertaining to pesticides and their use in our country. At the risk of generalizing, I have found individuals with strong interests in gardening, birding and the environment, to hold views that are strongly anti-pesticide. In the February, 2004 volume of Bluebird News, there was a very complimentary paragraph on the environmental work we have been and will continue to do on our golf course. I oversee a 72 box (paired) bluebird trail on the golf course where I am employed. In 2003, we fledged 65 bluebirds, 99 Tree Swallows, and 27 Black-capped chickadees, in spite of heavy house sparrow pressure. We are very proud of our trail and the many other environmental projects we are involved in on our property. Yet on the opposite side of the same page was the following:

"From Stearns County, L.E. Hinz reports having the worst bluebird season in 38 years. He reports problems with vandals, missing eggs, missing young. Tree Swallows and wrens in his boxes also seemed to be suffering the same as the bluebirds. It seems the houses are all located on a golf course where a lot of spraying is done, and the poor nesting results may have been caused by death of the adult birds. Sadly, this golf course superintendent seems to think the spraying is not hurting the birds."

So, let me get this straight...L.E. Hinz believes that "the spraying" MAY be causing the death of adult birds. This statement begs so many questions... What is L.E. Hinz's professional background? Were dead adult birds actually found on the property? Were toxicology investiga-

tions done on these dead birds to determine cause of death? What product was the superintendent spraying that is "causing the death of adult birds"? Why, after 38 years, have the bird populations only NOW been affected?

I cringe when I read statements such as the example above. Such statements are certainly subjective and void of scientific fact. To print such a statement is irresponsible journalism!

Please realize the following:

+ Any and all pesticide applications made on a golf course require the applicator to be trained, licensed and certified by the state of Minnesota. In contrast, homeowners have access to the same chemicals as golf courses, yet no training or licensing is required prior to application (food for thought).

+ Pesticide is a general term used to include all pest management products. Fungicides are designed to kill fungi, insecticides kill insects, rodenticides kill rodents, herbicides kill weeds, nematocides kill nematodes, etc. There are many types of pesticides!

+ The product label is the law! Up to 142 detailed scientific tests (including avian toxicity) are required to determine environmental impact of a product prior to release into the market. Products must be applied according to label directions and precautions noted to minimize or eliminate "non-target" environmental impact. That is why training is so important.

+ The American media operate on the premise that sensationalism sells. The truth is often boring or uninteresting and stories are crafted accordingly. All information you read is not necessarily accurate or truthful. Misinformation is every-



PHOTO BY CARROL HENDERSON

where. People and organizations can and do have agendas. Unbiased, independent University testing is what should be studied, learned and applied.

The golf course of today is very different, environmentally speaking, in comparison to golf courses thirty years ago. Today, most golf course superintendents are highly trained, educated individuals that view themselves as stewards of the environment. Integrated pest management practices are the norm. Since 1991, Audubon International has been working closely with golf courses across the United States through their Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses. This program addresses issues regarding wildlife habitat management, water quality, water conservation, IPM, environmental planning, outreach and education.

I think the time has come for "environmentalists" to take a step back and take a look at all the wonderful environmental work being done on the golf courses of today. I would ask that you use your wonderful publication to spread accurate, science-backed information and leave the opinion, falsehoods, and personal agendas on the editing floor.

And, no, Mr. L.E. Hinz, our "spraying" is not hurting the birds!

Sincerely,
Paul G. Diegnau
Certified Golf Course Superintendent
Keller Golf Course
paul.diegnau@co.ramsey.mn.us

Touche' Another Superintendent Rebuttal

Dear Editor,
North Oaks News
May 2002

There is nothing I would rather be than a Golf Course Superintendent. My work environment is primarily outside and full of natural wonders. During any given season I will see more rainbows than most see in their lifetime. The skills I learned at college and on the job provide pleasure to the patrons who use the course. And my professional agronomic abilities actually improve the neighborhood.

Golf courses are very beneficial to both communities and the environment. Besides merely preventing erosion from both

wind and water, turfgrass actually improves the ground water. Turf cleans up our water system by capturing the runoff created by a rain event, then filtering particulates from the water as it passes through the soil and then into the ground water. Along shorelands, turf acts as a surface filter and slows rapidly moving water further preventing the sedimentation of wetlands.

