

Does Your Canoe Have a Paddle?

by Jonathon L. Scott
Agronomist, Jack Nicklaus Golf Services Div.
Golden Bear International

Here in the U.S., we have a saying that may have originated with the frontiersmen who opened up the country for trade and settlement many years ago. While I don't know of any particular incident, I can imagine how one must have felt when, after canoeing through the wilderness, miles from anywhere, loaded with supplies and trade goods, the only paddle in the boat shatters against the first rock of a roaring rapids. This poor soul was then truly "Up a creek without a paddle". We use that phrase pretty loosely to describe anyone who finds themselves in the middle of a mess without any visible means of extraction. What, do you say, does that have to do with growing grass? A lot if you don't stay up to date with your profession.

As a golf course maintenance consultant (yes, I know, the bloke who knows less than you do but knows how to say it better), I see quite a few so called canoeists without paddles crashing through the rocks and rapids of modern turf management. They bounce from one boulder to the next, twirl in the whirlpools, bruise and bend their canoes, and hope to hell that they come through in one piece. Some make it, some don't. Those that do think the thrill is much greater without the paddle, and continue on to the next rapids without stopping to fashion another. Eventually, the canoe is so weakened by the repeated bashing, it gives out and the poor sod drowns. You would think, then, that the turf world would be quite full of people with paddles. Alas, there always seem to be an unending supply of thrill seekers hanging on for dear life.

Everyone knows, the proper way to approach a rapids, or turf management for that matter, is with proper training, experience, a good plan, and the tools with which to carry it out. However, rivers rise and fall, rocks move, and safe channels change. So it goes with grass growing. Anyone who thinks they can use the same plan and tools year after year is asking for trouble. This means keeping up on new technology, techniques, and regulations. So, a fifth dimension is added to the proper approach to turf management; staying current.

Recognizing the need to stay abreast of new developments (and reviews of old ones now forgotten) is the easy part. Finding the right methods for doing so can be overwhelming, and sometimes difficult. Mr. Jack Harris, your faithful bloodhound of the literature, makes it seem too easy with his excellent reviews in each TURFCRAFT issue. If any of you peeked at the list of references from his recent article on endophytes, you got an idea of the magnitude of material available on that subject. I have frequently found myself buried under a pile of books and papers while researching a particular recommendation after a site visit. Ask any graduate student doing a paper for his degree how many references were used, and you'll probably get a big eye-roll for a response. So, if this is what is needed to stay current, how does one find the bloody time? You don't, not this way at least.

What you can do to keep up with new information is con-
(cont'd. page 10)

Special Low Pricing on Vicon Seeder Spreaders!



25% OFF ALL MODELS IN STOCK
The accurate, versatile, reliable spreaders available in
sizes from 400 - 3,600 lbs.

HUBER RANCH POWER EQUIP., INC.
Box 188, Schneider, IN 46376
1-800-553-0552 or (219)552-0552



WILBUR-ELLIS

IDEAS TO GROW WITH®

YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE COMPANY

WE DELIVER SERVICE.....
...CUSTOM RINSATE PAD DESIGNS
...WORKER RIGHT-TO-KNOW TRAINING
...SARA TIER II REPORTING
ASSISTANCE

WE ALSO DELIVER PRODUCTS.....
.....A COMPLETE LINE OF TURF & ORNAMENTAL
PLANT PROTECTANTS, PLANT NUTRIENTS,
GRASS SEED, HERBICIDES, AND MORE!
.....FAST FREE DELIVERY WITHIN 24 HOURS

JOHN MEYER OR JOE WOLLNER
800-747-7400

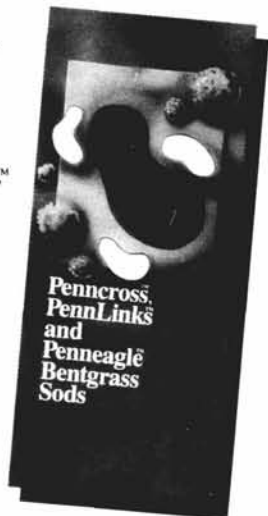
Finally, Bent Sod With Assured Compatibility

PENNCROSS GROWN ON A FUMIGATED USGA GREENS MIX SOIL

H & E Sod Nursery provides you with Penncross™ Bentgrass Sod that is grown on fumigated USGA Greens Mix soils making this superior turf totally compatible with golf course greens anywhere in the country.

