

February 2005

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COURSE NEWS

Serving the Business of Golf Course Management

Industry UPDATE

What to expect in '05

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Fertilization

Bunker management

Course champions

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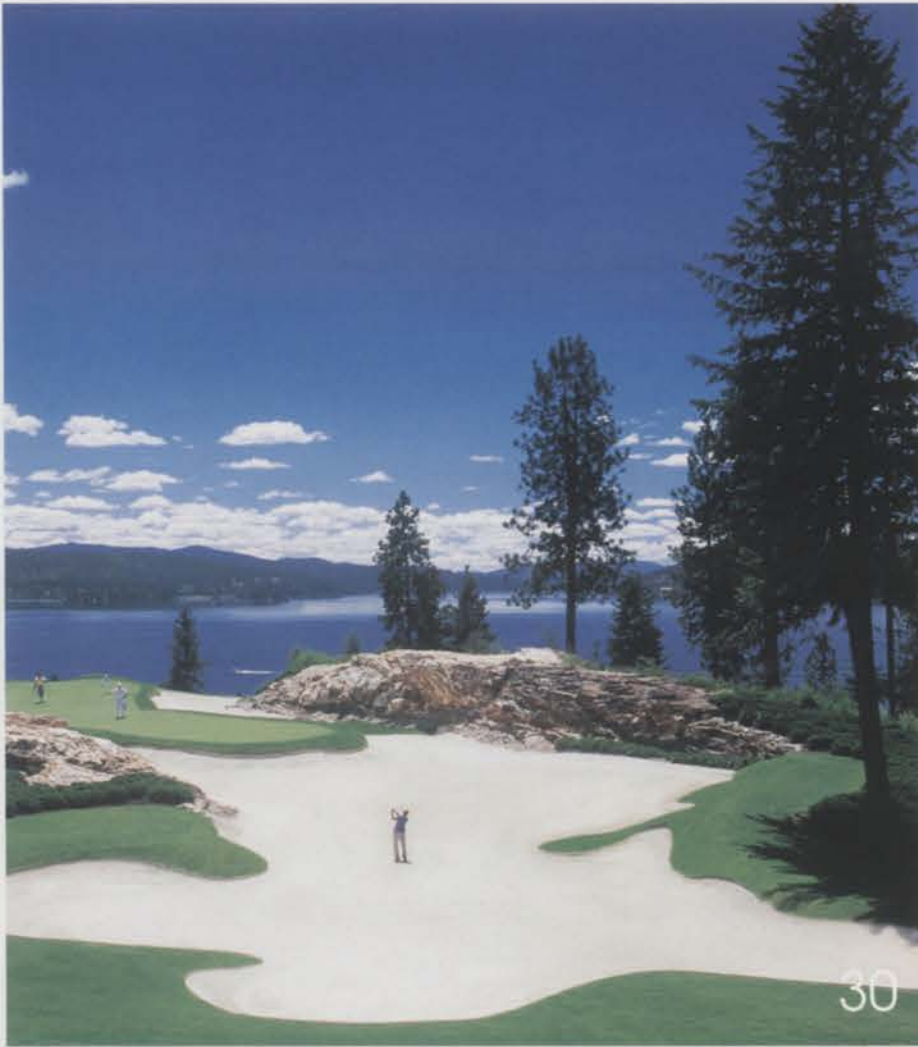
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Industry UPDATE

What to expect in '05

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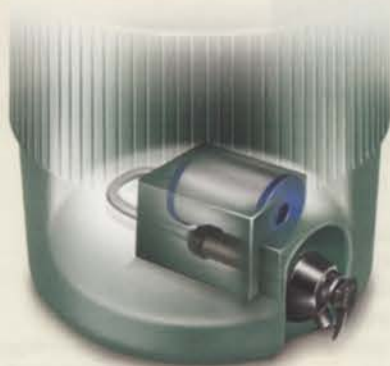
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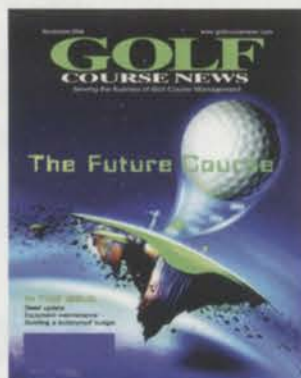
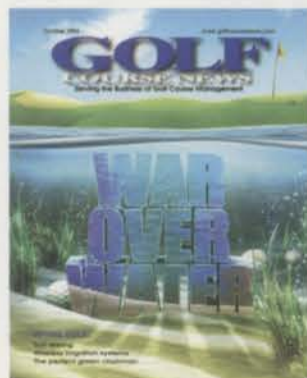
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Clarification

The covers of the October and November issues were illustrated by Ryan Etter Illustration. These credits were inadvertently omitted in the two issues.

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John Walsh
Editor

Targeting workers

Labor is critical for the success of a golf course, and it's consistently one of the top concerns for golf course superintendents. Hiring maintenance workers is a challenging aspect of the superintendent's job, and it becomes more difficult when the labor pool is small or shrinking.

It's becoming even more difficult to hire quality workers because there's more supply (golf courses) in the market, fewer people who want to do golf course maintenance work and competition with other industries such as fast food and retail.

Labor isn't only an issue for superintendents at the local level, it's an industrywide concern, which is why industry associations should do something about it.

One solution for superintendents to fill vacancies on their maintenance staffs is to hire foreign workers. Many use the federal H2B program to hire workers that come from Mexico and Central America. Superintendents like these workers because they're punctual, dependable and work hard. These workers like their jobs in America because they pay more than most of the jobs they can get in their home countries. These foreign workers are filling a need in the marketplace that isn't being met by Americans.

However, employing foreign workers has its disadvantages. Many of these workers don't speak English, or if they do, they speak it poorly. And superintendents know how important communication is with their staffs to ensure jobs are done correctly, efficiently and in a timely manner.

Another disadvantage is availability. The federal government puts a limit on the number of H2B workers – 66,000 a year – that can come into the country yearly. Steve Mona, c.e.o. of the Golf Course Superintendents Association, said some GCSAA members in the North have tried to hire H2B workers, but there are none left because they've been hired already, mainly because courses in the South prepare for their season earlier than those in the North.

So if superintendents are in need of workers and can't get any more foreign ones, where are they going to turn? Well, they can look right here in America.

The national unemployment rate has been steady the past few quarters and is at 5.5 percent currently, but there are still many Americans without jobs. Newspapers throughout the country list hun-

dreds of jobs weekly, so it's frustrating to see the number of people out of work.

But for some of those unemployed workers, it's their own fault because they're too lazy or they're too picky about the jobs they want. Granted, they might not be qualified for some.

There are too many people who think they should be working in an office pushing paper making \$100,000 a year. Too many Americans are unwilling to do physical labor for a living. It seems to be a thing of the past for many.

Golf course maintenance work isn't easy. The job entails working outdoors, being on your feet most of the day and getting dirty. On the other hand, some of it, such as cutting grass on riding mowers, isn't difficult. While it might not be the most glamorous job, it's good, honest, available work that requires teamwork. It's a job to be proud of.

Maybe there aren't many people who think about working on golf courses. But if American workers aren't coming to superintendents for work, superintendents and the golf industry need to go to American workers. Just like the National Golf Course Owners Association, the Golf Course Builders Association of America and the PGA are trying to encourage more people to play golf, the GCSAA, GCBA and NGCOA should campaign and encourage more people – young and old – to work on golf courses. Age isn't an issue, but benefits that can be provided might be.

A public relations campaign is needed to communicate the benefits of this work, such as being on a golf course, working for educated people, learning a craft or trade and possibly having a career in the industry.

Superintendents shouldn't stop hiring foreign workers. In fact, the H2B program could expand, and some are lobbying for that. But the industry should think about ways to send messages to those American workers looking for jobs that the golf course maintenance industry is a beneficial place to work.

