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A golfer shares Disney's Oak Trail Course with a flock of wild turkeys. Photo by Shelly Foy.

course because they have heard about the course's certification in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

When talking to Welder about what drives his commitment to the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program, he said, "I am old school. My father taught me the importance of leaving things better than I found them."

In discussing changes in golf course management over the years, and specifically as they relate to environment issues, both Joel Jackson (who spent 20 years at Disney before retiring) and Welder agreed that "We've gotten better... the sense of environmental awareness is there, and it gets better every year."

Jackson added "Technology, methods, and products have and continue to improve as well."

The majority of cast members (maintenance staff) are also long-term

employees. Every cast member we rode by, or spoke to, seemed genuinely happy to be there. Whether the course staff is filling bird feeders or monitoring nest boxes, or rangers are speaking to golfers about the turkeys, or the starters are telling golfers about the wildlife they can expect to see on the course, there is a collective effort to share environmental information with guests.

The longevity and continuity of the staff and their enjoyment of their jobs is an asset and a reason they work so well together as a team. As strongly as they feel about making magic happen on the golf courses every day, they also are committed to continuing to protect and enhance the natural environment of the golf courses.

One of the highlights for me was watching golfers and a flock of turkeys (estimated 300 on property) amicably share the golf course.

A lot of families play the courses and

sharing a round of family golf with turkey, deer, and more birds than one could count can only add to the magic of a trip to Disney. Welder told me there were days when you can round a corner and see herds of deer on the fairways. Most of the golf holes are bordered by hundreds of acres of undeveloped property, and wildlife has ample space for safe travel.

On the Palm Course, according to Welder, "each hole is like its own little world."

We came upon a fairway where a large flock of wading birds was foraging on the fairways between two lakes, turtles were sunning on a log, and an osprey was flying overhead looking for lunch. It was an amazing experience, yet just another day on the course for Welder, who has this pleasure every day.

The abundance of wildlife rarely causes damage to the course.

"Occasionally, if the deer are spooked,

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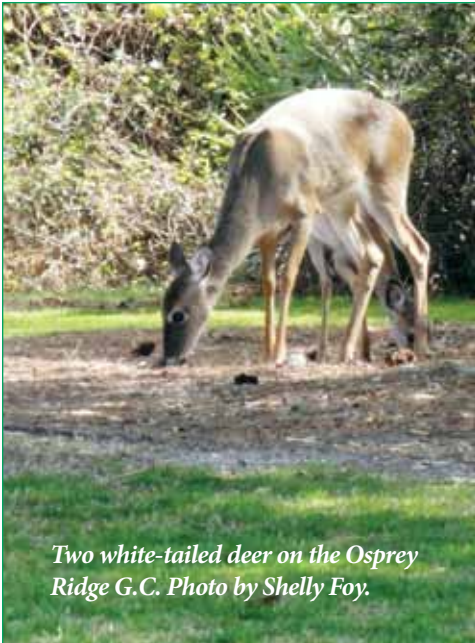
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Two white-tailed deer on the Osprey Ridge G.C. Photo by Shelly Foy.

they can cause a little damage on the greens, but nothing we can't handle," he said.

Two days on the Disney golf courses do not seem like two days at a major tourist attraction. On the Lake Buena Vista Course there are holes where you can see townhouses, cars, buses, and even parts of Downtown Disney, but there is an overwhelming sense of quiet on most of the holes on all five courses.

The next time you make the trip, do yourself a favor and don't miss the golf courses. Take the time to notice the smiles on the faces of the staff, the abundance of wildlife on every hole, and don't forget to breathe deeply and take it all in on those holes where you feel you are the only person out there.



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Helping Others Get Into the Swing of Things

*By Bob
Randquist,
CGCS*

I began playing golf as a teenager and quickly fell in love with

the game. After nearly 40 years in the golf course management profession, I admit I am biased in my feelings about the game.

I believe there are few leisure activities that are as enjoyable as golf. Golf offers us the wonderful opportunity to appreciate nature's beauty while enjoying the camaraderie of others. Yet, national tracking data indicates the number of people playing golf is flattening. Certainly the challenging economy has had an impact. We know that leisure spending tends to be the first to go when the belt tightening begins.

Even before the economy soured, golfer participation showed signs of waning. For the past four years we have had more golf courses close than open. That means the loss of opportunities to play, the loss of

employment opportunities and the loss of open green spaces in our communities.

