

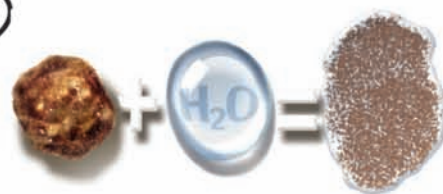
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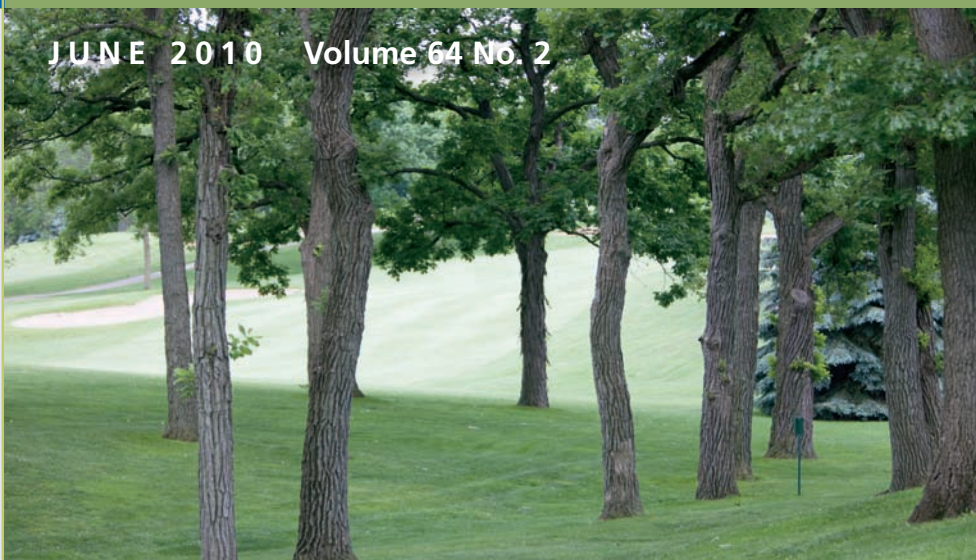
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**FRONT COVER**

The 14th, five par, at Elgin Country Club is characteristic of the rest of the golf course. Trees line each side of the undulating fairway and the green slope takes plenty of thought on the approach and putt(s).

*Photo credit: Luke Cella*

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The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance. We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

The MAGCS member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.

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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Bob Kohlstedt, Fox Bend Golf Course



# Midwest Monthly Meetings – Behind the \$cenes

*As past Arrangements Chairman and now Secretary/Treasurer I am often asked why events are so expensive. The board does pay attention to meeting price and it is a topic of discussion; however, much of the information is not conveyed to our membership.*

It is often a fine line we walk to provide the best venues for our events and to increase participation by keeping things affordable. Premier sites have larger expenses to cover and demand a premium price for use of their facility. Superintendents are competitive by nature so by trying to be better than the rest, things sometimes get out of control. Don't get me wrong, host clubs should cover the expense of a Midwest event and it is OK to bring some revenue to your course or club. That's just good business. As we all know everything we do or provide comes with a price tag.

Clubs, both public and private don't give things away like they used to. Some of us remember when clubs would comp the green fees and/or the cart fees and allow the Midwest the use of the facility and have the group pay for the food and beverages consumed. That has not happened in many, many years. With clubs vying for Monday outings that will pay top dollar, MAGCS is often left hanging. Even on the public side, how many tee times need to be blocked for an outing of one of ours? Certainly, it is the better part of the day and in the eyes of a manager, revenue.

It is tough enough for us to find a member that is willing to have a 100 or so of his peers play his or her property for a day, let alone asking them to cut us a deal, or give us a break on price. MAGCS has been very fortunate to have members that are willing to host an event and share their facility with us. I always learn something by seeing someone else's property. I have never attended a meeting where I didn't take something away by playing someone else's masterpiece.