In fact, turf is such a good filter, many communities in the southern regions of the United States are developed using golf courses as a tool for the recycling of their effluent water. Rather than processing wastewater through a purification plant, communities are applying it upon the golf course in the form of irrigation. This recycles the water naturally and also sets up several other important benefits of turf; noise, glare and visual pollution abatement.

Compare the environments of airport macadam and a golf course. The former is bright, loud and not as appealing as the later. A turfed area, such as a golf course, absorb sounds, reflects light multi-directionally and is nice to look at, especially if trees are added to the landscape. Grasses also provide elements necessary for human existence.

With the ever-growing concerns of reduced air quality, especially near metropolitan areas, turf can be considered a critical component of life. Turfgrass, shrubs

and trees all use carbon dioxide, sunlight and water to produce the nutrients necessary for their growth. A by-product of this process is oxygen, an element we need to survive. Not only do humans need oxygen but also so do other creatures. Golf courses provide many elements necessary for the survival of wildlife.

Besides oxygen, golf courses enhance the habitat necessary for the existence of many native species, both animal and

herbaceous. Over 50 percent of the property upon which the North Oaks Golf Club sits is either rough or non-play areas. These miniature sanctuaries provide the necessary environments for the

proliferation of many songbirds, deer, raccoons, water fowl, native wildflowers and beneficial insects as well. With the exception of a few insects, the natural aspect of a golf course is a lure for golfers and the wildlife alike.

As a professional turf manager, I embrace the idea that golf courses are good for the wildlife, for recreation and for the neighborhood. In an effort to take this concept one step further, North Oaks Golf Club is pursuing certification with Audubon International to create an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System. Audubon International is a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to improving the quality of life and the environment through research, education and cooperative assistance. --Jack MacKenzie, CGCS

As a professional turf manager, I embrace the idea that golf courses are good for the wildlife, for recreation and for the neighborhood.

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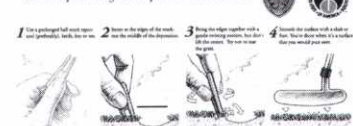
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Pearly Whites Help With First Impression

By American Dental Association

Everybody loves a bright white smile, and there are a variety of products and procedures available to help you improve the look of yours.

Many people are satisfied with the sparkle they get from brushing twice daily with a fluoride-containing toothpaste, cleaning between their teeth once a day and the regular cleanings at your dentist's office. If you decide you would like to go beyond this to make your smile look brighter, you should investigate all of your options.

You can take several approaches to whiten your smile: In-office bleaching, at-home bleaching, or whitening toothpastes.

You may want to start by speaking with your dentist. He or she can tell you whether whitening procedures would be effective for you. Whiteners may not correct all types of discoloration. For example, yellowish-hued teeth will probably bleach well, brownish-colored teeth may bleach less well, and grayish-hued teeth may not bleach well at all. Likewise, bleaching may not enhance your smile if you have had bonding or tooth-colored fillings placed in your front teeth. The whitener will not effect the color of

these materials, and they will stand out in your newly whitened smile. In these cases, you may want to investigate other options, like porcelain veneers or dental bonding.

If you are a candidate for bleaching, your dentist may suggest a procedure that can be done in his or her office. This procedure is called chairside bleaching and may require more than one office visit. Each visit may take from 30 minutes to one hour.

During chairside bleaching, the dentist will apply either a protective gel to your gums or a rubber shield to protect the oral soft tissues. A bleaching agent is then applied to the teeth, and a special light may be used to enhance the action of the agent.

A number of in-office bleaching agents have the ADA Seal of Acceptance, your assurance that they have met ADA standards of safety and effectiveness.

Lasers have been used during tooth whitening procedures to enhance the action of the whitening agent. No whitening products using lasers currently are on the ADA list of Accepted products.

There are several types of products available for use at home, which can either be dispensed by your dentist or purchased over-the-counter.

Bleaching Solutions

These products contain peroxide(s), which actually bleach the tooth enamel. These products typically rely on percent carbamide peroxide as the bleaching agent, carbamide peroxide comes in several different concentrations (10%, 16%, 22%).

Peroxide-containing whiteners typically come in a gel and are placed in a mouthguard. Usage regimens vary. Some products are used for about twice a day for 2 weeks, and others are intended for overnight use for 1-2 weeks. If you obtain the bleaching solution from your dentist, he or she can make a custom-fitted mouthguard for you that will fit your teeth precisely. Currently, only dentist-dispensed home-use 10% carbamide peroxide tray-applied gels carry the ADA Seal.