It's time associations spent money to encourage people to work on golf courses. Some Americans will become better workers, and golf courses might become a little easier to maintain. GCN

GOLF COURSE NEWS

Serving the Business of Golf Course Management

Vol. 17 No. 2

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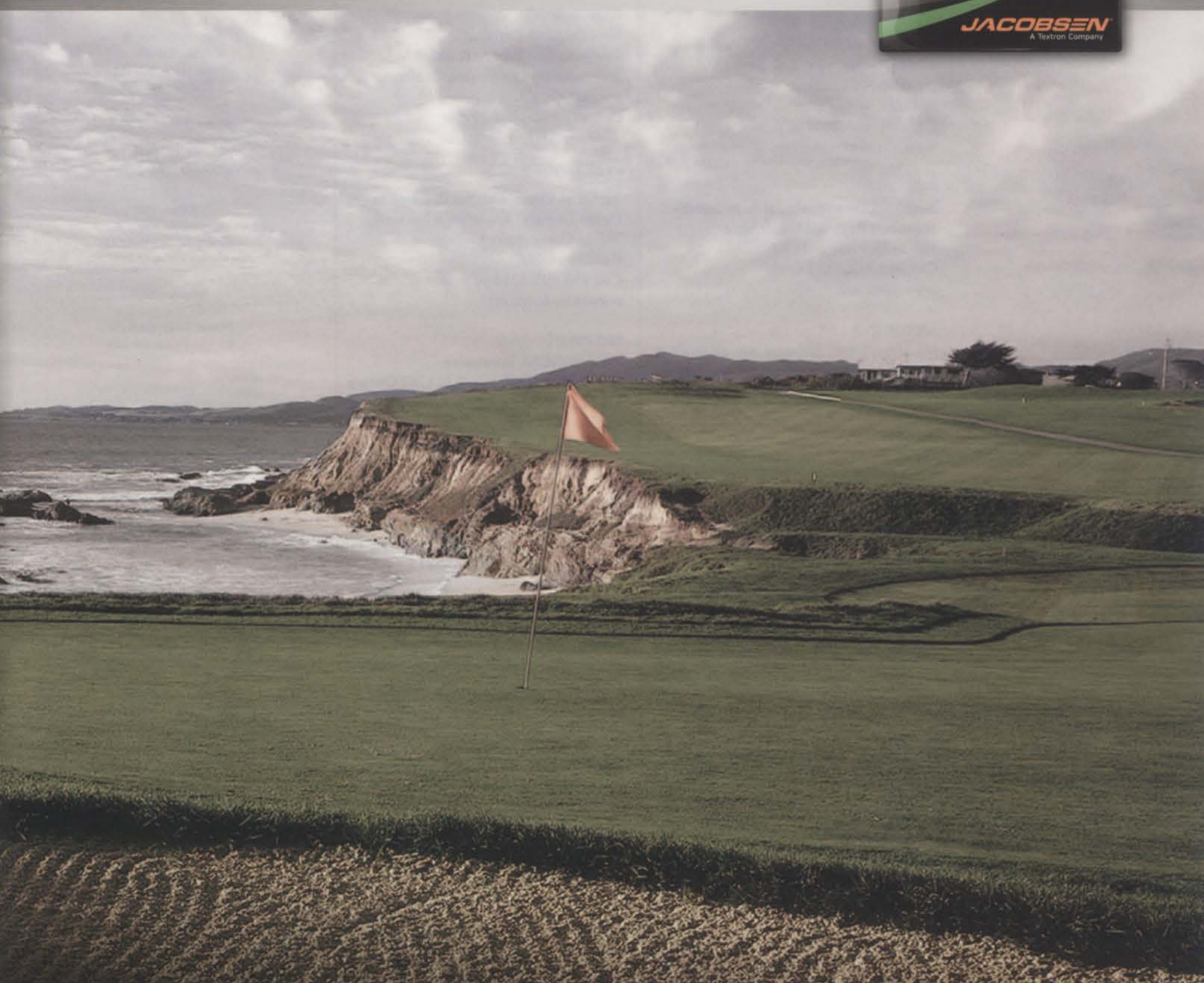
Golf Course News is published eight times per year by GIE Media, Inc., which also publishes: *Lawn & Landscape, Commercial Dealer, Interior Business, Snow Business, Pest Control Technology and Recycling Today* magazines. GIE Media is a leader in custom publishing, book publishing, database marketing, conferences and special events.

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Calendar of Events

Feb. 15-18

The First Tee 7th Annual Meeting
World Golf Village
St. Augustine, Fla.
Call 904-940-4300 or visit
www.thefirsttee.org.

Feb. 22

Spray Technicians Seminar
Berkeley Hills Country Club
Duluth, Ga.
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Feb. 27 - March 2

**Western Canada Turfgrass Association
42nd Conference and Show**
Penticton (B.C.) Trade
& Convention Centre
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Feb. 28

**New York State Turfgrass Association's
Southeast Regional Conference**
Hilton Tarrytown (N.Y.)
Call 800-873-8873 or visit
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March 2-3

**Michigan Green Industry Association's
17th Annual Trade Show & Convention**
Novi (Mich.) Expo Center
Call 800-354-6352 or visit
www.landscape.org.

March 2-4

Ohio State Golf Turf Spring Tee-off
Holiday Inn on the Lane
Columbus, Ohio
Call 740-452-4541 or visit
www.ohioturfgrass.org.

**March 3**

**Western Pennsylvania Turf
Conference and Trade Show**
Greater Pittsburgh ExpoMart
& Radisson Hotel
Monroeville, Pa.
Call 814-238-2402 or visit
www.paturf.org.

March 7

**New York State Turfgrass Association's
Western Regional Conference**
Buffalo/Niagra Marriott
Amherst, N.Y.
Call 800-873-8873 or visit
www.nysta.org.

March 8-10

**New England Regional
Turfgrass Conference & Show**
Rhode Island Convention Center
Providence, R.I.
Call 401-848-0004 or visit
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March 9

**Turfgrass Council of North Carolina
Demo Day and Knowledge Network**
Wayne Community College
Goldsboro, N.C.
Call 910-695-1333 or visit
www.ncturfgrass.org.

March 21

**Georgia GCSA Innovative
Superintendent Seminar & Golf Outing**
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March 23

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Golf Course News is a member of:
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Industry news

Turf-Seed plans to unveil seashore paspalum variety

Hubbard, Ore. – This spring, Turf-Seed is planning to release Sea Spray, a commercially available seeded variety of seashore paspalum. Seashore paspalum, which has high tolerance to heat and salt, has been seen as a viable alternative to Bermudagrass, but time and money expenses to sprig and establish the variety has prohibited superintendents from selecting it for their golf courses. The ability to seed with Sea Spray is expected to make seashore paspalum more affordable and easier and quicker to establish.

“The seed grows much faster than sprigs,” says Gordon Zielinski, c.e.o. of Turf-Seed. “Trials held at the University of Hawaii show that Sea Spray gained 95-percent soil coverage after about five weeks – faster than any other variety studied.”

Once it's established, Sea Spray adapts to a variety of soil types and water-supply sources, including straight sea water. This means superintendents and professional turfgrass managers can irrigate Sea Spray with pure sea water and achieve water savings.

“If a golf course is lucky enough to have ocean water available, they can greatly lower their irrigation costs by pumping directly from the ocean,” Zielinski says.

The recommended seeding rate for Sea Spray is one pound per 1,000 square feet. Its dual root system of rhizomes and stolons, along with its high turf density and quick repair ability, make it well suited for golf course greens, tees and fairways.

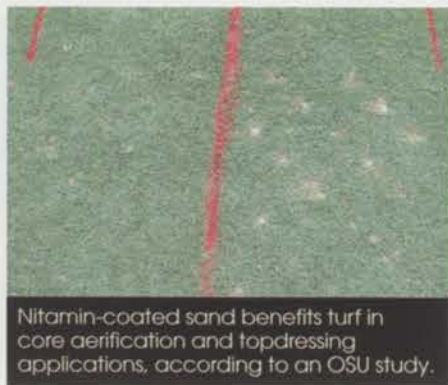
Ohio State tests Nitamin

Columbus, Ohio – Georgia-Pacific and its Nitamin-coated sand distributor, Fairmount Minerals, released results of two Ohio State University turf studies. The OSU studies demonstrate the benefits of Nitamin-coated sand in core aeration and topdressing applications compared with traditional sand. The research results show quicker turf recov-

ery in core aeration applications and improved turf color and density in topdressing applications with Nitamin.

Nitamin is a patent-pending fertilizer that's effective for turf establishment, topdressing, divot repair and high-traffic areas. Because of its extended nitrogen release profile, Nitamin isn't required for every topdressing application. The patented Steady-Delivery technology ensures a steady supply of nitrogen is released within the soil, keeping turf green and healthy for months with fewer applications and low risk of turf burn.