For more facts about all of the top golf course turfs we provide: Penncross™, PennLinks™ and Penneagle™ Bentgrass Sod...phone, fax, or write for a FREE INFORMATION PACKET: 3900 West 167th Street, Markham, IL 60426. Fax: 708-596-2481.

Phone: 708-596-7200



(Does Your Canoe cont'd.)

stantly keep your mind open to learning. You would be surprised how much is available with a little effort on your part to bring it in. This can be done in the following ways:

1. BOOKS: Create a library of current textbooks and reference material. Start out with the basic turf management bibles, such as Dr. Beard's TURFGRASS SCIENCE AND CULTURE, and his TURF MANAGEMENT FOR GOLF COURSES. Others could be Drs. Smith, Jackson, and Woolhouse's FUNGAL DISEASES OF AMENITY TURF GRASSES, Dr. Couch's DISEASES OF TURFGRASSES, and Dr. Vargas' MANAGEMENT OF TURFGRASS DISEASES. Add to that Drs. Daniel and Freeborg's TURF MANAGERS' HANDBOOK, Dr. Turgeon's TURFGRASS MANAGEMENT, and, of course, any textbooks or government publications specific to Australian and New Zealand insects and grasses.

2. MAGAZINES: Subscribe to any and all trade and technical periodicals you can afford from not only Australia, but abroad as well. As I have said in a previous letter published in TURFCRAFT, I get a great deal of valuable information from this magazine, as well as those from the U.S. Certainly, GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT, published by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America is among the leaders in providing timely information. Also, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT by Edgell Communications, GROUNDS MANAGEMENT, by Intertec Publishing, and GOLF AND SPORTSTURF, by Adams Publishing Company are staples in the U.S. turf management diet. Your counterparts in the Canadian Golf Course Superintendents Association publish GREEN MASTER, an excellent pipeline into the University of Guelph. And, of course, BIGGA publishes GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL, with direct links to Bingley in the UK. I receive about twelve different periodicals a month and try to read every one before the next batch comes in. I don't recommend you get that many unless you spend as much time in an airplane as I do, but you should read at least four each month.

3. TURF CONFERENCES: Every one of you should be attending your National Turf Conference, as well as any regional conferences put on by local associations. The same applies to seminars and workshops sponsored by TAFE or other schools, agencies, and industry. You should also try to attend the New Zealand National Turf Conference, at least every other year. and the International Golf Course Conference and Show here in the U.S. whenever possible. The experience gained at these "live" sessions is invaluable in maintaining up to date turf management practices.

4. PEER DISCUSSIONS: I have been in the turf industry since 1972. In that time, I have learned as much or more from my discussions with fellow professionals than all of the books, magazines, and conference seminars combined. That is not to say that the latter aren't valuable. It's just that you can't beat a one on one discussion with someone who has "been there" or is going through the same problems as you. I found this especially true when I was fighting black layer problems on my greens. I talked with everyone I could find who either was in the same battle, or had won or lost a similar fight in the past. As many of you know, that included one Daniel Varrey, late of Wanerroo in Perth, and now with Paris International Golf Club in France. When I learned the problem I was facing was

(cont'd. page 12)