You also may want to speak with your dentist should any side effects become bothersome. For example, teeth can become sensitive during the period when you are using the bleaching solution. In many cases, this sensitivity is temporary and should lessen once the treatment is finished. Some people also experience soft tissue irritation—either from a tray that doesn't fit properly or from solution that may come in contact with the tissues. If you have concerns about such side effects, you should discuss them with your dentist.

Toothpastes

All toothpastes help remove surface stain through the action of mild abrasives. "Whitening" toothpastes in the ADA Seal of Acceptance program have special chemical or polishing agents that provide additional stain removal effectiveness. Unlike bleaches, these ADA Accepted products do not alter the intrinsic color of teeth.

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Defying Mother Nature

By Robert Distel, Superintendent
 Steve Roxberg, Assistant Superintendent
 Jesse Trcka, Second Assistant Superintendent
 Wayzata Country Club

Being greeted by the stench of a rotting, decaying, silage-like smell when removing one of the first greens covers of the year caused an overwhelming feeling of despair among the staff at Wayzata Country Club. The removal of the Green Jacket greens covers on March 26th at Wayzata Country Club created cause for some concern. Even after taking the same preventative steps as previous years, this year several greens had experienced various levels of damage from crown hydration. The worst of these was the tenth green with a 2,500 square foot area essentially dead and already decaying under the cover. The thoughts immediately turned to what, if anything, was still alive in the area. Several cup cutter plugs were taken from the damaged greens and placed in an indoor greenhouse to force the remaining plants from dormancy. Many of the plugs showed promise of returning plant growth, but plugs from greens ten and eleven left some concern.

To help jumpstart the damaged greens with significant num-



Wayzata Country Club's Superintendent Bob Distel, left, and Assistant Superintendent Steve Roxberg, pump air to create a "hothouse" on the tenth green to expedite the recovery process.

bers of living crowns under the senescing leaves, several different methods were used. These included topdressing the damaged areas with generous quantities of a black topdressing sand and continued covering with HPI covers, both of these measures taken to encourage the growth of the remaining plants. Further, some areas were quadra-tined to try and capture more heat down into the soil profile. The black sand was obtained from Plaisted and is a new product developed by Dr. George Hamilton of Penn State University and the HPI covers were on loan from Jim Nicol, CGCS of Hazeltine National Golf Club.

The question was then what could be done to re-establish the damaged areas on the tenth and eleventh greens when there were live crowns in only about half of the remaining plants. Soil temperatures would drop too significantly at night to allow seed germination. Attempts to capture sunlight and heat and then retain this heat, were made using several different types of covers. The different types of covers that were tried included concrete curing blankets, HPI covers and Excelsior mats. While these covers worked well during the day with living plants, it became apparent that covering greens with these types of covers only held the cold overnight. Several interesting theories to remedy the problem were discussed and many ideas began to flow about how to actually put these theories into reality.

The initial steps were nothing too out of the ordinary. The tenth and eleventh greens were verticut to a depth of just under 0.10 inch in five directions to remove some of the dead leaf blades and to open the turf canopy up for overseeding. At this

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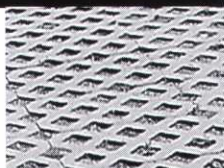
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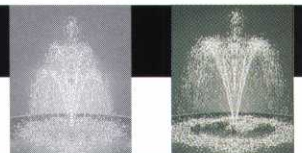
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Defying Nature—

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depth no crowns of remaining plants were damaged but the surface was significantly opened up to improve seed and soil contact. Dominant Extreme bentgrass seed was applied with a drop spreader in two directions followed with a T.I.P. spiker in five directions to help impact the seed down into the verticut slits. A light layer of black topdressing sand was applied and brushed into the area to help capture sunlight and heat. All greens were sprayed with Trifloxystrobin fungicide at .25 oz/1,000 square feet.

With seed now present in the soil, the second part of the challenge began. The construction of a greenhouse would provide the ideal environment for seed to germinate. But how to construct an easily removable greenhouse that was weather-proof, lightweight and would not leave any adverse effects on the green surface became the next question.