“We wanted to determine if backfilling coring holes with Nitamin versus traditional sand would enhance core hole recovery,” says Dr. Karl Danneberger, professor at The Ohio State University's turfgrass science department. “Our experiments showed that after 11 days, the Nitamin-treated areas showed about two holes visible per plot compared with about 10 holes per plot on the traditional sand-treated areas.”



Nitamin-coated sand benefits turf in core aeration and topdressing applications, according to an OSU study.

The core aeration study was initiated on a three-year-old L93 bentgrass fairway established on native soil and mowed at 0.5 inches. On Aug. 10, 2004, plant growth regulator treatments were applied to the turf at different rates. Three days later, the OSU research team set up 3-foot-by-6-foot plots in a random block design and aerified them with 5/8-inch tines. After aeration, the team removed cores and allowed the plot area to settle and dry for three days. Then the core holes were filled with Nitamin or traditional sand.

To evaluate the effectiveness of using Nitamin in topdressing applications, the OSU team compared it with traditional sand at different rates and judged the results based on color and density.

“We discovered that applying Nitamin at a rate of 1.5 pounds per 30 square feet provided better color and density than traditional sand applied at the same rate,” Danneberger says. “The

lower rate of Nitamin applied at 0.75 pounds per 30 square feet also performed comparatively well.”

The topdressing study was conducted on creeping bentgrass turf established on a U.S. Golf Association-specified green. The constructed root zone was maintained at 0.125 inches. The treatments were replicated three times in 6-foot-by-5-foot plots, which were designed randomly.

Appropriations bill includes funding turfgrass research

Washington - President Bush signed into law Consolidated Appropriations bill H.R. 4818, funding of fiscal year 2005, for several federal agencies, including the USDA – Agricultural Research Service. In the bill, new funding for turfgrass research (\$275,000) was included at two new locations. The new funding was added as a result of efforts by the turfgrass industry to inform Congress of its research needs and the importance of the National Turfgrass Research Initiative. More information on the National Turfgrass Research Initiative can be found at www.turf-research.org. Turfgrass research now is funded within USDA-ARS at \$760,613.

The breakdown of the funding is:

- \$485,613 – restored funding for the current research position at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington. It was about \$490,000. All programs were cut by 0.8 percent;
- \$150,000 – new funding for turfgrass research at the Beaver, West Va., facility;
- \$125,000 – new funding for turfgrass research at the Logan, Utah, facility.

Because of last-minute congressional negotiations to resolve differences between House and Senate versions of the bill, the funding for West Virginia and Utah turf research positions was reduced by half of what was in the original bill.

Pickseed buys Seed Research of Oregon

Lindsay, Ont. - Pickseed Cos. Group

purchased the Seed Research of Oregon, which was owned by Land O'Lakes. Additionally, Land O'Lakes purchased Seeds Ohio, a regional seed distributor based in West Jefferson, Ohio, that was owned by Pickseed. The transactions closed Dec. 31, 2004.

SRO will operate as an independent business unit of Pickseed in its Corvallis, Ore.-based facility under the direction of the current management team. SRO will continue its initiatives in research, technical support, quality assurance and customer service, including the supply of turf and forage grass seed to Land O'Lakes.

"The acquisition of Seed Research of Oregon represents significant market-share expansion for Pickseed within the United States and international markets," says Robert Clark, president and

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chief executive officer of Pickseed.

Dave Seehusen, vice president of the seed division for Land O'Lakes, says SRO will become a core asset of Pickseed and a key supplier of competitive turfgrass products to Land O'Lakes', Seed Solutions' and Croplan Genetics' marketing programs.

The Pickseed Cos. Group is comprised of Pickseed Canada, Pickseed West, Turf-One and Mapleseed. It has been operating since 1947 and is privately held.

Land O'Lakes is a national farmer-owned food and agricultural cooperative with annual sales exceeding \$6 billion.

Cleary awards two scholarships

Somerset, N.J. – At the recent 15th Annual Turfgrass Awards Banquet, two Rutgers Professional Golf Course Management School students each received a \$1,000 scholarship from Cleary Chemical Corp.

Timothy Connolly of Gaithersburg, Md., was awarded the Dr. Paul Sartoretto Memorial Scholarship, and James Schmid of Goshen, N.Y., received the Cleary Chemical Corporation Academic Scholarship.

The recipients, both in their second year at the Professional Golf Turf Management School, were selected by a committee of Rutgers University turf faculty. The students were chosen based on their strong academic performance and commitment to a career in golf turfgrass management.

The scholarships, presented at the banquet by Dr. Karen Plumley, director of research for Cleary Chemical, have existed for two years. The Dr. Paul Sartoretto Memorial Scholarship was established in honor of Sartoretto, an employee of Cleary Chemical for 50 years. He served as the technical director of the company's turf and ornamental products business. Sartoretto is recognized for pioneering



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several significant industry contributions, including the technology of fungicide tank mixing.

Association news

OTF offers largest, diverse curriculum

Columbus, Ohio – More than 3,800 turfgrass professionals participated in the 38th Ohio Turfgrass Conference and Show, which was conducted at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, Dec. 7 through 10, 2004. Almost 2,900 attendees visited with 225 suppliers of turfgrass products and services in more than 530 booths.



“A lot of business was written on the show floor,” show manager Kevin Thompson says. “Many exhibitors have commented about the number of decision-makers visiting the trade show and the quality and number of new prospective customers they met.”

Doug MacLean, general manager of the Columbus Blue Jackets gave a welcome presentation. The event officially opened with a keynote speech from Mike Veeck, part owner of five professional baseball teams, senior v.p. of the Detroit Tigers, an ad agency executive and a nationally recognized speaker.

The educational sessions featured turfgrass management experts from Iowa State University, Penn State, University of Georgia, University of Kentucky, Michigan State and the Sports Turf Research Institute in the United Kingdom, along with several professionals representing athletic facilities and golf courses throughout the country. More than 30 hours of pesticide recertification training and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and Sports Turf Managers Association credits were available during more than 100 hours of education, making it the largest and most diverse curriculum that OTF has offered.

A highlight of the event included the OTF annual awards banquet. Almost \$25,000 was awarded in scholarships to well-deserving turfgrass management students from schools throughout Ohio. Additionally, OTF president George

Furrer presented a symbolic check for \$173,800 to Dr. Bobby Moser, dean of the College of Agriculture at The Ohio State University, representing research grants to the university and student scholarship awards.

Lawsuit filed against phosphorus ban

Washington - Plaintiffs including RISE and CropLife America filed suit Dec. 15, 2004 against the City of Madison and Dane County, Wis., demanding an ordinance banning the display, sale or use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus be overturned. The suit states the ban violates state and federal preemption laws and, therefore, is illegal. This litigation marks the first time RISE has stepped into the courtroom as a plaintiff to defend the rights of industry members.



“The city of Madison and Dane County have overstepped their boundaries,” says Allen James, president of RISE. “If we allow these bans to be instituted, we are completely ignoring preemption and what it stands for. Our products have been tested, retested, and registered by the federal and state governments for safety. As the industry representative, it is up to us to stand up for our companies.”

These ordinances would put undue burden on lawn-care and landscape companies, opponents argue. Because the county's ban differs from Madison's, companies would be expected to know the specifics of each ordinance and in which jurisdiction their customer resides. State preemption, as exists in Wisconsin, prevents these local, confusing ordinances. The bans were scheduled to take affect Jan. 1.

Proponents of the ordinance believe the reduced use of inorganic specialty fertilizers containing phosphorus in their community will help eliminate unwanted algae blooms in local lakes. While the plaintiffs agree excess phosphorus contributes to the growth of noxious algae blooms in water, the lawsuit alludes to the bigger problem – the existence of Eurasian Water Milfoil, which is an invasive weed that can reproduce by fragmentation in Dane County lakes.

GCSAA plans relief effort

Lawrence, Kan. – The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America will make a donation to those affected by the devastating storms in Florida this past fall and the victims of the Southeast Asia tsunami. The association will present a check to officials while in Orlando for the GCSAA education conference and the Golf Industry Show. Additionally, the association will collect donations in the show's registration center during the week of conference and show.

The GCSAA will match those contributions and then forward the funds to the U.S. Golf Tsunami Relief Fund. This is a collaborative effort of the major golf associations to address the needs of the regions affected by the natural disaster.



