

INDY CARS, NASCARS, AND PINK SLIPS

Speed Kills!

By Jim Walker



When I was a young lad of about 10, I watched a movie about the Indianapolis Speedway and the Big Race held there each year. It starred William Bendix who played the part of "Burn 'em Up" Barnes. Needless to say, old "Burn 'em Up" slammed into the wall and expired amid the wreckage and twisted metal near turn two... or three... or one of those turns. Funny how that movie stayed with me all these years, but it has. The moral of the story, obviously, was "speed kills."

Last April, my wife and I had the opportunity to get up close and personal with Daytona International Speedway, thanks to her ex-husband, with whom she has remained cordial. Bruce is an architect working for the France Company which owns the Daytona Track and several others across the country. He took us on quite a tour of the facility, but the most compelling part of the excursion was almost being able to touch the wall in turn three where Dale Earnhart, "The



Intimidator," had bought it just a couple of months before. Moral of the story: "Speed kills."

In case you were wondering what the hell a bunch of people going around in circles at 180 miles per hour has to do with turf, it is that speed kills.

I have seen too many good superintendents lose jobs because their greens took a dump as they tried to maintain them at speeds of 10, 11, or 12 on the stimp meter. This quest to have the fastest greens in town is taking a toll, and it seems to me that it is all so needless.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not someone who putts badly on fast greens and has a personal axe to grind. As a matter of fact, the faster they are, the better I like it. This fact can be verified by any number of people whose socks I've knocked the dust out of. Putting on fast greens brings out the Jerry McGuire in me.

But enough is too much already! A stimp 8.0 to 9.0 is plenty fast enough and leaves the plant sufficient leaf tissue to accommodate photosynthesis. Furthermore, there doesn't seem to be a loss of root mass at these speeds. With products like Primo, around 8.0 on well-shaped greens is more than what 90 percent of golfers can handle. I know it's one of the main reasons play has slowed down. The greens are too fast and all these pork chops are chipping from one side of the green to the other and following that up with three- or four-putts.

I think the time has long since passed that the USGA and particularly the GCSAA began aggressive education to the masses that the green speed they see on TV every week is not what they should expect from at their clubs on a regular basis.

I wish I had kept the article in *GolfWeek's Superintendent News*, which alluded to the fact that the greens on three of the last four US Open courses had to be replanted immediately after the event because they had gotten so stressed out during tournament week.

That's the part of the story the golfing public never hears. "Speed Kills" is the part of the story our industry, and the people to whom we have entrusted our profession need to begin preaching. Slow 'em down!

I know that this commentary will be read by some folks at big-time clubs and be laughed at, but not everyone has a million-dollar budget and a staff of 20 or more for each 18 holes.

I have known Fred Klauk since his days at Eagle Trace, and his TPC course was one of the courses that my wife and I played last April. That was just a short time after the Tournament Players Championship. Fred is for sure one of the best two or three superintendents I have known in my

30-plus years in the business.

When we played the first par three on the front side, there was one of his trusted and knowledgeable staff members working diligently, sodding bare spots! His comment to me as we commiserated on his task was, "You can't mow 'em at .110 and expect them to grow, can you?"

No, especially not in Jacksonville at that time of year.

Come on USGA! Come on GCSAA! Get on board and come on in for the victory lap, or else we'll have you standing tall before the man.

Start telling the masses: "Speed Kills!"

P.S. That day at Fred's magnificent facility, I knocked it in on No. 17, shot 82 and didn't three-putt a green.

TURF=ENVIRONMENT

If You Really Want to Understand How the Activists Think... Join 'em

By Phil Busey, Ph.D.



Phil Busey, associate professor of turfgrass science at the University of Florida's Fort Lauderdale REC, operates "Turfgrass Management," a web site, online discussion forum and an irregular but frequent email newsletter. The following excerpts indicate that not all voices in the discussion of turfgrass and the environment are either shrill or confrontational.

Walk the Talk

If turfgrass is to survive in the urban age, we must talk the talk, *and* walk the walk, of environmental stewardship. If you as a turfgrass manager are not a member of the Sierra Club, or the Audubon Society, or the Nature Conservancy, you should seriously consider protecting your livelihood as well as doing what good you can do as a citizen, and join one of these or other responsible organizations. If for no other reason, you'll meet some interesting people.

That said, we must be careful to be accurate and not exaggerate the safety of pesticides, nor to exaggerate their potential harm. This came up at a recent meeting in which there was a comment made speculating about possible complaints by neighbors (which have never occurred) regarding pesticide use.

This kind of speculation is harmful

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1st Place - Native wildflowers, by Lyne Page, The Habitat @ Valkaria



2nd Place - Native plantings replace exotic invaders, by Tom Trammel, Hawks Nest G.C.

Native Plants: includes beds of native plants, aquatic plants, natural areas and wildflowers.

