

# The Summer of '95

## Mark My Words



*Mark Jarrell*

Mark Jarrell, CGCS  
Assistant Editor

It is mid-September as I sit down to write this, and already we have received more than 57 inches of rain for the year, which is normally about the total for a full year in my area.

August was especially brutal with almost 20 inches. Though we may not reach last year's total of 90 inches, I can't remember any previous summers where I had to repair the same washouts on new construction so many times.

Couple this with the worst mole cricket infestation I've ever seen and 1995 takes over as one of my worst years in the golf business.

The difficulties presented by Mother Nature are frustrating and often disheartening but I can count myself among the few fortunate superintendents who don't get ulcers worrying about job security due to weather-related problems.

Some of my peers are not so lucky. I fully expect to begin hearing of superintendents fired for "unacceptable playing conditions" about the time this magazine reaches your hands.

One of our area's most prominent superintendents was told by a greens chairman over a year ago that "they paid him enough to handle any weather-related problem."

Another in Naples told me in march that some members absolutely refused to believe that two days of frost could cause the turf to go off-color, simply because frost hadn't occurred in that area for several years and they had never seen it.

Saving your job often depends upon your people skills — diplomacy, poise and tact — over your agronomic skills when trying to deal with Mother Nature. Giving thorough and factual information in a non-confrontational manner is your best bet when explaining to a frustrated member about the imperfect playing conditions.

In the hope that I might present some information that could help save a superintendent's job because he didn't give a thorough enough answer or left out a significant point, may I offer the following points when explaining the detrimental effects of excessive rainfall:

When feeling the pressure to open the course during wet conditions, and especially about allowing cart traffic, explain that waterlogged soils will not support the weight of maintenance equipment or golf carts. Water acts as a lubricant between the mineral soil particles, and traffic will break down the soil structure.

The resulting compaction and turf damage from rutting may take weeks to correct. The excess water replaces the air in the soil's pore spaces, depleting soil oxygen and slowing the respiratory processes.

Root growth is restricted, and toxic organic acids and gases may form. Extra aerifications, which we all hate, may be necessary to release these gases, stimulate root growth, put oxygen into the root zone and restore soil structure, so carefully consider the consequences of traffic on a wet golf course.

In addition, turfgrasses will *luxury consume* excess water and nutrients, causing cell walls to become elongated and weak. The softer tissue breaks apart more easily under traffic, making the grass plant more vulnerable to attack from the many parasitic fungi that thrive under the wet conditions.

Thinking only of the lost income from keeping the course closed may be false economy; the extra money that may be needed for fungicides and aerification may be greater than the additional revenue.

As any good superintendent knows, raising the mowing height on greens during stressful conditions, such as those created during heavy and frequent rains, gives the turf a better chance of surviving

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the adverse conditions, but the typical member doesn't know this, so save yourself some grief by educating them to the facts.

Be prepared to explain your need for budget revisions because of the fertilizer and pesticides that are washed away during excessive rains.

Finally, I'd like to say a word about Primo. Typically, all of us who write for your FGCSA publications avoid sounding commercial, but it fits into the subject of my article, and I would be remiss in not pointing out how useful it is during Florida's rainy season. At Palm Beach National I have a mix of bermudagrasses in my fairways and was worried about the effects of Primo before I started using it

in 1993.

I'm happy to say that the use of Primo at 14 ounces per acre, every six weeks or so, actually tightens the grasses up and makes them appear more consistent. Cell walls are stronger and better resist fungal invasion. These are the side benefits.

The real value of Primo is in the fact that I have sometimes gone ten days between mowing of fairways due to persistent wet conditions and, when we were able to mow, we weren't "bailing hay" as we would have been in previous years prior to using Primo.

I know some superintendents haven't yet tried it — probably due to its high cost — but be sure you factor in the importance of increased quality and playability

in your cost-to-benefit evaluation.

As frustrating as bad weather is, I know most superintendents don't mind having to face Mother Nature's challenges. It just seems unfair that we also have to fear for our jobs when she kicks us in the teeth.

After 26 years in the golf business, I have to chuckle at those romantic environmentalists who view Mother Nature as perfect and benign.

Don't these people ever watch public television? They obviously don't have jobs in natural resource management. Life is a constant struggle and Mother Nature can be your best friend or your worst enemy.

Good luck to us all!



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# Let's talk golf

## Green Side Up



*Joel D. Jackson*

Joel D. Jackson, CGCS  
Editor

We keep saying we're tired of preaching to the choir. Let's take the plunge and reach out to that mass of viewers that tune in to the plethora of talk shows on television. They crave the dysfunctional! Let's give them the sordid story of bermudagrass "off types!"