Reach, Speed & Stability



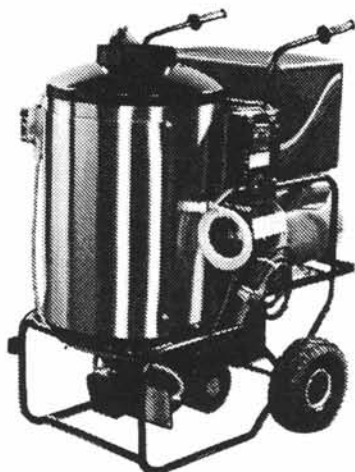
Ford New Holland "Super Boom" skid-steer loaders do more for you:

- * Reach - Loads center of six-wheel dump.
- * Speed - Faster cycle times, speeds up loading/unloading operations.
- * Stability - Longer wheelbase with low center of gravity.

MARTIN IMPLEMENT SALES, INC.
16400 S. 104th Ave.
Orland Park, IL 60462
(708) 349-8430



PRESSURE WASHERS



250
to
2,000
PSI

NEW AND USED

FREE DEMO

- SALES
- SERVICE
- PARTS
- CHEMICALS

Formerly Hotsy of Chicago

CALL TOLL FREE 1-800-666-3900

*The Cleaning Equipment Specialists Since 1976**



TIM LAYDEN
General Manager

708-893-0777 • FAX (708) 893-1045

Formerly Hotsy of Chicago

1-800-666-3900

Sales Service Parts Rentals Chemicals
25 S. Park Street • Roselle, Illinois 60172

(Does Your Canoe cont'd.)

global, it changed my thinking dramatically. Peer discussions can open your mind to other avenues.

5. **SELF-CONDUCTED RESEARCH:** Most of us have been known to experiment from time to time. Universities call that research. What separates us from them is that we usually aren't so particular in our methods. While our results may be "tainted", they do offer (if conducted with a modicum of scientific method) a means to compare products and test claims. If you are really adventurous, you can even see how agricultural or industrial products may behave on turf. No, one does not use the 18th green or the middle of a sports field for the test plot.

6. **OBSERVATIONS:** Perhaps the single most valuable tool in keeping up with changes is your ability to observe and ask questions. This is done with visits to field days, sports fields, a round of golf at another golf course, and, of course, looking in your own arena of turf management. Ask not merely why something is wrong, but just as importantly why it is right. Question why, in the face of adverse conditions or problems, is a certain turf area looking good when by all rights and reason, it shouldn't be. You can learn more from answering that question than all of the wrongs you can find. Keep daily tabs on your observations, and work on questions, theories, and answers as time permits. The old "trial, error and logic" method is still a valid learning technique.

7. **CONSULTANTS:** Finally, and you would have been disappointed in me if I hadn't included this, you have consultants. Many of you already know where you would like to have consultants, but that is another story. Sometimes I feel as welcome as a shark eating its prey alive. Nevertheless, a good consultant is a wealth of current information. In order to be a consultant, one must strive to absorb all that is possible so that a proper recommendation can be made on a variety of problems and circumstances. If you were looking for an old answer, you would already have it. I try to share with my clients information that I have learned from every one of the points previously listed. However, my limited brain space (some say the space is there but not the substance) only allows so much of this sharing to take place on any one visit. Don't count on a consultant to solve all of your problems, or even to be the single source of staying current. However, do ask questions, probe and prod on any topic related to turf management to get the most out of a visit.

There are many other means for keeping your edge sharp in modern turf management. Industry sales information, student apprentices, technical researchers themselves, are just a few. My point is, you can't expect to rely simply on your own training, experience, and plan to safely see you through the mess we sometimes call turf management. You also need to stay current with a good reference library, a monthly supply of trade periodicals, regular attendance at turf conferences, frequent discussions with your fellow professionals, a little experimentation at the work-place, a lot of looking and asking why, and good use of a qualified turfgrass consultant. Then, when you find yourself "up the creek" in front of a roaring rapids, you can smugly smile at the thrill seekers bashing to and fro about the rocks as you glide gently through with your spare paddle ready for as much rough water as the turf world throws at you.