Lawn tractor delivers gift

Raleigh, N.C. - A \$56,065 John Deere LT 150 lawn tractor, which normally retails at about \$2,400, served as the sole prize in a raffle staged by golf course superintendent Michael Shoun's colleagues in the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association to pay for surgery that would help his 2-year-old son, Parker, hear. The cost of surgery, therapy and specialized schooling as Parker learns to speak will cost between \$60,000 and \$80,000. Parker had cochlear implant surgery in mid-2004, and his doctors and parents are encouraged by early results.



Superintendent Michael Shoun was given a \$56,000 check to help his son.

Members of the Triangle Turfgrass Association in and around Raleigh, N.C., campaigned for 12 months on behalf of the Shoun family. They received responses from golf course superintendents and industry members throughout the country. The campaign also received generous support from the membership of Raleigh Country Club, where Shoun has worked for seven years.

The \$56,065 figure is likely to become larger after Ed Wheeler's name was drawn as the winner of the raffle immediately after the check presentation. Wheeler, who works with Harrell's, immediately donated the prize back to the fundraising campaign.

Outgoing Triangle TA president, Steve Dorer, CGCS, says the success of the fundraising campaign illustrates the tight-knit nature of the golf course maintenance business.

Superintendents recognized for relations work

Lawrence, Kan. – Four GCSAA members were recognized with 2004 Excellence in Government Relations Awards for their government relations work in the areas of advocacy and compliance.

The awards were presented Feb. 11 during the general session of the GCSAA education conference and inaugural Golf Industry Show in Orlando.

Craig A. Hoffman, golf course superintendent at The Rock Golf Course on Drummond Island, Mich.; Stephen A. Kealy, CGCS, at Glendale Country Club in Bellevue, Wash.; Kenneth N. Lallier, CGCS, at The Quechee Club in Hartford, Vt.; and Sean J. Kjemhus, golf course superintendent at Stewart Creek Golf and Country Club in Canmore, Alberta, Canada were honored.

EGR Award nominees were judged on how their efforts best served the interests of the golf course superintendent profession and the golf course management industry. Members of the government advocacy and compliance task group conducted the award selection.

Course news

Teton Lakes facility to expand course

Rexburg, Idaho – Phelps Golf Design

plans to give the operators of Teton Lakes Golf Course something new and different. Phelps associate designer Kevin Atkinson is developing a preliminary proposal for a links-style nine-hole course to complement the existing parkland and lakeside layouts at the 18-hole municipal facility co-owned by the City of Rexburg and Madison County.

The original nine holes opened in 1978 and the second in 1984, according to Duffy McFarland, director of golf. Two floods between those opening dates resulted in the basic architectural differences between the front and back nine.

"The developers want a distinct third nine and asked for a links setting on a relatively flat, 60-acre site," Atkinson says. "Generally, when you add holes to an existing layout, most people want all the holes to blend together. But here we have two existing nine-hole courses that are already quite different from one another. The developers want to embrace that difference by building a third nine that varies from the existing holes."

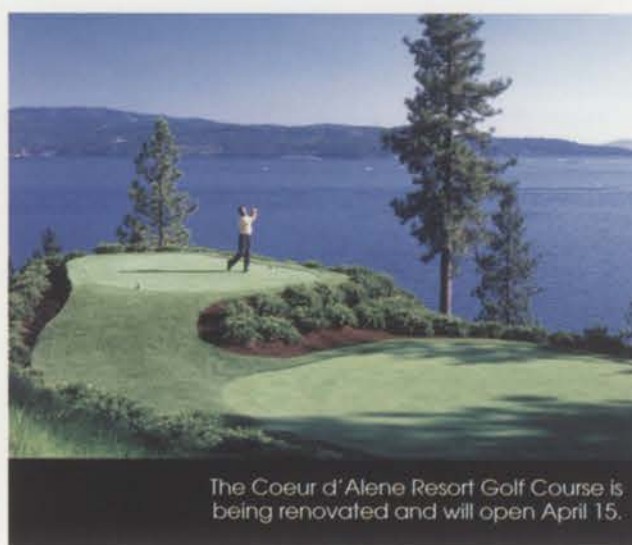
The addition is in the concept and master-planning stage. Atkinson has developed preliminary routing plans and budget numbers that he submitted to municipal officials. Construction could start in the spring, although no specific date has been determined.

Greens fees at the existing course are \$16. One of the primary goals is to keep the facility affordable. One way to do that is by using local materials. For example, five miles from the course are natural sand dunes that motorcross drivers from throughout the country travel thousands of miles to enjoy.

Idaho Resort upgrades course

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho – The Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Course is in the midst of the second phase of a multi-million dollar makeover that began in 2002. Improvements include adding new trees to the 14th hole, new green surrounds on the 16th hole, and new contouring and sod on the third, fourth and sixth holes. The irrigating systems and landscaping also will be improved.

The biggest project will be a completely new green complex on the fourth hole. The new green will feature a subair system to air condition the turf in the hot weather during the summer and heat it on cool mornings in the spring and fall.



The Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Course is being renovated and will open April 15.

Designed by Scott Miller, the project is being implemented by Ridgetop with direction by superintendent Kevin Hicks. Because of the new construction, the course is closed and won't reopen until April 15.

The par-71 6,804-yard course has two full-time maintenance staff per hole, and they do all their work at night. The landscaping includes more than 1,500 wildflowers, 25,000 junipers and 30,000 red geraniums.

Hagadone Hospitality Co. owns the resort.

Bandon Trails to open in June

Bandon, Ore. – The latest addition to the Bandon Dunes Golf Resort, Bandon Trails, is scheduled to open in June. The third course of the resort spreads throughout the southeastern part of the property. Bandon Trails, which was designed by Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw, was in the final phase of construction – overseen by KemperSports Development – in December.

Paris Landing gets Audubon nod

Buchanan, Tenn. – Paris Landing Golf Course achieved a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary designation from Audubon International by demonstrating and maintaining a high degree of environmental quality. Paris Landing successfully met high Audubon standards in areas such as environmental planning, wildlife and habitat management, chemical use reductions, water conservation and water quality management.

Paris Landing is the fourth course in Tennessee and only the third park-affili-

AUDUBON
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ated golf course in the nation to receive this honor from Audubon International.

The other state park affiliated courses are the Bethpage (N.Y.) Black, Green and Red courses. Other Audubon-certified courses in Tennessee are The Legacy in Springfield, President's Reserve at Hermitage Golf Course in Old Hickory and the Tournament Players Club at Southwind in Memphis.

Led by Dwayne Hicks, golf course superintendent, and Jane Burkhart, golf shop assistant, Paris Landing made a range of investments and operational changes to achieve Audubon certification. Investments include natural habitat enhancements and the addition of feeders that increased populations of wild turkeys and other animals around the course. Changes in storage and application of chemicals, in addition to adjustments for cart wash procedures, also are under way.

USGA awards \$15,000 to First Tee of San Antonio

San Antonio – More than 800 kids in the San Antonio area will continue to learn the game of golf and its inherent values thanks to a \$15,000 grant from the United States Golf Association. The program exposes disadvantaged youths to golf and the life-enhancing values that are associated with the game.

The First Tee of San Antonio's main objective is to make the sport of golf and related life skills accessible for San Antonio youth. The program focuses on teaching children between the ages of 5 and 17 the game of golf while exposing them to the core values and etiquette inherent in the game, which also can be valuable skills in everyday life.

The USGA grant will help The First Tee of San Antonio remain a free program for all participants. The grant is part of an overall financial commitment of \$11 million to The First Tee home office and its local chapters.



Kiva Dunes breaks ground on expansion

Gulf Shores-Orange Beach, Ala. – Kiva Dunes Golf & Beach Club, which is part of the Gulf Shores Golf Association, is expanding and has broken ground on The Village at Kiva Dunes.

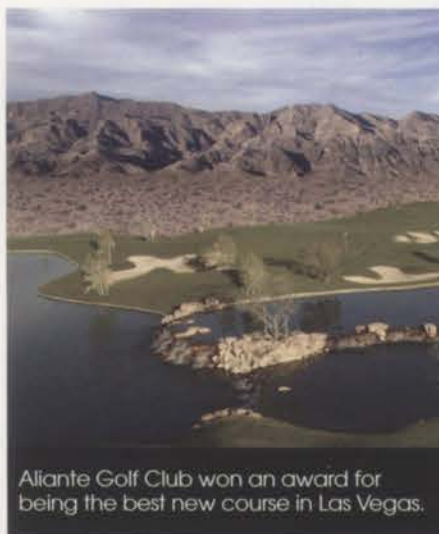
Kiva Dunes is a multi-amenity resort-residential community that offers private condominiums and rental lodging opportunities, including the Kiva Lodge Clubhouse and Condominium. It features Kiva Dunes Golf Club, a Jerry Pate-designed golf course that is rated among the top 100 courses in the United States.

