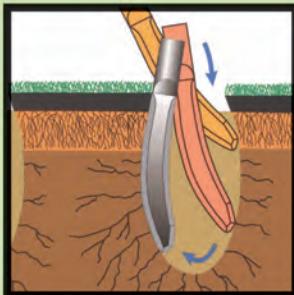




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# What, Me Worry?

There may not be that many readers who remember the famous words of Alfred E. Newman, the spokesperson and mascot of Mad Magazine, but he was a personal favorite of mine whose memory is kept alive by the fading tattoo on the arm of my assistant, Bobby Thigpen. Alfred's philosophy on life was @#%& it.

Oh, to be like Alfred! But alas, kids in college, car payments, insurance, mortgage, (thank God I don't have one of those) utilities, cell phone, gasoline, ailing parents, oy. The bills keep coming, so we've got to keep working.

It's getting so I can hardly watch the game I love so much on TV because of the idiot commentators working the broadcast. The line that gets me most is: "This putt Bobby Bigbucks has for birdie on 18 is worth \$220,000. That's the difference between finishing alone in second place or tying for second with Johnny Gotrocks and Bill Cashappy. Yea, that putt is worth \$22,000 a foot. What pressure?"

What pressure indeed. I'm absolutely devastated for these touring pros

## AS IT LIES



*Jim Walker*

and all their pressure. Thirty of them made \$2 million-plus last year. The top 70 made over a million, and Nicky Price — who is a true gentleman of the game — finished 125th with \$650,000. The very top players are living like kings, traveling in private jets or custom motor homes with their swing coach, sports psychologist, management guru, and financial adviser.

There is no doubt these guys are playing at a level far higher than 30 or 40 years ago, but give them back their wooden drivers, steel shafts, marsh-mallow balata balls, cut the first-place check to \$100,000 and see if the Tour would have to require them to spend time signing autographs. If the leading money winner made less than a million, and the guy finishing 125th made \$100,000 they would be back in their cars, staying at Holiday Inns, eating at Applebee's, and damn grateful they could play a game to make a living.

I don't want to pick on golfers alone. The NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB can also get on the bandwagon. These guys are the best and most talented players in their sports, but they are just playing a game for their enjoyment and ours. They aren't finding a cure for cancer, heart disease, or aids. Real pressure isn't catching a game-winning touchdown or hitting a game-winning home run. It isn't hitting a 3-pointer at the buzzer to win the championship.

Pressure is the middle class guys (and now in a lot of cases, gals as well) who get up every morning no matter how rotten they feel and get their kids off to school, go to work and do a good job, then take those same kids to soccer practice, music class, ballet school or to buy a new pair of sneakers at the mall so they can have the same kind their friends are wearing. They take their kids to Disney for vacation instead of leaving them with grandma and taking their wives to a tropical resort or to Tahiti where the women don't wear tops. Island life is AOK — party all night and surf all day.

Pressure is being a great parent to your children, a good and loving mate to your spouse, and making this world a better place when you check out than it

was when you got here.

Pressure is keeping a public golf course in good shape all the time without enough help, equipment, or cultural-practice supplies, while hosting 60,000 rounds a year.

Pressure is keeping a top private course in great shape all the time with the Greens Committee breathing down your neck to keep the greens stimping 10-plus, the fairways cut at 3/8 inch, all the bunkers perfect, all the trees trimmed, and all the flowers blooming so their wives aren't chirping about the course not being pretty enough when they play nine holes on Sunday afternoon.

Honey, we put some pretty blue flowers at the 14th tee. Did you see them? They match yours and your three playing partners' hair perfectly.

Pressure is being boss, friend, psychologist, big brother, father and all around good role model to your crew members. Making them take pride in not only what they do at the golf course but in themselves.

Is that pressure? Tell me the truth! You can't handle the truth!! Yea, that's pressure. Playing a game is not pressure. Lee Trevino said: "Winning on the Tour isn't pressure. Playing a \$50 Nassau with \$10 in your pocket is pressure."

Now for the ultimate pressure — retirement. Two and a half years away for me. For you young guys, who knows what shape Social Security will be in by the time you reach the finish line? Plan now! I don't want to be the guy on a soapbox crying wolf, but Father Time creeps up on you at stealth level 5.

Get your ducks in a row. Talk to a financial planner and work out a game plan. You are never too young to plan for your future. Last year, I was 20. Six months ago I turned 50. Then a few months ago I became 61. Gee ain't it funny how time slips away.

I just read an article in the financial section of the paper this morning that said most baby boomers will retire \$165,000 in debt. Now that's pressure.

What, Me Worry? You bloody well better! Alfred E. Newman was just a cartoon.