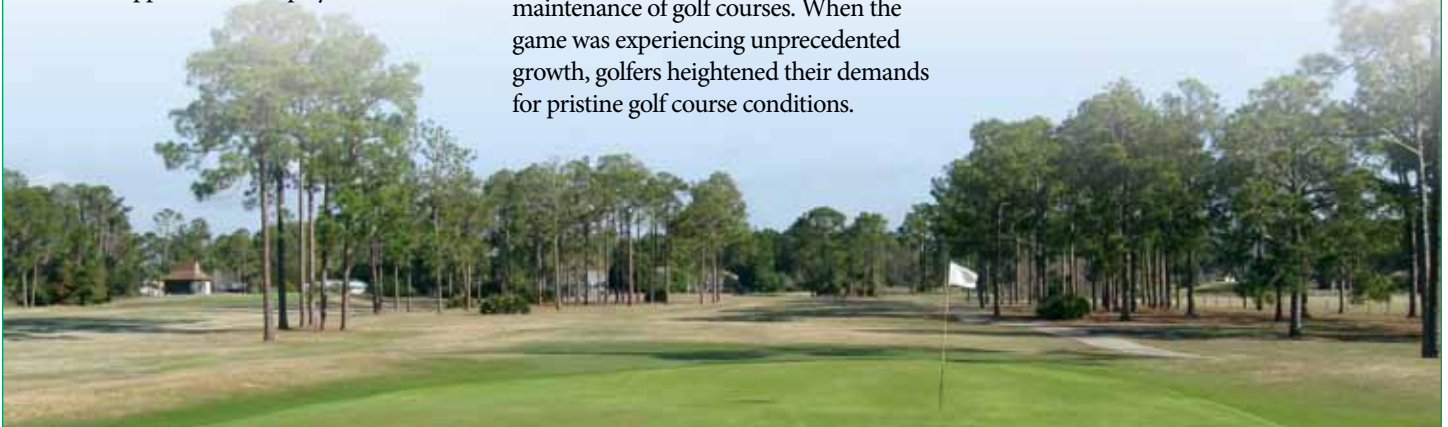
Some industry experts say the reduction in the number of golf courses is simply a market correction. My opinion is that we need to focus on getting more people to play this great game. Golf has so much to offer for people of all ages and backgrounds. It is one of the few activities that is truly accessible to all. Organized golf has responded with a number of programs aimed at increasing golfer participation and making the game more affordable. As president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, I am heartened by what the industry is doing to address its challenges.

But I believe the renaissance of the game can be driven by golfers as well. They are the ones who can introduce friends and family to the game. They are the ones who can work with golf facility leaders to adopt programs that not only attract new golfers, but retain them as repeat customers. Golfers can also help to make the game more affordable. A large share of golf facility expenses comes in the maintenance of golf courses. When the game was experiencing unprecedented growth, golfers heightened their demands for pristine golf course conditions.

With a strong cash flow, the industry reacted by meeting those demands. The consequence came in the higher costs that came with providing such conditions. Increased expenses for labor, fertilizer, pesticide, water, maintenance equipment, etc., continue to drive up the cost of the game. As a result, the game has become too expensive for some people.

What does this mean for golf? It means that consumer demand and professional desires for perfect golf conditions have diminished the core appeal of the game. Golf is a visual sport, offering some of the most stimulating environments to the human eye. But the "look" or the aesthetics of the sport should not mask that the most important aspect of the golf course is how it plays, not how it looks.

Part of the beauty of the game has been that golfers must develop the skills and mental toughness to play golf shots from a variety of lies, both good and bad. I think by returning some of our focus back to providing economically realistic playing conditions, we can make golf more accessible and enjoyable for everyone.



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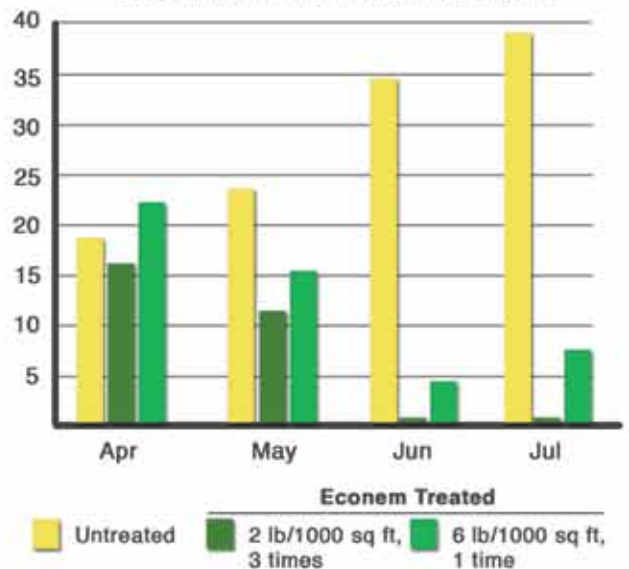
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**GREEN SIDE UP
BY JOEL JACKSON**

I can't help continuing the seasonal theme. Spring has sprung and the new growing season is upon us and hopefully any winter woes are on the mend. We're in that time of renewal that rubs off

on us too when the greening up of the turf and the buds and blooms offer the hope of new life, new beginnings.

We hope that the economy is regenerating. Many prognosticators in business, and especially golf, keep saying the face of golf is changing – or needs to change – to survive, much less grow. I'm not a pessimist by nature, so I hold out for modest growth in the game as folks retool and re-evaluate their approaches to the business of the game and individual golf course operations.

There is an adage that "Success comes when preparation meets opportunity!"