The units at The Village are designed with golf groups in mind. Plans call for some of the four-bedroom units to comfortably accommodate as many as eight golfers. This phase of Kiva's development includes 30 additional two-, three- or four-bedroom luxury condominiums in two buildings located along the lake that runs adjacent to the 18th hole at Kiva Dunes.

Kiva Dunes offers a full-service clubhouse, meeting facilities, fitness area, three swimming pools, 3,000 feet of private gulf beach and on-site rental management of luxurious condominiums and beach homes. The master plan also calls for a tennis center and expanded facilities for meetings, conventions and corporate retreats.

Aliante Golf Club earns award

Las Vegas – Aliante Golf Club earned two Fairway Awards for being the best new course in Las Vegas. Aliante won the award in Vegas Golfer magazine's reader poll category and was the magazine's staff pick.



Aliante Golf Club won an award for being the best new course in Las Vegas.

Photo: Aliante Golf Club

The 18-hole, par-72 course, which was designed by Gary Panks Associates, opened to public play Dec. 5, 2003. The course, which stretches 7,000 yards from the back tees, includes a practice facility that features a driving range, putting green, chipping green and practice bunker. OB Sports Golf Management manages the Aliante Golf Club.

Legacy receives tourism award

Las Vegas – Lorraine Hunt, the lieutenant governor of Nevada, awarded The Legacy Golf Club a Tourism Development Award at the annual governor's conference on tourism in December. The Legacy was one of 105 businesses to receive the award throughout the state for opening or adding new facilities to attract visitors and enhance the state tourism economy during 2004.

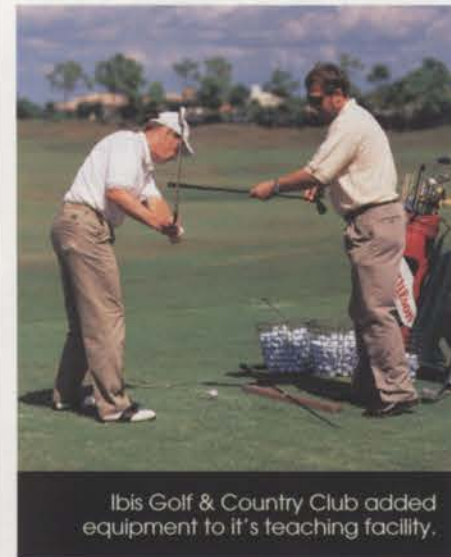
The Legacy Golf Club, which is managed by OB Sports Golf Management, underwent an exterior renovation that included a fresh coat of paint, patio refurbishment and other cosmetic upgrades to improve the club.

The course stretches 7,233 yards from the back tees.



Florida club adds practice station

West Palm Beach, Fla. – Martin Hall, the director of golf instruction at the Ibis Golf & Country Club, added equipment to the club's teaching facility. The most efficient golf swing attainable perfect pro-



Ibis Golf & Country Club added equipment to its teaching facility.

Photo: Ibis Golf & Country Club

active equipment features 15 separate teaching stations that target almost every aspect of a student's golf swing. The MEGSA PPE ensures students use the same address position every time so they can work on their consistency. The 15 teaching stations are: antislidewall, rear posture board, width producer, right knee stabilizer, over/under station, take away perfecter, preset wall, hand plane bar, insider, plane-o-matic, head stabilizer, antilift pole, finish perfecter, resistance cord and post impact bar.

Additionally, custom-built, high-end residential homes continue to be built near the golf course.

Supplier news

Agrotain International, a supplier of stabilized nitrogen products, commissioned a new series of paintings called Artistry of Golf that pays tribute to the hard work and dedication of golf course superintendents. The first painting in the annual series, Crowds Have No Place Here, showcases the sixth hole at Crooked Stick Golf Club in Carmel, Ind., often referred to by golf course architect Pete Dye as his first-born. The commissioned work was unveiled at the 2005 Golf Industry Show, where golf course superintendents entered a contest to win one of 50 signed and numbered limited-edition prints that are suitable for framing. The grand-prize winner was to receive the original framed oil painting. Superintendents who visited the company's booth and took the Stabilized Nitrogen Challenge received a commemorative poster featuring the artwork. The painting is the work of Sandy Cashman Schmieder, an artist who has been professionally serving the golf course maintenance industry for more than 15 years.

Avendra, a procurement services company, offers food-service operators programs that can help them address food-safety issues highlighted in a recently released report by the Food and Drug Administration. The FDA reported widespread risks of food-borne illness throughout various types of food service operations. Food-safety-related offerings include: food-safety reviews, which thoroughly assess a property's handling, preparation and serving of food; Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point program development, which helps properties comply with food-handling regulations; and Meet the Truck Audits, which ensure properties are get-

ting wholesome product, delivered in the right condition, from local suppliers.

BASF says its Insignia fungicide received registration from the New York Environmental Protection Agency. Insignia provides control of more than 15 major turfgrass diseases as well as suppression of dollar spot. The active ingredient in the product is pyraclostrobin, a member of the strobilurin chemistry class, which inhibits mitochondrial respiration.

Finalists in the agricultural proficiency competition for the National Future Farmers of America organization were honored at the National FFA Convention in Louisville, Ky. **Bayer Environmental Science** sponsored three of the 49 proficiency awards, including turfgrass management, landscape management and diversified horticulture. The sponsorship is an example of Bayer's commitment to the green industry, part of the company's Backed by Bayer initiative.

Dave Sylvester of **Bayer Environmental Science** presented Frank DeRosa, superintendent of Cedar Brook Country Club in Old Brookville, N.Y., with a Ford F-150 pick-up truck as part of the company's yearlong sweepstakes celebrating the 10-year anniversary of Merit insecticide. DeRosa was the contest's grand prize winner in the golf industry category.

John Deere introduced the One Source Credit Card with rates as low as 8.9 percent for all One Source soft-good purchases. Credit card holders can spread expenses with monthly payments equal to 10 percent of the amount financed, buy on demand, enjoy a flexible line of credit for multiple purchases and feel less pressured with the 8.9 percent APR. The new credit card is designed to smooth out the maintenance cycle. If the month is going well and there's money left in the bank, cardholders can pay ahead and skip upcoming payments or pay off the balance with no penalty. There's one consolidated bill a month.

Following two days of international competition, the 18th annual **John Deere World Championship** recently came to a close. Branxton (Australia) Golf Club became the first team outside North America to claim top honors. Contested Nov. 10 through 13, 2004 at Grayhawk Golf Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., the tournament featured 31 teams from six countries. Each

foursome represented a typical golf course management team – superintendent, owner, manager, golf professional – brought together to demonstrate a different set of skills on the golf course. The Branxton team of Aaron Ling, superintendent; Mark Hale, club president; Andrew Hayward, club professional; Gary Anderson, club manager; and Trent Bolton, John Deere representative, finished with a two-day modified scramble score of 103, edging a single stroke ahead the team from Hesperia (Calif.) Golf & Country Club.

LESCO expects its net sales for the year ending Dec. 31, 2004 to range from \$560 to \$563 million compared with net sales of \$523.5 million in 2003 – an increase of about 7 to 7.5 percent. The growth in net sales is from the company's service centers. The company also benefited from sales growth in its golf segment. It expects to release fourth quarter and 2004 results March 1.

Additionally, the company has retained Western Reserve Partners to explore the possibility of selling all or a portion of the company's distribution and manufacturing assets. The company believes harvesting the working and fixed capital of its supply chain will allow it to focus its resources on the expansion of its service-center network.

Players Turf International provided the synthetic turf for a 25,000-square-foot indoor practice area at the Golf Industry Show. The practice area featured several areas designed for improving a player's short game, including a practice putting green, an elevated chipping green and a driving range with a target green.

Pursell Technologies began production at its newest plant in Sylacauga, Ala., to meet the demand for the company's polymer coating technology for horticulture and professional turf market segments. The facility will allow the corporation to double its present production capability. This is the third manufacturing expansion for the company in recent years. The multi-million dollar expansion employs 15 people. There are plans to add 10 workers in the upcoming year.