Easy Rules

1. Submissions for judging must be a color or black and white photograph or a slide. No computer print outs of digital photos will be accepted. Only one entry per category. Don't make us choose.
2. Photo must be taken on an FGCSA member's course and taken by the member or a member of his/her staff.
3. Attach a label to the back of the photograph

4. A caption identifying the category, course and photographer should be typed or printed on the paper below the photograph.
5. Judging will be done by a panel of FGCSA members not participating in the contest. Mail entries in a bend-proof package/mailer to Joel Jackson, 6780 Tamarind Circle, Orlando, FL 32819

Prizes

1. First Place (\$100). Second Place \$50 in each Category

2. Editor's Choice - Best Overall Photo - \$100
3. All winning entries will be published in the Florida Green.

Categories

- Category 1 - Wildlife on the Course: mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects.
- Category 2 - Formal Landscape: annual beds, shrubs, trees, entrance and tee sign beds and any other formal plantings.
- Category 3 - Native Landscape: native plant beds, aquatic vegetation plantings, natural areas and any other use of native plants on the course.
- Category 4 - Scenic Hole: sunrises, sunsets, frosts, storms or any other interesting view of a golf hole.

because of the work that the GCSAA, the FGCSA, the FTGA, the TPI, and others have done to educate their members on safe pesticide use, and to educate the public on the benefit of turf to the environment. It cuts deeply because pesticides are greatly misunderstood and distrusted by the general public. Idle and erroneous speculation about possible future complaints from neighbors can only feed the flames

of misunderstanding.

Most seasoned environmentalists I know have focused their efforts on broader issues such habitat loss, noxious exotic weeds, and energy policy. In contrast, pesticides are one of the few environmental issues that are under strict regulatory oversight. With few exceptions, the kinds of pesticides that are used, and the low rates at which they

are used, make the biggest problem one of actually finding them in the environment. But careless comments about pesticides get attention.

-Turfgrass Management, Vol. 4, No. 7
I had an enjoyable and stimulating exchange of views regarding my suggestion that turf managers run out and join the nearest environmental club. The comment was that doing so might be like

"joining the enemy." We came to the conclusion that different strategies may work in different situations.

In my 10 years as a member of the Broward Sierra Club, I have never met someone with whom I could not intelligently discuss turfgrass and pesticides. That may not be true everywhere, but I think it would be more true with local organizations than national ones.

We even have one Sierra Club member who advertises his pest control services in the monthly newsletter; the company name "Kilzum Bob Pest Control" says it all, followed by "Environmental Solutions."

When my colleagues and I were working with Peg McPherson of the South Florida Water Management District to develop BMPs for landscape and turf, we got to the 11th hour and realized we didn't have an environmental representative. Because of my personal friendship and membership in the club, it was easy to get the local conservation chair to a BMP meeting, sitting across the table from reps of TruGreen/ChemLawn, LESCO, and pest control organizations.

The Sierra Club representative's departing comment was, "I didn't know there was so much involved in taking care of turfgrass."

And with that we got the endorsement of the Sierra Club.

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Spray Drift Labeling

The EPA's extended comment period on

proposed new spray drift labeling guidelines ("Draft Guidance for Pesticide Registrants on New Labeling Statements for Spray and Dust Drift Mitigation") closed March 31.

While most of the proposals will not affect urban turf applications, sod producers could be affected.

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A chemical product representative in the southeastern US explained how much work was required to get the spray drift labeling guidelines to make sense. The initial draft would have permitted zero drift, even where no harm or hurt would have occurred. It would have also been impossible for the EPA to enforce.

Fortunately, there were available government and university studies on the subject of drift, which industry representatives presented to the EPA.

The chemical product representative in Florida mentioned to me, "Where a small amount of drift will potentially do harm, there should be none." But with reason and common sense on both sides of the problem, they were able to convince the EPA to develop real-world guidelines that will be good for the environment, and not create a cure worse than the problem.

So, in this complex world, there are trade groups who are helping you keep your greens green.

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Wanted: Partners for the Future

MARK MY WORDS



By Mark Jarrell,
CGCS

The long-awaited presentation to potential industry supporters of the Pine Acres project took place at the Orange County Convention Center Feb. 9 during the GCSAA's annual conference and show. Representatives from John Deere, Toro, Textron, Rain Bird, Wadsworth Construction, Harrell's, Howard Fertilizer and Chemical Co., Golf Ventures and

many others were in attendance.

For those who don't know, Pine Acres is the name of the more than 1,000-acre plot 20 minutes south of Gainesville that is to become the centerpiece and focal point of all of



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UF/IFAS's plant sciences. The G.C. Horn turf plots on the north side of Gainesville will be relocated there. However, the Envirotron and its attendant research green will remain on campus. The G.C. Horn name will move to the new location. Turf and Ornamentals were one of the first commodity groups to commit to the move, giving us a prime plot of 40 to 50 acres.

The strategy is to consolidate UF/IFAS's many far-flung research facilities into a few manageable, efficient, and first-rate centers. The Gainesville campus continues to sprawl from increased enrollment, making it too crowded and impractical to continue the many small and diverse research areas. Furthermore, many of the smaller off-campus plots and stations have become "unsustainable" because of inadequate funding for maintenance. The operative words are "deferred maintenance," meaning the research and education centers are never given enough state funding to maintain their facilities, such as fix the roofs and air conditioners.