The process of arranging an event starts with the MAGCS member volunteering their facility as a potential host site. The arrangements committee will then develop a list of the host sites and contact the superintendent and schedule the day of the event. Two months before the event contacts are made with the food and beverage manager as well as the pro shop to begin the process of selecting a menu and getting a preliminary per person expense. This is where it gets tricky. If the expense is too high then we look at which services can be reduced or

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*I always learn something from seeing someone else's property. I have never attended a meeting where I didn't take something away by playing someone else's masterpiece.*

---

eliminated, such as breakfast or locker room service. Once we have arrived at an agreeable price we may add a few extra dollars to cover the expense of prizes and pro shop certificates. This is the cost of the event that is posted as the registration expense but this does not include the "extra" expenses.

The "extra" expenses of providing a MAGCS event that are not covered by registration fees are the things that most overlook. The board knows about them, because they are discussed, but the general membership doesn't always see the true cost of putting on a meeting. Some of these expenses include:

- The host superintendent receives a complimentary foursome.
- The speaker is invited to play golf as a guest of the Midwest.
- Staff is invited to participate in the outing and cover the event for the magazine.
- Speakers are given an honoraria and reimbursed for any travel expenses they incur.
- Our host is given a gift, a plaque and the framed cover of *On Course*.
- The Midwest purchases and provides golf prizes for each meeting.
- There is sponsor signage for each event.
- The Midwest pays merchant processing fees to the credit card companies each time a card is swiped.

Some of the costs are really behind the scenes, but a meeting can't occur without: web updates and programming, meeting notices and mass emails, event formatting and communications, pairing sheets, and account reconciliation.

*(continued on next page)*



These expenses add up over the course of the year and are covered by our very generous sponsors. The Midwest sets the price each month to break even on every event. Over the past three years, your board has done an excellent job of making sure the Association is fiscally prudent and sound (since 1/1/07 thru 12/31/09 our meeting income is \$142,322.50 and our expenses have been \$144,386.86).

Recently we conducted a survey of our members about meetings, and certainly meeting price was a question of interest. Thank you to those 181 members that completed the survey. Overall, the results of the survey supported the work of the board. I am proud to say, the number one item of importance when deciding to attend a meeting is still the education offered at the event. The other items in order of importance were: travel time to meeting, venue, cost, and the day of the week. The most popular day for a meeting is now Tuesday, followed by Monday and most want the meetings to start in the mid morning. Of the 181 members responding, 82% of their employers pay for them to attend a Midwest meeting and it shows that when meetings approach the \$100 mark, members take notice.

Many members responded positively to a less formal and shorter meeting, perhaps a nine-hole event. The board and the partnership task group have noted this and are exploring opportunities to make this happen in the future.

There is a lot of work that goes into each meeting. As a board member, I am thankful every time someone steps up and offers to have us over to play. -OC

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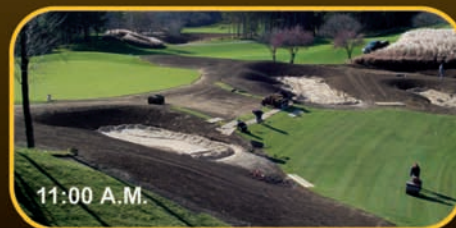


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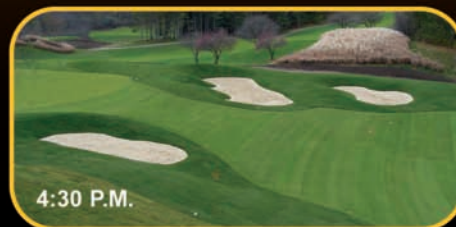
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# Know the Genetics of Your Next Bentgrass Variety

*During my junior year at SIU, I enrolled in a genetics course. The course material was different from the rest of the turfgrass curriculum. We learned about the structure of the DNA molecule and how the cells use this information for vital plant functions. Genes were described as the unit of heredity passed on to later generations. Mendel's Laws of Inheritance formed the basic rules to begin the science of genetics. After learning these fundamentals, the exciting uses became apparent—the ability to develop a new plant with superior performance and quality.*

Plant breeding is defined as, “the art and science of improving the heredity of plants for the benefit of humankind” (Poehlman and Sleper, 1995). This combination of art and science has been going on for thousands of years in food crops, but has only just begun in turfgrass. Farmers of annual crops choose their genetics every year. Professionals in our field don't always get to choose the genetics of their turf. Many times we are managing a turf that was seeded before we arrived or perhaps before we were alive. For those who do have the opportunity to buy seed or sod, the choice is an important one that can affect management for years to come.