Initial ideas included using a frame of scaffolding, a center support or vertical



Watering the 10th green at Wayzata CC is Assistant Superintendent Steve Roxberg.

supports around the edge of the green and covering this frame with a 6 mil clear greenhouse plastic. Ultimately, it was decided not to use any frame and create a dome structure using heated, pressurized air, called a hothouse. This was accomplished by using a thermostatically controlled, 80,000 BTU propane heater complete with an electric blower. The propane heater allowed for the hothouse to be

heated consistently. The plastic was laid out flat over the damaged area and the edges taped to provide more strength and decrease any tearing that could occur from the sod staples that were used to pin the plastic to the ground. Vents were cut into the plastic and the propane blower was attached to the edge of the plastic and

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The Fickle Finger of Fate Strikes Again

By Dr. Donald White
University of Minnesota

(Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted from the May 1997 issue of Hole Notes.)

The following is an open letter to Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents and Minnesota Golfers in general.

If I was giving this as a talk, I would entitle it: Odyssey of Another Poa Annua Year or The Fickle Finger of Fate Strikes Again.

Many of you are probably asking :“Why me?” “ Superintendents may be feeling like the quest without a wedding garment in the parade” and there will be a weeping and wailing and nashing of teeth in the outer darkness. (Matthew 22:13).

You really shouldn't have to feel like that because the damage that is now becoming evident that poa annua took place, I am sure, at a time when there was nothing you could do about it.

It was just an average year for Minnesota, not like any other we have experienced in recent years. It looked for a while like we were in for it again with poa annua. Many of you alert superintendents discovered ice on your greens and noticed a putrid smell developing in late winter on ice-covered greens.

Whenever that happens you know that some damage has occurred. Sometimes some turf can be salvaged if the ice can be broken so the greens can air out. The standard recommendation is to break up the ice or make it porous with top dressing materials and leave it in place as long as things stay frozen.

With melting or when frost leaves the soil surface, the ice and moisture must be removed as rapidly as possible. No question that this is the best procedure under the conditions. At the same time you have to realize that the putrid odor came from rotting dead grass and the best you could hope for is to salvage what wasn't already dead. Then the weather seemed to give the turf a break by turning warm during the day and cool at night but not

overly so. In fact, the ice went so fast that fear of open greens became a real concern.

Again it looked like we were home with damage, but not devastated. There was enough green color showing on most greens to give hope that things weren't so bad after all.

Unfortunately that now does not seem to be the case. The first few greens I looked at were damaged but looked like they would make it with limited damage. All were situated with good surface drainage. Oh there were some areas on the greens that were worse than others but things didn't look all that bad.

However, as the knotweed germinated about

some thawing and increasing density of the snow surface. Maybe even some free water on the surface. That period was followed by our coldest weather and that is when I think most of the damage occurred. The Poa Annua crowns were most likely hydrated (water uptake) and then frozen resulting in killing. The slow rotting of the dead plants resulted in the putrid odor which built up under the ice. The limited gas exchange caused by the ice and very dense snow also probably added to the problem by increasing the damage. It at least increased damage potential.

Winter, 1996-97

Relatively mild weather, average snow-fall along with accumulation-thawing cycles (even rains again in Feb.) resulted in free water on the ground surface and increasing density of snow at the surface along with ice formation did it again.

The older greens with heavy soils and poor drainage will probably be hit the hardest because that fosters the conditions contributing to “winter kill” of Poa.

I am confident that the damage occurred before you could expect it and at a time when there was really nothing you could do about it.

The courses on sand, with USGA greens and with bentgrass, are the lucky ones. The courses with old greens, heavy soils and Poa Annua are at the mercy of nature, and nature is usually neither merciful or forgiving, just painfully true to its laws.

Well, now that we've got it, what can we do about it?

There are several alternatives open to us besides crying, quitting or dousing yourself with digel. However, everyone and particularly the golfers will have to be patient and understanding while turf becomes reestablished.

There are several alternatives open to us besides crying, quitting, or dousing yourself with digel. However, everyone and particularly the golfers will have to be patient and understanding while turf becomes reestablished.

March 30 after several days of 40 degrees weather, greens that looked pretty good as the ice was removed or melted started to lose color. The putrid smell persisted if you handled any plants but was not overpowering. What seemed to be happening was that a lot of the green plants were dead but preserved somewhat until things thawed out. Now the true condition was becoming evident and many poa greens look like they will again be the victims of circumstances.