Preparation and opportunity are things we have some control over. Preparation for sure is something you can control by your daily choices,

planning and goal setting. Opportunities are less directly controlled by a person, but can be enhanced by one's behavior and approach to their careers and situations.

Five points by Wendy Enelow, author of *Expert Resumes for Military-to-Civilian Transitions* and *Executive Resume Toolkit*.

- Moving your career forward is your responsibility
 - Dedicate yourself to lifelong learning
 - Stay visible
 - Maintain an active responsive network
 - Dedicate yourself to your career, and understand that it will require your active participation – forever
- That last line is the clincher. All chapters are seeing a break between the generations especially in terms of participation at meetings and

but also in volunteerism in general. It is getting harder and harder to get folks to step up and serve on the local boards. Now, more than ever, our associations need to be strong in the face of growing regulations and changes in the golf industry.

Older and younger superintendents need to bridge any widening gaps to understand the history and value of camaraderie of one generation and the needs and perceptions of the other. Younger and newer is not always better and older and traditional is not always wiser. A combination of both is what's practical and necessary to be the most effective for each individual and the profession.

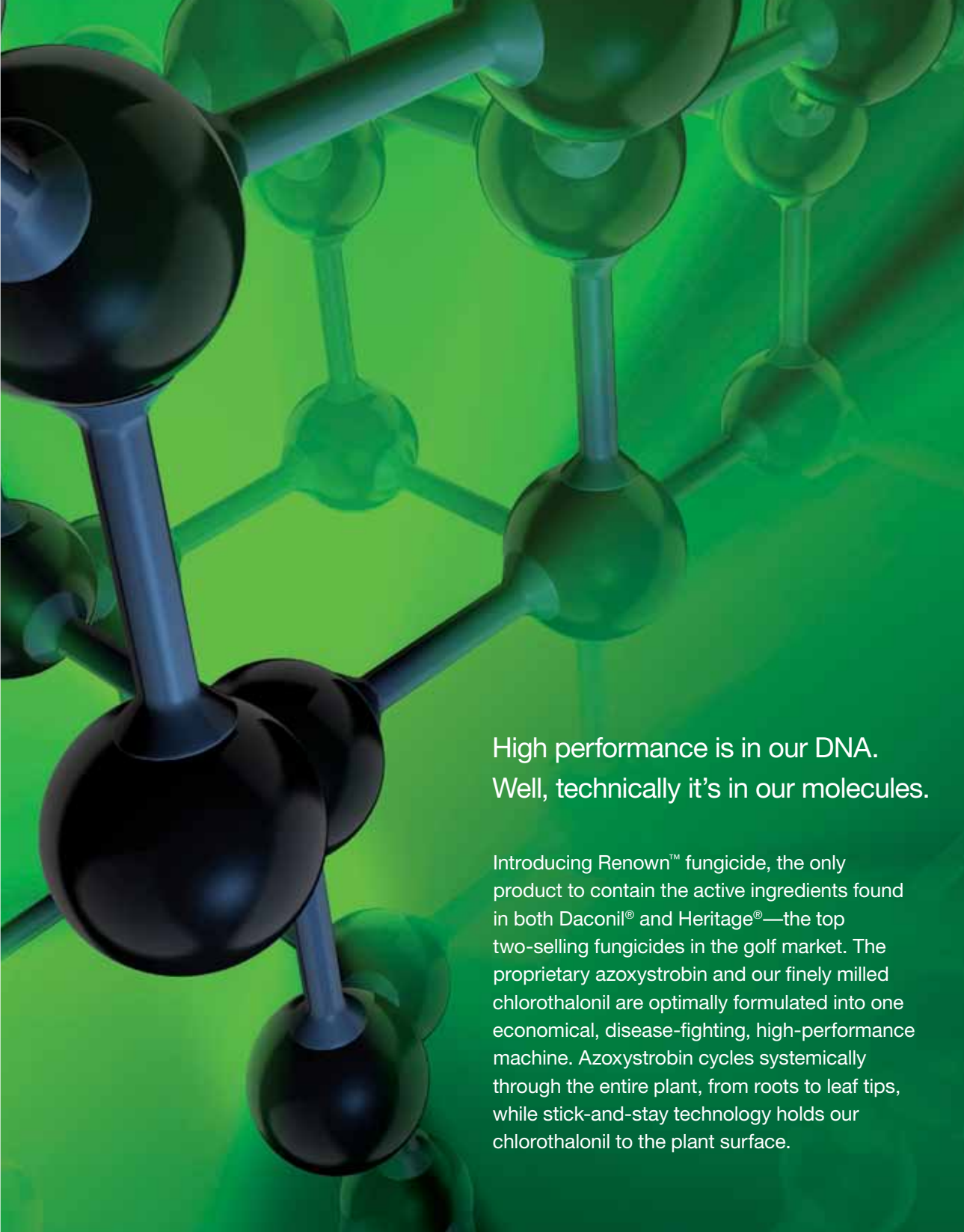


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