Their morbid curiosity unsated, we can show slides of nematodes feeding on mole cricket cadavers. For something really disgusting, we could show a slow-motion video of my golf swing. It might go something like this:

**Fade In:** Camera pans audience assembled in corporate hospitality tent left over from the Classic Invitational Open. Sound track from the movie Caddy Shack is playing.

**Announcer's voice:** And now ladies and gentlemen it's time for Let's Talk Golf with your host, that lady of the links, a scrappy thirty-six handicapper who has never conceded a putt, Miss Okra Windtree!

Okra enters tent from right. Wearing a Fuschia, Optic Yellow, Chartreuse, and International Orange golf outfit from Ultimate Insult of Redondo Beach. Camera pans wildly cheering audience. Okra bows. Waves. Blows kisses.

**Okra:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Ya'll are great! Thank you. OK! OK! Enough already! We've got a great show today and I want to introduce our panel of guests right now. We are very fortunate to have three golf course superintendents from the area here today. They are going to give us the down and dirty of golf course maintenance.

On my left is Brad Blazer, CGCS, from the Wine Cellars Country Club. In the middle is Gene Denim of the city course, Divot Acres Golf Club, and on the far right is Dave Docker, CGCS. Dave is the Director of Golf Maintenance for the Rest and Relax Resort chain. Gentleman, welcome! We look forward to visiting with you today. For the benefit of the three hundred people jammed in this 20 by 20 tent, I'd like each of you to tell us a little bit about your course and how you

manage turf. Brad, would you please start?

**Brad:** I'd love to Okra. Wine Cellars Country Club is a private club with just 300 members from all over the world. Mostly bankers, lawyers, doctors, celebrities, and tycoons. We have 151 male members and 149 female members. Mr. Elliott Sureshank is our 47th Green Committee Chairman this year. Our diversity programs have been sanctioned by the NCAA, NOW, Hard Copy and Geraldo Rivera.

We have 12 teeing areas on each hole to allow for people of varying abilities to enjoy each hole. The most forward tees are affectionately called, The Putting Course.

I facilitate a crew of 54 people for 18 holes. This does not include our two assistant superintendents, two pest control technicians, two Irrigation technicians, four mechanics, one lawyer and my administrative assistant, Zelda.

We contract out the maintenance for the clubhouse grounds, tennis courts, pool area and roadways in order to save money. We hand mow greens, tees, collars, approaches, and fairways. We mow the roughs with triplexes. We hand rake all of the bunkers and hand trim all of the runners. We are closed from June 1st to October 1st and every Monday the rest of the year. Our first tee time is 9 a.m. and shotgun starts are not permitted.

We have closed circuit television on every hole to monitor golf etiquette. Any players not filling divots or fixing ball marks have their playing privileges suspended for 30 days. We also have the satellite tracking and communication system on our golf carts and maintenance equipment.

I can monitor where everyone is instantly. We can also tell if a cart is violating "Cart Paths Only" and "90 Degree Rule restrictions." Violators have been successfully prosecuted in small claims court and video tapes of the incidents have been shown on the TV show, "Cops." It wasn't pretty!

**Okra:** Since we always speak frankly on this show Brad, I can tell you I didn't appreciate the Geraldo comment. Next,

from Divot Acres, Gene Denim.

**Gene:** Hello Okra, it's nice to be here. I'm afraid my operation isn't quite as exotic and high tech as Brad's. In the first place, my membership is anybody with the ten bucks green fee in their pocket. There are six of us on the course, not counting the community service folks that Judge Gavel sends over from the courthouse. They aren't much help because we have to go pick them up and bring them to work. Suspended licenses. Things like that. Once we had a serial killer that was mistakenly put in a work release program. Didn't know it at the time. Maybe that's why I didn't see any armadillos that summer.

I am the mechanic, pest control operator and irrigation man. The only thing we hand mow is the mayor's yard. Oops, I guess I shouldn't say that should I? We're never closed. We just yell "fore" and run that aerifier across the green. We all wear hard hats and flack jackets anyhow. Shoot, last year we had three old coots out there playing in Hurricane Hepsibah! At the last city council meeting they were talking about installing floodlights on all the holes so we could stay open 24 hours. When I mentioned something about irrigating at night, Councilman Pinchpenny suggested we just yell "fore" and turn it on! He was peeved because we ruined his brand new Titleist X-out ball with our aerifier last week. The Council is also considering leasing the driving range for the annual Tri-county Tractor Pull. Needless to say they keep us pretty busy.