Let Me Outline What I Think Happened to Your Greens:

Fall, 1996

Snow cover before we had a great deal of frost. Late December early January

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Today's Job Market

By MGCSA Human Resources Committee

As in most professions, today's golf course management jobs are very **COMPETITIVE**. "It's who you know, not what you know!" is a phrase everyone hears all too often.

While this has merit, there are a lot of do's and don'ts throughout the whole process of securing employment. From an employer's point of view (Superintendent), here are a few tips for students, foremen and assistants.

1. Print ALL pieces of the application, which includes the envelope. "FIRST IMPRESSION COUNTS!"

2. ONLY apply for the specific job that has been posted.

3. If you are sending out resumes to get your name out, DON'T state in your cover letter that you're applying for a position that has not been OPENED.

4. For your first interview, you are better to be **OVERDRESSED** than underdressed.

5. Call to **CONFIRM** that your application was received.

6. Deadlines for submittal are **SERIOUS**, adhere to them!

7. Learn how to shake hands....Firm.

8. No baseball caps.

9. Be honest, if you don't want your current employer contacted, let the Superintendent know. We respect that and won't question it. We have all been in that position before.

10. Send a **THANK YOU** note after your interview.

11. List by name and position your references.

Just So You Know...

Do you know why full-length golf courses have 18 holes and not 20, 10 or an even dozen?

During a discussion among the club's membership board at St. Andrews in 1858, one of the members pointed out that it takes exactly 18 shots to polish off a fifth of Scotch. By limiting himself to only one shot of Scotch per hole, the Scot figured a round of golf was finished when the Scotch ran out.

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Fate—

(Continued from Page 17)

The first consideration is to dry the greens down so they can be reworked and to salvage what remains alive, such as the grass in the aerified holes. Then you may consider the alternatives. Some alternatives are: (1) don't do anything extra and let nature take its course; (2) slice, overseed and top dress; (3) aerify, slice, overseed and top dress; (4) rebuild the green. The very low budget courses may be faced with the first alternative in which case you can expect the Poa will be back and reasonably playable after June 15. Even in this case you're probably better off to at least slice or otherwise break up the mat and scarify the soil surface.

Everyone involved should agree to this before you elect to exercise this option because it may be an unpopular solution.

Most courses should have the manpower and support to do a little more than this minimum. However, everyone should know that it won't be easy and it will take moral support and patience. If everyone maintains a positive and sup-

portive attitude, the time will pass faster and the job will be accomplished in the best manner.

If you have a green or greens that were devastated, I would suggest a thorough renovation. That is aerify, scarify, overseed and top dress. You may overseed with any of the seeded creeping bents:

If your green is heavily thatched and damaged severely you may want to remove the thatch with a sod cutter and re-establish bent on the soil surface.

Penncross for heavy use; Penn Eagle, Emerald or Prominent for 1/4 - 1/2 lb per 1,000 square feet with all but Seaside in which case you can go as high as 1 lb per 1,000 square feet.

You must have good soil contact with the seed in order to expect reasonable results. So aerify first and break the plugs up. If your green is heavily thatched and damaged severely, you may want to remove the thatch with a sod cutter and

re-establish bent on the soil surface.

If you have had the problem before, you can expect it again once out of every 4 or 5 years. Just long enough for the membership to forget. It may be time to consider rebuilding and improving drainage. In that case do what you can now but start the planning so that next fall you can start rebuilding.

Sand top dressing is also sure to receive more attention but unless the poor drainage situation is rectified, it has to be a poorer alternative in converting a green than rebuilding.

In any case, if you have damage, rest assured that there was nothing you could have done about it and dive in to get things going. If you have little or no damage, rejoice that you've got a good situation and support the less fortunate. And rest assured in either case that you are a member of a noble profession that brings enrichment to many lives. So hang in there.

Remember when life serves you lemons, make lemonade and use this as an opportunity to correct your problems and increase the bent population.

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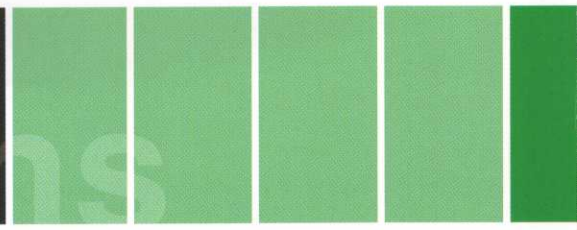
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