To help the victims and survivors of the recent tsunami disaster, **SMT Golf** is donating one dollar from the sale of every company driver, iron, wedge and hybrid sold during the months of Janu-

ary and February directly to the Tsunami Relief Fund. These contributions will include all orders placed directly through the company or by any of their

distributors, including prebooks of any new equipment that the company introduced at the PGA Merchandise Show.

Syngenta is donating aid to help victims of the tsunami triggered by an earthquake in the Indian Ocean. Initially, Syngenta is donating \$100,000 to aid agencies in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Additionally, the company will provide 10,000 safety kits with gloves and masks for the Red Cross and specific insecticides to reduce the risk of dengue fever spreading in affected regions. The company also will work with regional and international agencies to contribute additional aid initiatives and programs

During 2005, **Tee-2-Green** will commemorate Penncross creeping bentgrass with a 50th anniversary celebration. The company started the celebration by producing a 50th anniversary compact disc, which was mailed to 15,000 industry professionals in the show issue of *Golf and Environment*, the superintendent's video magazine. The company also will showcase the creeping bentgrass in a series of advertisements in industry trade publications.

Textron will donate as much as \$750,000 to assist with tsunami relief efforts, including an initial contribution of \$250,000 to the American Red Cross International Response Fund's tsunami relief efforts and a \$250,000 grant for a dollar-for-dollar match of employee contributions to the organization.

Turf Diagnostics and Design, a soil testing and consulting company, moved from Olathe, Kan., to Linwood, Kan.

Personnel news

Brian Hardin was named golf course superintendent of Stone Eagle, a new private golf club development in Palm Desert, Calif. Hardin, who was the superintendent at The Palms in La Quinta, Calif., for the past six years, will oversee the current construction, agronomy and day-to-day maintenance of the course. Stone Eagle, which is being developed by Destination Development Co., is the first Tom Doak-designed golf course in the Coachella Valley.

Benjamin D. Steen was named golf course superintendent at Sea Gull Golf Club in Pawley's Island, S.C. His responsibilities include maintaining golf course conditions, supervising the greens maintenance

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staff and serving as a club liaison.

Jim Kron was named superintendent at Poplar Hill Golf Club in Farmville, Va. Previously, Kron, a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, was assistant golf course superintendent at Horsehoe Bay Golf Club in Egg Harbor, Wis.



Kron

Golf course superintendent **Kevin Collins** left Tower Ridge Country Club in Simsbury, Conn., and is now at Washington Golf Club in Washington Depot, Conn.

The city of San Diego hired a manager to run its golf courses. **Mark Woodward**, who has been the parks and recreation director for Mesa, Ariz., for the past 10 years, was named San Diego's golf operations manager, overseeing courses at Torrey Pines, Balboa Park and Mission Bay. The 52-year-old Woodward replaces Jim Allen, who resigned in May before a financial audit critical of the golf operations was released.

Kimberly Heyl, superintendent at Fenwick Golf Club in Old Saybrook, Conn., was elected as a corporator of the Middlesex Hospital in Middletown, Conn.

Michael Marino, superintendent at Stonington (Conn.) Country Club; **Brent Palich**, superintendent at Potowomut Golf Club in East Greenwich, R.I.; and **Ralph Simonelli**, assistant superintendent at Warwick (R.I.) Country Club, are new members of the Rhode Island Golf Course Superintendents Association.

The Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents added new members recently. They are: **Michael Astram** of Northern Designs, **Jason Booth** of Pine Orchard Yacht and Country Club, **Rob Giampietro** of Bull's Bridge Golf Course, **Paul Legault** of A-OK Turf Equipment, **Brian Sepot** of Longshore Club Park, **Timothy Quirk** of Turf Products Corp. and **Thomas Vorio** of Pine Orchard Yacht & Country Club.

James MacDonald, golf course superintendent at New Haven Country Club in Hamden, Conn., retired.

Robert Witkoski, golf course superinten-

dent at Washington Golf Club in Washington Depot, Conn., retired.

At the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation awards banquet in December, **Mike O'Connell**, golf course superintendent at Maketewah Country Club in Cincinnati, Ohio, was presented with the Professional of the Year award for his commitment to the golf course maintenance profession and his years of involvement in the Greater Cincinnati Golf Course Superintendents Association. O'Connell's award was presented by OTF past president John Fanning of Verdicon/UHS.

At the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation awards banquet in December, **Pamela Sherratt** of The Ohio State University's department of horticulture and crop science, was presented with a Professional Excellence Award by John Street for her accomplishments in turfgrass research and education, particularly in the areas of sports turf research and extension.

PGA golf professional **Albert Murdock** was named director of golf at the Links at Las Palomas Golf Club in Puerto Peñasco, Mexico. Currently, Murdock is vice president of the Southwest section of the PGA. He is a current member of the Senior Goldwater Cup Team and a guest instructor of the Stanford and Arizona State University golf camps. Murdock will direct the new course operation at Las Palomas, which is scheduled to open in May.



Murdock

PGA National Resort & Spa and the PGA National Members Club named **Desi Howe** the director of golf for the five-course facility in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. Previously, Howe was the director of golf for the Doral Resort & Spa in Miami.



Howe

The International Network of Golf's membership elected a new advisory board. The new board members are **Tom Landers** of Pub Links Golfer, **Mitch Laurance** of Ace Productions, **John Steinbach** of TaylorMade-Adidas Golf and **Dean Stoyer** of Nike Golf.

Re-elected to new three-year terms were **Jack Bacot** of Carolinas PGA Golfer and

Tony Leodora of TL Golf Services. The remainder of the current ING advisory board are: **Laurie Dovey**, **Ron Garl**, **Holly Geoghegan**, **Rick Jamison**, **Dove Jones**, **Lynn Luczkowski**, **Ronnie Musselwhite** and **Mike Purkey**.

The 15-year-old ING is a non-profit, media-based networking organization that has a mission to enhance and promote communication and education in golf. The organization is managed by a six-person executive committee, elected by the advisory board. The current committee includes **Jay Hubbard** of Tour Edge Golf; **Mark Grody** of Corporategolf.com; **Tim O'Connor** of O'Connor Media; **John Glozek** of Long Island Golfer; **Geoff Converse**, a freelance golf writer; and executive director **Mike Jamison**.

Pearl Carey, a former president of the Western States Golf Association and a member of the USGA Regional Affairs Committee, was chosen as the second woman to receive the USGA Joe Dey Award. Given since 1996 in recognition of meritorious service to the game of golf as a volunteer, the award was presented Feb. 6 at the association's annual meeting in Santa Barbara, Calif. The award is named in honor of the late Joe Dey, who served as USGA executive director for 35 years – from 1934 to 1969 – and was later commissioner of the PGA Tour.

Matthew Bradley was named golf sales representative for Bayer Environmental Science. He will cover southwest Florida from Tampa through Naples and is responsible for the complete portfolio of Chipco golf products.

Golf Ventures West hired **Steve Anderson** as equipment territory manager for the southern Phoenix market.

Redexim Charterhouse hired an additional sales professional, **Nate Patrick**, to support its network of North American distributors.



Patrick

Chris Nordling is a product manager for trimmers, brush cutters and lawn edgers for Shindaiwa.

Jim Doll joined Tecumseh Power Co. as product line manager for walk behind mower engines. GCN



Jack Brennan founded Paladin Golf Marketing in Plant City, Fla., to assist golf course owners and managers with successful marketing. A former associate publisher for *Golf Week*, he can be reached at Jackbrennan@ij.net.

Using a market analysis

As golf becomes more competitive, marketing your course becomes more important. In previous columns, I've suggested the need to compare your course to other courses in your area regularly. The goal of this is to keep your regular golfers coming back and to attract new players who have taken up the game recently, have relocated to your area or are unhappy with the course(s) they have been playing. Keeping core golfers and acquiring new ones also is the goal of the competitive courses in your area, so to "win," you need to make sure your course is at least as good as the other courses or ideally, superior to them.

This leads to the question: What makes a good or superior course experience? The answer is a combination of cost, course reputation, location, course condition, service quality and other factors. Given all these factors, comparing two or more golf courses might seem more complicated at first than it really is.

A simple and time-proven tool used by marketers to make practical comparisons is called a SWOT analysis, which stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This marketing tool can be adapted to a superintendent's job even if his course doesn't have an overall marketing plan.