The Chicago District Golf Association (CDGA) has its roots in variety selection and continues to study new releases in the turfgrass industry. In the 1980s a turfgrass disease specific to the bentgrass cultivar ‘Toronto’ was responsible for the beginning of the turfgrass program at the CDGA. Since then, Dr. Randy Kane has established multiple variety trials on Sunshine Course. These trials are evaluated not only through statistical analysis and written reports, but also through the rigorous examinations of turfgrass managers. Variety trials are open to all; they can be examined up close and personal.

In 2002, variety trials were placed in roughs, fairways, and putting greens on Sunshine. The two original National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) trials have been replaced as required by protocol, but new trials have been started. A total of six replicated variety trials are currently in place on Sunshine. The recent additions include a tall fescue trial at lawn or rough height, a Kentucky bluegrass at fairway height, and bentgrass trials at both putting green and fairway height. These are being

studied closely using a system of monthly ratings. Some additional turfgrass species are available for view on Sunshine. Dr. Ken Diesburg from Southern Illinois University has his own tall fescue variety, different Zoysia grasses, and a type of Bermuda grass planted on Sunshine. In addition, Supina bluegrass and colonial bentgrass have been used on Sunshine. We have also installed a putting green trial at Shoreacres in Lake Bluff, Illinois. This will allow us to study variety performance in the microclimate adjoining Lake Michigan. Cool lake breezes and delayed greenup are aspects of that environment that differ from Lemont. This could affect which varieties perform best.



**Figure 1. Putting green varieties are evaluated for their thatch production before recommendations of seeding are made. July 23, 2009.**

(continued on page 6)





## CDGA Bentgrass Studies

Creeping bentgrass varieties can have a large impact on the inputs of a golf course. The genetics of bentgrass turf will have an impact on cultural and chemical practices. What are the benefits of eliminating one fungicide application on your fairways each year? Some varieties can save you an application while others will not. In fact, some new varieties may be able to save you even more money and time than just one fungicide application! However, a comprehensive evaluation of bentgrass varieties gets complicated. In the early years of improving bentgrass, breeders were able to select for finer texture and greater density, both of which are easy to see. Thatch production is important also, but harder to see and select. It takes more time to cut into the turf and measure, and often the thatch of a variety is not known. This is an excellent example of how the variety trials on Sunshine are used to aid in your decision of selecting a variety.

Bentgrass trials on Sunshine began with a NTEP fairway study conducted by Dr. Kane, Dr. Tom Voigt, and Dr. Derek Settle from 2003 to 2008. Twenty-eight bentgrass varieties as well as 7 colonial bentgrass entries were evaluated for visual quality, dollar spot susceptibility (Figure 2), brown patch occurrence, and other turf quality traits. While most NTEP trials across the nation are repeatedly sprayed to control disease, dollar spot was allowed to develop in these varieties in order to better evaluate the resistance of each variety. As expected we found that colonial bents have much better dollar spot resistance but are lacking in brown patch resistance (Figure 3). Colonial bents lack

spreading ability as well. In our study, creeping bents became a weed within colonial plots. This ruined the data from colonial plots later in the study. It also taught us that variety trials of this species and other bents should be conducted separately. In separate trials, management can be suited to their needs so that invasive creeping bents would be excluded.