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If you never looked beyond the headlines you would think that the primary cause of degraded water quality around Florida was caused by runoff and leaching of nutrients from lawns, sports fields and golf courses. Let's start putting lawn-fertilizer use in perspective. Some may get onto the streets and into the storm drains, but most of it goes on the grass and is used by the grass.

Scientists have compiled reams of peer-reviewed research that has consistently said over the past several

## The Fertilizer Fear Factor

decades that properly applied fertilizers do not cause any negative environmental impacts. The bottom line is that fertilizers are being made the scapegoat because end users are easy targets. We might spread nutrients on turfgrass, but detractors are spreading fear and the facts don't support their claims.

I recently attended a meeting that was aimed at reducing phosphorus inputs in the vast Lake Okeechobee Watershed. Legislators and even the governor have decreed that phosphorus inputs will be reduced or eliminated so that Lake Okeechobee can be restored. Their first draft said "NO" phosphorus will be allowed in the future. Common sense prevailed and instead a "Low" phosphorus approach is being tolerated.

Attacking fertilizers is a smoke-screen because they make an easy target.

## GREEN SIDE UP



Joel Jackson, CGCS

If tomorrow a bag of 16-4-8 at Home Depot has a new label that says 16-2-8, the politicians will crow about how they reduced phosphorus by 50 percent. That's true for that bag of fertilizer, but not for the other 98 percent of the sources of nutrients being released in the watersheds.

But according to several PhDs sitting around the table, until the water in Okeechobee itself is treated, 20 years from now if no one applied fertilizer in the basin, the phosphorus levels would still be high. The lake bottom is phosphorus rich from eons of erosion and transportation of sediment into the lake.

In fact Dr. Bruce Augustine, formerly with UF/IFAS and now with the O. M. Scotts Company, has a compelling presentation that clearly shows that the most feared-and-maligned home-lawns sector is actually in reality a very minor player in the fertilizer factor. Do-it-yourself homeowner applications account for less than 2 percent of the applied fertilizer in the USA. And of the 80 million home lawns, 40 million receive zero fertilizer, 18 million receive one application, 10 million have two applications and, in the more high-end categories of three and four applications, there are only a million of each. In the USA, approximately 10 million lawns are maintained by lawn-care or pest-control companies.

What other possible sources of phosphorus (nutrients) should regulators, politicians and environmentalists acknowledge besides fertilizer? "One of the major nutrient sources dumping directly into our waterways is municipal and industrial treated water (sewage)," according to the December 2005 "Streamlines" newsletter published by the St. Johns River Water Management District. And let's not forget the septic tank systems that line river and lake banks in areas not served by sewer systems.

Soil erosion is a really big source of nutrients, especially when large tracts of land are exposed during development.

Many rivers in our watersheds cut across naturally occurring phosphate-rich deposits. We *mine* phosphate in Florida, for crying out loud.

Recent estimates by the U. S. Fish

& Wildlife Service put the resident goose population in the Atlantic Flyway at over 1 million and growing at the rate of 8 percent per year since 1981. In the Mississippi Flyway the population is 1.3 million and growing by 6 percent per year. In one study of an urban lake in the Northeast, the phosphorus from goose poop was found to be five times higher than inputs from storm drains in the surrounding area. In 2001 a study of an urban lake in Wilmington, N.C. estimated that waterfowl droppings contributed 27 percent of the total phosphorus in the lake.

We don't have the colorful foliage change in Florida as do our northern neighbors, but every fall I see those bald cypress trees going bald, dropping their needles into the wetlands that feed into the creeks and rivers. And then there are the oak, maple, sweet gum and sycamore leaves finding their way into urban storm drains. In the spring, oak and pine pollen turns the air and every flat surface yellowish green with pollen dust. It also falls into the water everywhere, as do the blossoms and seeds of our prolific native and landscaped shrubs and trees. As far back as the 1970s a Univ. of Minnesota study found the act of sweeping the streets once a week could reduce phosphorus concentrations of storm water runoff by up to 42 percent.

People should use fertilizer responsibly. They should apply the right product at the right time in the right place at the right rate. Instead of proposing laws to ban fertilizers, politicians should be looking at the "Green Industries BMP Manual for Protection of Water Resources in Florida" and the fertilizer recommendations in this manual.

If officials are looking for easy answers, these manuals have been produced using sound science and under the scrutiny of and with the approval of the Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection. Instead of enacting meaningless, self-serving and often unenforceable local ordinances and pandering to the agendas of activists, legislators at all levels should spend their time and efforts on educating their citizens about these proven positive environmental practices.

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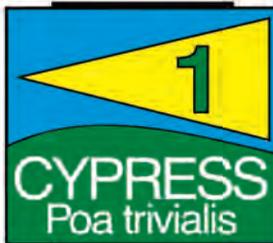
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