The first step of a SWOT analysis is to decide which courses you want to compare. My rule of thumb is that any course within a reasonable driving distance for a golfer is a direct competitor. Other considerations include similar greens fees, ease of access to the course, course conditions and playability. Simply put, a competitive golf course is any other one your regular golfers might consider playing.

Once you have identified your competition, the main challenge in a SWOT analysis is exercising the discipline and time necessary. A SWOT analysis takes time and is only as good as the individuals involved, so consider asking some of your employees and other managers on the course to join.

The process is simple: You take each aspect of the analysis and list the answers for your course and each of your competitors.

Strengths

List the strengths for your course and your competitors in separate columns. Key strengths from a golfer's perspective will include things like speed of play, de-

sign of the course and value, which is the what-you-get-for-what-you-paid equation. Turf conditions could be a strength depending on the turf, green speed, lack of weeds and insects, and the consistency in turf quality. Playability – another strength – could be the width of the fairways. Other possible strengths are signage, course location, staff expertise and service attitude.

Weaknesses

Next, follow the same process by listing weaknesses of your course and your competitors. Try thinking of things that are genuine negatives for golfers. The condition of the cart paths might be a strength, a weakness or neither. However, knowing a competitive superintendent is operating with three-quarters of the staff he had a year ago is a potential negative for that course and might factor into the equation.

Opportunities

When considering opportunities, the focus needs to be on your course. A number of your opportunities already will be listed in your weaknesses column. For example, if you listed a moisture problem on a green as a weakness, then correcting that situation is an opportunity.

But opportunities should go beyond correcting negatives by considering positive actions you can take to improve your course with your present crew and budget. This might include ideas that help attract new golfers or make your course more enjoyable for members or regular golfers. For example, Ron Garl, a Lakeland, Fla.-based golf course architect, says a significant number of golfers practice more than they play, even if that's just working on one aspect of their game that needs improvement. So, with many golf courses, improving the practice areas is a marketing opportunity.

I would consider your master plan if your course has one. Opportunities should include any steps you can take toward making that vision become a reality.

Finally, special events in your community or on your course create opportunities to make a great impression on visitors or first-time golfers.

Threats

Threats include things such as an outbreak

of turf disease, but the emphasis of a SWOT analysis is on outside situations or conditions that can affect play. An example is planned roadwork that makes it difficult to get to your course for weeks or months. New ownership of an area course is always a marketing threat because improvements on the course probably are planned. Similarly, a planned renovation of a course in your market area, or the announced construction of a new course, must be considered threats because they might attempt to take away some of your golfers.

Threats also can be unknowns such as the hiring of a new superintendent, consultant or management company.

Analysis

The most challenging aspect of a SWOT analysis is considering all four factors at once to get a big picture of your course's marketing position and actions you can take to improve your position.

When considering strengths, ask yourself if you're making golfers aware of them as often as you should. For weaknesses, decide if they can be remedied or improved easily or if you have to put up with them for a time. Opportunities need to be ranked and prioritized for action. Threats have to be evaluated by how likely they are to happen, their potential impact and what you can or must do to counter them.

When considering all aspects of a SWOT analysis at once, you might see some interactions between variables. For example, when anticipating and taking proactive steps to combat a threat, you might end up adding a new strength to your course.

When completed, a SWOT analysis provides a practical evaluation of your course relative to competitors and helps drive an action plan to improve your course and your marketing position.

The value of this four-step exercise comes from repeating it at least once a year. Your first SWOT analysis creates a benchmark of where your course stands versus the competition. Later comparisons allow you to measure your progress in overcoming deficiencies and improving in all factors you choose to consider. The goal is to produce a superior course for your golfers. GCN

Tree management

Trees are beautiful and necessary on most golf courses, but because of abundant trees, many American courses inadvertently have hurt their agronomics and playability.

While superintendents and golf course architects don't agree about everything, we're generally in accord that too many American courses have too many trees. Many superintendents have an inherent conflict with trees, and golf course architects generally think overplanting limits design options and doesn't look attractive or natural.

There is, however, a widely different perception among golfers about trees on a golf course. Looking back, heavily treed American courses were probably inevitable, factoring in American ingenuity, the concurrent rise of golf and the "city beautiful" movement, which emphasized parks and tree planting to humanize and renaturalize crowded cities.

The gradual change of opinion is reflected in the writings of the first generation of golf course architects in America who didn't like trees in virtually any form.

"Trees in the course are a serious defect, and even when in close proximity prove a detriment," wrote C.B. Macdonald, the father of American golf course architecture in 1906. And in 1928, he wrote: "I should like to make this distinction – no course can be ideal which is laid out through trees."

The tide changed slightly when golf course architect Harry Colt softened his stance in 1920. "Trees are a fluky and obnoxious form of hazard, but they afford rather good protection, and if a clump of these exists at such a spot, it might well be considered justifiable to leave it standing," Colt wrote. "Where very few trees exist, every effort should be made to retain them, and in every case the architect will note the quality of the timber with a view of retaining the finest specimens."

Donald Ross took similar positions. "As beautiful as trees are, and as fond as you and I are of them, we must not allow our sentiments to crowd out the real intent of a golf course of providing fair playing conditions," Ross wrote. "If it, in any way, interferes with the properly played stroke, the tree is an unfair hazard and should not be allowed to stand. On the other hand, there is no need to ruthlessly cut down everything before us. If it can be arranged so that holes are slightly elbowed, trees can frequently be

spared. On hot summer days, they are most welcome, especially around tee boxes."

Besides the cost savings of using the natural landscape, Alistair MacKenzie also saw a more practical side to trees. "On an inland course, the only way, except at enormous expense of providing hazards as high as sand dunes, is by the use of trees in groups," MacKenzie wrote. "Trees make an excellent corner for a dog-leg. Firs, pines, cypress, silver birch and California oak make beautiful backgrounds for greens."

In 1933, the "Good Doctor" eloquently condemns poor planting style. "Playing down a fairway bordered by straight lines of trees is not only inartistic but makes tedious and uninteresting golf," he wrote. "Many green committees ruin one's handiwork by planting trees like rows of soldiers along the borders of the fairways. Alternative groupings of trees, planted irregularly, create most fascinating golf and give players the opportunity of showing their skill and judgment in slicing, pulling round, or attempting to loft over them."

However, green committee chairmen took another piece of advice from Colt's partner, C.H. Alison, to heart. "If you have any planting to do, do it at the start," Alison wrote. "Trees take a long time to grow."

To expedite tree growth, many ignored the experience of A.W. Tillinghast by planting quick growing varieties, which tend to be short lived. Tillinghast wrote: "Trees of the better sort, well shaped and really fine specimens, are admired and loved by the vast majority of people in all walks of life everywhere." He also abhorred straight planting lines. "Fairways should be rather irregular in shape and not like bowling alleys extending through the woods," he wrote.

George Thomas wrote: "Trees and shrubbery beautify the course, and natural growth should never be cut down if it is possible to save it; but he who insists in preserving a tree where it spoils a shot should have nothing to say about golf course construction."

William Flynn captures the new beliefs in 1927. "Old ideas have been discarded, and the prevailing belief is that trees, most emphatically, have a fixed place on a golf course," he wrote. "This is true for many reasons. First, because there are few, if any, sites available that are devoid of trees and it is very costly to cut them down and remove them. Second, trees add beauty to a golf course forming picturesque backgrounds and de-

lightful vistas. Third, their shade is most refreshing on a hot summer day. Fourth, they are of great practical value in segregating the various holes."

The overplanting problem isn't new and was recognized by these experts almost as soon as it began. Our love of trees allowed tree-planting committees to hold sway for almost a century. Even when no money was available for other things, clubs – despite cautions from generations of course architects and superintendents – planted trees that have filled in almost every conceivable gap between fairways and, as they matured, crowded and narrowed fairways.

Golf could be more interesting if green committees weren't so focused on increasing difficulty through tree planting. The agronomic problem caused by trees is summed up by a veteran superintendent who asked, "Do you want turf or trees?"

After seeing the long-term results of continual tree planting, we've seen many high-profile courses succeed with tree-removal programs recently.

Most courses should focus on tree management rather than strictly planting or removing trees. Courses built around mature timber will have problems eventually. Your course should plan for removal and replacement of selected older trees, substandard varieties and diseased trees to keep a viable mix of young, medium and fully mature trees for long-term health.

When planting trees, consider the turf's need for morning sunlight by planting them no closer to the fairways, greens and tees than their mature height on the east side, or tell your members to expect highly trafficked areas to begin a slow decline.