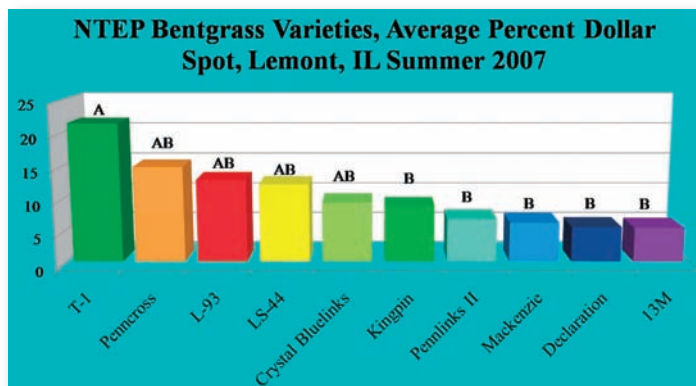


Figure 2. Average percent dollar spot during the summer of 2007 in a NTEP trial on Sunshine Course. Means not followed by the same letter are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) by Fisher's LSD.



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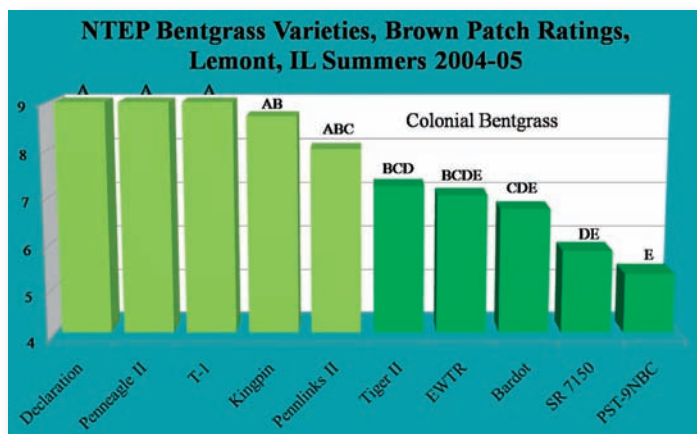


Figure 3. Brown patch comparisons between creeping bentgrass varieties (left) and colonial bentgrass varieties (right). Means not followed by the same letter are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) by Fisher's LSD.

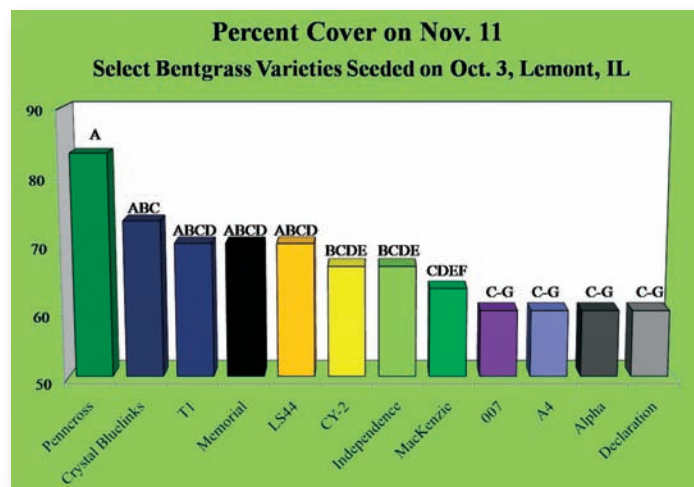


Figure 4. Percent cover of Bentgrass varieties in 2008 from our NCERA fairway trial. Means not followed by the same letter are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) by Fisher's LSD.

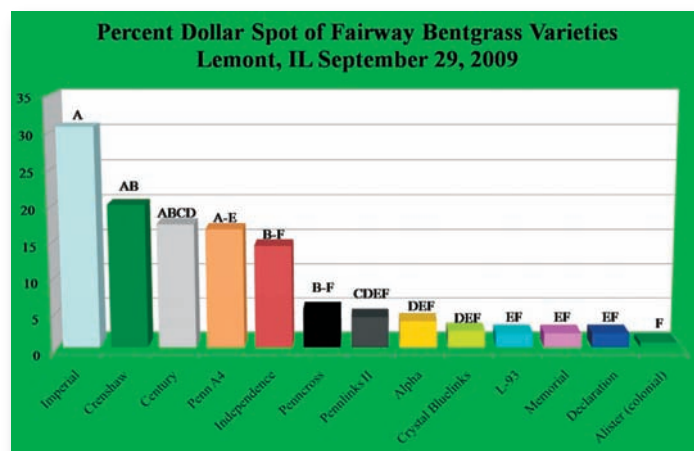


Figure 5. Dollar spot within Sunshine's NCERA fairway study. Means not followed by the same letter are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) by Fisher's LSD.

