

USGA

And Some Things Do Change

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USGA Green Section, Wester Region,
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Last month's article examined a number of subjects, from Dr. Alister Mackenzie's book, *The Spirit of St. Andrews*, that seem to have not changed over the years. As a follow up I thought it may be interesting to take a look at some things that have changed in golf course maintenance.

The popularity of golf has changed and the amount of play courses now receive is phenomenal. I doubt if at the time George Thomas designed Riviera, or Mackenzie built Pasatiempo, they ever intended their greens to support anything in excess of thirty to thirty-five thousand rounds a year. (Maybe not even that many.) To my knowledge both receive somewhere near two times this amount, a reason for more aeration.

People's attitudes have changed. Golfers

expect a higher level of maintenance on a daily basis (due to the influence of television.) The public is concerned about what it takes to keep golf courses green. More regulations govern maintenance operations than ever before and along with this the educational requirements for superintendents have risen.

Pest pressure has changed, and this may be related to several of the "old standby" chemicals being removed from the market place. New products are more pest specific and less broad spectrum in nature. Weak diseases that were not considered a consequence 15 years ago now surface on a more regular basis. The Black Turfgrass *Ataenius* has become a resident in Palm Springs and is now moving into other areas of Southern California.

Mowing heights have changed and some place complete blame on the Stimpmeter. Yes, this device had an influence, but I don't think it was the sole catalyst. If you think

back about 1978 there were no such things as "super thin" or "tournament" bed knives. Back then, without grinding the bottom of a bed knife, there was no physical way to adjust a mower less than 3/16". So don't place all the blame on the Stimpmeter — some creative mechanic helped with this one. While we are on the subject, equipment has most definitely changed. Rarely does one see a ground-driven gang mower on a fairway, *light-weight* is the buzzword now. Riding aerators, high pressure water injection, deep tine machines and core harvesters have changed cultivation programs. Electric equipment is now being developed to respond to noise ordinances and residential development courses. (It's funny that everyone wants to live on the course but no one wants to listen to you maintain it.) Computers are common in the superintendent's office for record keeping

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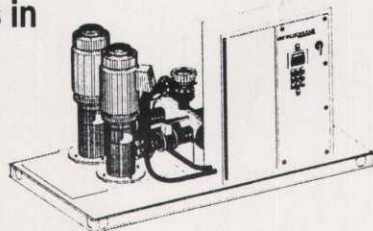
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I Want To Go To Work, But

Have you ever tried to be a telecommuting Golf Course Superintendent? It is impossible. I managed to get a few items ordered over the phone with a few vendors, even though I could not take delivery because the road was too muddy. Can you imagine only being able to wonder what your golf course will look like after some heavy downpours, wondering because you know you cannot get there anyway?

What a strange feeling that is. Think about it for a moment. Most of us can at least get to work to survey the damage after a storm. Even if I cannot do anything about the rain, I at least want to know what my course will look like afterward. I have had what seemed like sleepless nights before in my career, wondering how my *Poa annua* greens would look the next day after the stifling summer heat in southern California. Sleepless because I would wonder whether my outdated irrigation system would have shut down during the night. But now I lose sleep wondering what my course will look like . . . wondering if I will even be able to get there in the morning.

I want to go to work, but I can't . . . what a feeling. I guess it is not as bad as wanting to go to work but not having a job.

Have you ever heard the saying, "you can't get there from here?" That is how I have felt the last couple of months, and who knows, if this winter is anything like last winter, maybe I'll have that feeling from now until April. I am beginning to think that instead of a company truck, I will need a company helicopter to get to work!

Project update: as of February 1st, we still have two fairways and tees, and one green to seed on The Ranch Course (first 18), with a hoped-for opening in late Spring, 1996. Rough grading has begun on eight holes of The Legends Course (second 18) with several lakes dug already. We hope to open The Legends Course Summer, 1997, and host the Gene Sarazen World Open soon thereafter. The hotel and winery will begin construction Spring, 1996, with homes sites following. Of course, all those dates depend on how bad the rest of this winter is, because we might not be able to get there anyway. What a feeling! ♦

Pete Bowman, CGCS, recently joined the GCSANC. Pete is Immediate Past President of the Sierra Nevada GCSA, and current President of the California GCSA.

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and operating the irrigation system. Who would have ever thought?

Grass varieties have changed. Seeded bermudagrasses are getting finer textured, Kentucky bluegrasses tolerate slightly lower mowing heights, perennial ryegrasses and bentgrasses more heat tolerant. This is not to mention endophyte enhancement and the possibility of introducing a gene into turf that would make it tolerant to glyphosate applications. Zoysiagrass and buffalograss may in the future hold great potential as low maintenance turfs for roughs and fairways.

Water quality has changed, and mother nature has had little to do with it. Politics and availability in arid climates have placed golf courses in the position to become water recyclers. Effluent, reclaimed or non-potable, no matter what you call it, golf courses are now using it. In the future, whether effluent is used or not, we can expect further restrictions to be placed upon golf courses, like those currently in Arizona. Using low quality water as impacted how greens are managed from day to day. Gone are the days of firm, dry greens, as leaching salts must be

performed regularly. More aerations are also needed in these situations to improve infiltration.

Believe it or not even mother nature, or at least some local climates, have changed. California Irrigation Management Information System (CIMIS) records for the Palm Springs area confirm this. The average humidity during the months of July, August and September has risen approximately 13% during the time span from 1984 to 1994. (Is it global warming or all the water sprayed in the air each night to irrigate the golf courses and landscapes?)

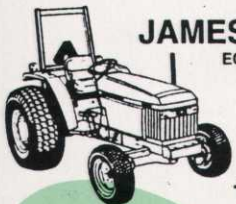
I suppose, the fact that *some things do change* keeps this business interesting. Looking back, however, it is almost frightening that most of these changes have taken place over the past ten to fifteen years. It only makes me wonder, what do we have to look forward to during the next decade? ♦

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