Our budget is \$50,000 per year which covers all the salaries, materials and equipment. If it wasn't for the adopt-a-hole program by the local Neighborhood Watch Committee we couldn't mow down those hiding places in the roughs that used to attract an occasional mugger. On top of all that, local radio personality, Saul Garvey, is suing to have all golf courses banned in the city limits. Something to do with wanting to take a walk in a sterile environment and his cashmere sweater being ruined by bird poop. He claims that golf courses are nuisances



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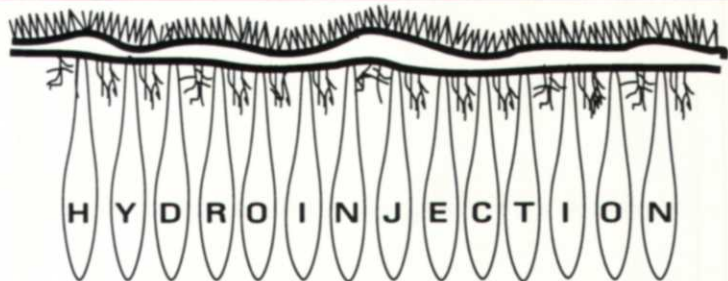
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that attract wildlife. I think Saul has been sitting too close to the transmitter for too long if you know what I mean!

**Okra:** Wow! Gene your plate sure is full! On this program we also like to interfere in people's lives and dispense unfounded advice. So Gene, believe me when I say you'd better update that resume. I understand Mack Willis of the 30 Minutes Show is headed over the the Mayor's house right now to film his yard. And last but not least, Dave Docker. Hi Dave!

**Dave:** Hi yourself, Okra. Thanks for asking me to be on the show. In this totally open atmosphere that has been created by some of the audience cutting out the sides of the tent, I want to make a confession. As you see me today, and believe me I have noticed the stares, I stand 3 feet 9 inches tall. I was 5 feet 10 inches before our Golf Division was downsized. I consider my self very lucky compared to poor old Sherm over in Marketing, which experienced downsizing and FLATTENING!

As for golf course management, I travel the world coordinating and consulting the various courses we operate as part of our resorts. To be more effective, I have learned to speak French, Spanish, Russian, German, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Swahili, Farsi, Yiddish and Bronx. One of my responsibilities is to coordinate corporate purchases of equipment and make sure all the safety decals are translated properly and put on the machines going to the different countries. One year we had some Swahili labels on the equipment going to Brazil. We are still mitigating that part of the rain forest.

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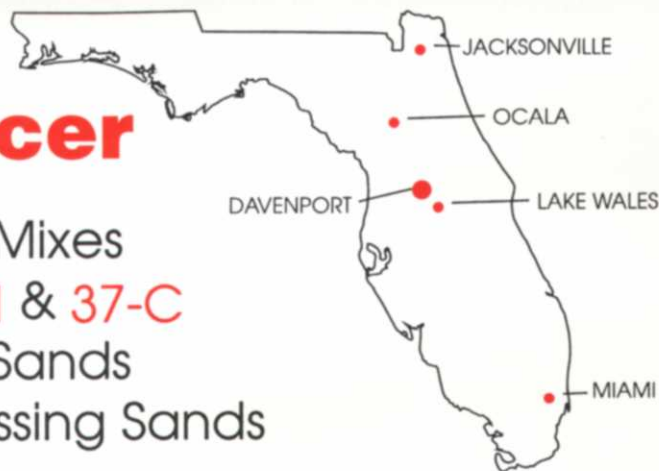
Unlike Brad and Dave, I do not engage in the mundane matters of turf management on a daily basis. I do act as a consultant when visiting our resorts and have learned many unique skills such as Gazelle Stampede Damage Recovery Methods; Bavarian Botulism Prevention On Tall Fescues; The Shortcomings of Rice Paddies As Temporary Greens. The list goes on.

**Okra:** Dave, I hate to cut you off, but our time is almost gone. Folks, how about a great big hand for our three superintendents. Gentlemen, thank you for sharing your insights and comments on golf maintenance with us today. Tomorrow on Let's Talk Golf we go into the Pro Shop to talk to teaching professionals to learn about the latest medical tragedy, "Paralysis by Analysis." Don't miss it. Bye now.

**Editor's Disclaimer:** This column should be read only by trained professionals. If you didn't laugh or smile, I failed. If you're still laughing, seek help immediately! Come to think of it. This column should be **written** only by trained professionals!

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