As the NTEP study expired in 2008, a new kind of variety testing trial made its entrance at Sunshine. This time a group of turfgrass scientists from 11 regional universities called the North Central Extension and Research Association (NCERA) designed an experiment to thoroughly test bentgrass varieties for dollar spot resistance. The design of this study is aimed at finding the varieties that perform the best with fewer inputs, which includes fungicides. The trial is not a beauty contest; it focuses on the primary problem of bentgrass turf: dollar spot. Bentgrass fairways in and around Chicago require multiple applications of fungicide to control this disease. The best control is in the genetics of the bentgrass variety. This new variety testing will help us select the varieties with the best genetics.

The NCERA trials include 25 bentgrass varieties at fairway and putting green height. Our fairway trial was seeded in the fall of 2008. After a month, we were able to see differences in the establishment of varieties (Figure 4). Although these trials should be repeated, it seems as if the old industry standard 'Penncross' has the vigor to grow in and cover the surface faster than other varieties. After lowering the mowing height and allowing plots to fill in, we obtained some dollar spot data last fall. The results show the varieties 'Declaration,' 'Memorial,' 'L-93,' and 'Crystal Bluelinks' provided the best resistance to dollar spot (Figure 5). Our materials and methods within this trial include splitting each variety plot; one side receives no fungicides while the other side receives applications based on the most resistant varieties. We expect the results to lead us to a handful of varieties that can perform well, while the majority of the varieties tested will be loaded with dollar spot. Each trial will have its first full year of data collection this summer. The results will help us determine which varieties perform best under fewer inputs. We are excited to have this study on Sunshine this year and in the many years to come. The information from this collaborative effort will be important for anyone looking to seed bentgrass.

Not all studies are conducted on Sunshine course. Multiple locations are important in order to replicate results across our region. Dollar spot data is plentiful in CDGA research. When Dan Dinelli, CGCS at North Shore Country Club requested we rate his own tee box varieties we jumped at the opportunity. In 2008 we rated dollar spot several times. Each time we noticed a few varieties with resistance to this persistent disease (Figure 6). 'Benchmark DSR' stood out because it was a variety that we had not yet heard of and because of its improved resistance (Figures 6 and 7). Another trial was seeded away from Lemont in the fall of 2009. As mentioned earlier, this new variety trial was installed at Shoreacres in order to evaluate performance in the environment near the lake and to evaluate spring greenup specifically. Twenty-five varieties were seeded. After this spring the varieties will have filled in and will provide plenty of quality and color data. In this study we are using normalized difference vegetative index (NDVI) as a tool to measure the light reflectance and estimate the color of the turfgrass. These measurements will give us unbiased data on color and complement our visual ratings.

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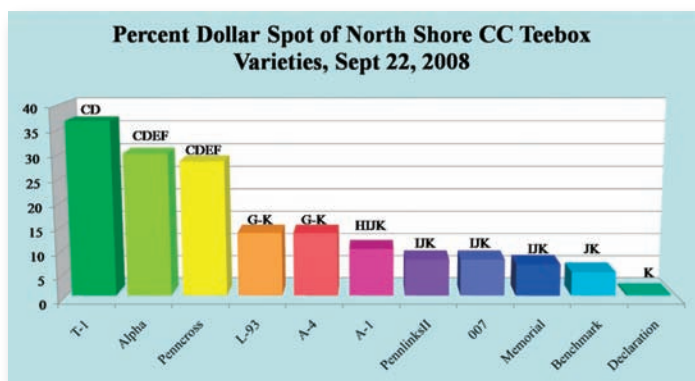


Figure 6. Percent dollar spot of bentgrass varieties managed on a tee box. 'Crenshaw' had the most disease at 63% dollar spot. Means not followed by the same letter are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) by Fisher's LSD.



Figure 7. New varieties must be tested to show characteristics like dollar spot resistance in 'Benchmark DSR,' September 22, 2008.