While the events of Sept. 11 caused our governor to slash the IFAS budget about another \$8 million this year, the truth is that IFAS has been squeezed by all the Legislatures since 1987. The bottom line is that Florida's politics are now controlled by urbanites elected by urbanites who have no understanding or appreciation for agriculture, the green industry, or natural resources.

We have worked hard over the years to show our industry's support of UF/IFAS research, only to have state support continue to diminish, and many programs to erode instead of advance. Perhaps our main thrust should be political activism to educate the urbanites about the value of IFAS programs to the green industry and to the protection of our natural resources - the primary reason people move to or visit Florida.

But I digress. The Pine Acres presentation was well received by those company representatives who attended. It was a soft sell approach meant to introduce the plans and put out feelers for

support rather than to solicit a defined commitment. IFAS Vice President Mike Martin gave a superb presentation, supported by Dr. Terril Nell and several of the UF turf faculty, using an excellent video developed just for this presentation, with a take-home folder of pertinent info about IFAS and the turf program.

I give the effort an "A," but I've been at this long enough to be optimistically cautious when people are asked to reach for their wallets.

I know that some in our industry are so frustrated with the politics that they are considering washing their hands of support to the IFAS turfgrass program. This would be a big mistake. Research in Florida under Florida conditions is important to us as professionals, and to the people who live in this state, even if they don't yet understand it or help support it. We may have hit a bump in the road, but the turfgrass program is moving forward, and all Florida turfgrass professionals need to help make it the best in the country.

Putting Things Into Perspective

GREEN SIDE UP



Joel Jackson, CGCS

As the war of words continues with respect to environmental issues, it is our duty to speak up when our industry and our profession are assailed in the media and at county commission or water-management-district meetings. Words and phrases like "big water users" and "runoff" and "pollution" are bandied about and repeated so often in the media, that the mere mention of them is accepted as fact.

Of course a little cursory fact finding and research into reality tells us that golf courses are not big water users. Just because we are visible and well maintained doesn't mean we are water wasters. According to the U. S. Geological Survey of fresh water withdrawals done in 1995, golf only used 2.6 percent of the total water pumped daily. The USGS compiles the data from all five water management districts every five years. The 2000 report is being assembled now.

You can't read an article on ground water and water quality without finding the words "runoff" and "pollution" automatically associated with the use of fertilizers and pesticides. The years of studies and research have shown repeatedly in different parts of the country, under different environmental conditions, that fertilizers and pesticides applied properly do not negatively impact

the environment. What reporters and critics fail to mention is that it is the *misuse* of products that can cause potential problems. But isn't that true for anything we do? Over 50,000 people a year are killed in automobile accidents. Nearly half a million birds are killed every week from flying into glass skyscrapers and from cat predation.

How many people are killed from proper pesticide use? The answer is zero.

There are some pesticide poisonings each year, but they come from suicide, homicide, accidents or misuse. There's no hue and cry to ban automobiles, raze skyscrapers or destroy all cats. There's only the constant focus on pesticides as the evil force in world.

The words "toxic" and "toxins" are used with such venom in describing pesticide use on lawns and golf courses as if pesticides were the only toxic substance mankind comes in contact with thanks to the green industries. Once again the critics ignore the fact that studies done on lab rats show that nicotine, gasoline and caffeine are more "toxic" than diazinon. Guess which substance has been banned? MSDS sheets also show aspirin is more toxic than malathion, and table salt, vinegar and baking soda are more toxic than glyphosate and benlate.

Dose makes the poison and many natural and organic substances from animal and plant extracts can be poisonous or beneficial when used in prescribed amounts. Consider antibiotics and fungicides people use to kill bacteria, athlete's foot and yeast infections in and on their bodies. Botox, a product derived from the deadly botulism bacteria, is injected in people's faces to firm up sagging skin. People have much less contact with pesticides applied to lawns and golf courses than they do with the common everyday medicines,

cleansers, solvents and other products that can cause health effects when misused.

Nonprofit activist organizations need conflicts to generate publicity to generate donations and foundation grants. The media needs conflict to generate headlines and stories to generate readership to justify advertising rates. These two groups form an insidious relationship that fosters speculation, not education.

We can't out-finance or out-shout the narrow-minded critics, but we can respond to misinformation when we see it or hear it.

Abusers of any product or process should be exposed and prevented from doing harm to the environment. But painting all pesticides and fertilizers - and those who use them - with the same brush is not only shameful, it is irresponsible. The development and proper use of pesticides and fertilizers have made the U.S. the number-one food producer in the world, and we do it on less land, which allows us to preserve habitat, and we have the safest food supply in the world.

Only a relatively small percentage of the population works with nature and our natural resources. The ones who do respect and protect the environment because their livelihoods depend on it. Most of the general public, including legislators and regulators, are from urban settings; they are disconnected from the land. Their view of the world is a 25-inch TV screen or a newspaper headline screaming, "Pollution!"

We can't out-finance or out-shout the narrow-minded critics, but we can respond to misinformation when we see it or hear it. Until we do a better job of educating lawmakers and the media, we will have to try to put things into perspective one story at a time.