In summary, the bentgrass dollar spot data in our variety trials show 'Declaration,' 'Memorial,' and 'Benchmark DSR' provide excellent dollar spot resistance. 'L-93' was the industry standard for dollar spot resistance up to ten years ago, but today we have more varieties with the same or better resistance. When keeping thatch levels in mind, 'Pennlinks II' still provides a good level of dollar spot resistance and less thatch development. We hope that more variety trials will address the issue of thatch in the future. Just as 'Benchmark DSR' surprised us in 2008, we were also learning more about new varieties called 'Crystal Bluelinks,' '007,' and 'CY-2.' New varieties are released every year, and testing must be continued to determine the performance across our region. As I prepared for our latest establishment I heard new names such as 'Pin-up' and 'V8.' Some companies even stated that the economy was delaying the release of new varieties. Some entries don't have market names yet and may be a couple years from being released. For example, we have two varieties in our Shoreacres plot that are still experimental. The current NTEP putting green trial at North Shore Country Club has eight experimental entries. Research is ongoing in bentgrass genetics. Scientific articles from university programs shed light on new ideas and methods being tested. Our varieties will continue to improve, and CDGA testing will show the uses and savings these varieties can provide.

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Poehlman, J.M. and Sleper, D.A. 1995. Breeding Field Crops. Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa. -OC

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# Meat and Potatoes Stew at the Links

*What are the real meat and potatoes at your facility? The meats at my facility are the golfers. Now if you like meat as much as I do, then you do whatever it takes to get it. How many superintendents took advantage of the past two mild summers we had to create unusually fast conditions?*

I really never hear my golfers say, "Rick the greens are too fast today." What I do hear is fellow superintendents say, "are you crazy how many times last week did you double cut and roll." During these tough economic times I want to keep my golfers happy and playing at my facility.

My situation is a little different from some, because we cater to many low handicappers. Today most of my members are members at other facilities, as well. So, it's important to try to set ourselves apart from other facilities. We want our members to choose our facility out of the two or three clubs they belong to and to bring their guests here. With the mild weather we had over the past two summers, creating optimal playing conditions was not very risky. So, if I can double cut and roll four or five times a week with my old sixty-plus percent *Poa annua* greens, why are others with new greens and grasses not doing the same? Well, most likely, because they aren't crazy. I think that I should thank all of you for not being crazy, because while you're not being crazy, we've stepped up the fine touches and maintained our rounds of golf for the past three years.

O.K., enough of the blah, blah, blah. The point I'm trying to make is, what are you doing to keep your golf rounds up at your facility? In my opinion, the present economy calls for a decrease in spending, but an increase in detail. How can I spend less but do more? By using the best asset we have at our facilities— staff. Delay any large projects; repaint and rebuild instead of buying new equipment. Perhaps set up an every-other-year equipment purchasing program.

I believe the last thing we should cut is staff. Staff is, in my opinion, the potatoes of the meat and potatoes. Staff is the fulfilling part of the meat and potatoes. They are the individuals that get the job done. One of my favorite sayings comes from Al Fierst. He always said, "when something needs to be completed, call the 'movers and the shakers,' the grounds crew."

I sat down with my crew and talked about the importance of keeping golfer rounds up. What we needed to do to keep golfers happy and guest rounds coming. One of those things was keeping green speeds up on these old *Poa annua* greens. We set a plan in place, and everyone has chipped in to make it work for the past three years. The crew is paying more attention to details, adjusting hours, and taking real pride in the product they are producing. We are not working any more hours than if it was a warm summer requiring a little hand watering (which is figured into the labor budget).

What has happened is that we have had the same rounds played, both guest and member rounds, over the past three years. This has put the club in position to continue to employ staff during this economic down time.

On a final note, I should point out how lucky I am to have two Assistant Superintendents, Alonso Esquivel (32years) and Paul Stoffel (15 years), who are truly dedicated to our club. The majority of the crew has been with me for 5 to 30 years. They are eager to perform, because they realize how well the members at our club support us.

So instead of taking advantage of a mild summer by leaving early or laying off an employee, try taking that extra step when conditions are right. **-OC**



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