Plant trees in naturalistic clumps of three to 12, leaving gaps in between to allow the possibility of a recovery shot. One superintendent objected to my tight spacing of trees initially, fearing it would increase mowing time. Later, he said the extra time of detail mowing between trees spaced 10 to 12 feet apart was more than offset by production mowing in the open areas.

I marvel at how clubs can find money to plant trees, but have no money to get proper advice on how to do it. Others won't use golf course architects, who have a grasp of playability and aesthetics, in favor of a local landscape architect or nurseryman who doesn't. The cost of moving trees will offset any fees eventually. GCN



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Chapters can do more



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Where does the greatest opportunity lie to advance the professionalism of golf course superintendents further? The question conjures up a wide variety of possible answers.

Is it via the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America with its ever-expanding programming? Not necessarily, even though the GCSAA should be recognized for its continued efforts to better serve its members and the golf industry. I'm only saying this isn't the best means available because so few in golf have consistent contact with the GCSAA.

Is it via the continued inspired work of individual superintendents? Not necessarily, because the indispensable work of each superintendent collectively throughout the country already has had its meaningful impact on the industry and doesn't promise the opportunity for unbridled future professional advancement.

Then where will this opportunity be found? It's through the enhanced operational performance of the 104 GCSA regional chapters, which represent the front-line interface between the world of the golf course superintendent and the tens of thousands of golf club/course officials and millions of golfers throughout the country.

The basic issue that needs to be addressed within chapter programming to advance the profession is the far too persistent practice of focusing the chapters' primary communications vehicles (i.e. — newsletter, educational and guest speaker programming) on close to 100 percent of agronomic/turf management subject matters. This doesn't serve the chapter members well because they're consistently being overloaded with technical education via a wide variety of sources, or the nation's local golf communities whose officials don't have the patience or interest to digest this same steady flow of technical information.

The result of this short-sighted chapter programming is the equivalent of putting the world of the golf course superintendent in a closet, region by region, and closing the door. Recommended corrective measures include:

- Reorganize chapter **newsletter** content along the following approximate lines: 35 percent technical writing, 35 percent national and regional industry news, and 30 percent chapter activities and member-welfare issues, most of which can be sourced by subscribing to

national information services.

- Restructure chapter **educational programming** to continue to include precedent-setting technical subjects, which would then be complemented with basic 101-level programming intended to educate club/course officials to better understand the working world of the golf course superintendent.

- Restructure **guest-speaker presentations** by inviting speakers to present topics that parallel the subject matters suggested above for newsletter and educational programming.

This implies that club/course officials would be invited to attend many chapter seminars and monthly meetings. To ensure more effective and affordable educational programming and meeting speakers, four to eight chapters might form regional circuits that would schedule four to eight varying educational topics and speakers for a season. Then rotate these seminar subjects and speakers through each participating chapter's events/meetings.

Because it's recommended that local course officials be invited to attend monthly meetings, it's further suggested the monthly tournament format be adjusted to allow each chapter member to invite a guest official from his course to play in the day's golf tournament on a two-man-team basis and then stay on to listen to the guest speaker of the day — a win-win situation for all parties.

Finally, in the quickly advancing communications world, is there a good reason why every chapter doesn't develop its own Web site to promote activities and to permanently catalogue its education and speaker programs? Currently available information indicates about 60 percent of the 104 GCSA chapters have, or are planning, their own Web sites. For any serious business or association not to have its own Web site is tantamount to inviting eventual organizational suicide. The 25 or so chapter Web sites currently in play throughout the country provide an excellent collective model for the remaining chapters to emulate.

Suggesting the above is clearly "easy talk" but obviously not an "easy walk." Little of permanent importance will happen until chapters can engage qualified people to manage their varied membership, newsletter, educational, tournament, speaker and Web-site programming professionally. Statistics show that only about 10 percent of the 104 GCSA chapters currently engage

an association manager or executive director. The rest of the chapters essentially rely on executive secretaries to administer membership and direct-mail programming.

In contrast, the 41 PGA sections throughout the country each has an executive director and its own Web site — affordable necessities because the national PGA underwrites section operations. The GCSAA is not yet there, maybe some day? But chapters shouldn't wait for this eventful day because these challenges can be addressed now.

The easier part of this challenge would be finding qualified executive director candidates from the retired corporate and military communities; by soliciting from the empty-nest parent community; and by advancing qualified executive secretaries that are presently engaged.

Before looking at the more challenging aspect of funding executive director types, it's important to ask why the PGA has only 41 sections and the superintendents have 104 chapters. The answer is that it's far easier to fund operational programs with larger, more consolidated regional membership bases. Many GCSA chapters are too small to self-fund their own operations. As the GCSAA looks to formalize its relationships with the affiliated chapters during the years ahead, chapter consolidation might be an early topic of consideration.

Assuming that chapters will some day be able to maintain a minimum number of members, adequate operational funding would be realized by positioning dues comfortably above present levels (i.e. members pay more for better service provided by professional staff), and by realizing added advertising/sponsorship revenues from the expanded newsletter, education and Web-site programs. The money is there, if mined properly.

All of the above suggests the need for a series of annually repeating workshops to educate chapters how to find, fund and effectively utilize professional staff. No doubt, this resource will develop as need arises. Clearly, the process would be significantly enhanced should one or two chapters volunteer to develop a model management program.

It's time for the world of golf course superintendent to open its doors and let the light shine out through the prism of more effective chapter performance. GCN

Hiring quality workers

Many golf course superintendents are in the midst of preparing for a new season. They're undoubtedly enjoying their time studying and pricing new equipment and turf supplies. But most of them find much less joy recruiting and selecting the people who will use the equipment and supplies to create a magnificent golf course.

The choices they make will go a long way to help determine the level of stress they will face this year and the success of their courses. Good procedures for choosing equipment and supplies and hiring employees have more similarities than one might think.

Consider the purchase of a new fairway mower. Superintendents begin by specifying what they need – width, power, cut, features – given the mowers they already have and the characteristics of their course. Then they collect information and compile – formally or informally – a list of possible makes and models they might purchase. Finally, they collect detailed information, including cost, and select a mower to purchase.

When hiring the best people, a similar procedure is used, albeit with two considerable differences. First, the choices are more important because there are greater productivity differences among people compared with brands and models of equipment. Second, each superintendent is practically on his own when hiring employees.

Unfortunately, most hiring procedures are less detailed and less reliable than those generally used to purchase new equipment.

So what's included in a reliable hiring procedure? Begin by specifying what's needed. In the human resources field, this means defining the competencies one seeks that will enable the person in a certain position to succeed. A formal definition of competencies is the combination of observable and measurable skills, knowledge, performance behaviors and personal attributes that contribute to enhanced employee performance and personal success. One should select three to five competencies that are most critical to success in a position, given the existing staff and the task to be completed. Employee competencies might include experience operating equipment, positive work attitude, reliability and being a team player. Recruiting without first specifying the desired competencies is like wandering

around a trade show without knowing what you are looking for.

Recruitment is defined as the process of attracting individuals on a timely basis, in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications to apply for a job. The focus of this definition is on attracting a pool of applicants – not just one qualified applicant. This focus is the most common mistake made by managers, including golf course superintendents. The goal of recruiting is to attract a quality pool from which there's a high probability of hiring a great candidate. Without a pool of candidates, the probability of hiring a great candidate is low.

So how is a great pool of candidates achieved? Recruitment is a process of marketing a club or course and the position available. One must develop a recruitment plan that reaches great candidates and entices them to apply for a position. The plan can include informal word of mouth, want ads, job announcements in the newspaper or on the Internet and formal job services. What-

ever the method to reach potential applicants, the recruitment material must provide a picture of the course or club and the position that stimulates qualified candidates to apply.

The following provides the information needed to write great recruitment material:

- List words and phrases that describe positive attributes of the club or course;
- List words and phrases that describe positive attributes of the position;
- Describe the position;
- List the qualifications required for success in the position;
- Find out what great candidates for this position are doing now (be creative); and
- Know how candidates should apply.

Selection involves choosing from the pool of candidates who best match the competencies needed to succeed in the position. The interview is the most important part of that.

The following are some ideas to consider when planning your interviews.

- Determine the fit of the candidate for the position, and promote the position and the course or club so the candidate is likely to accept should he be offered the position. Hiring is like dating – either party can end the process at any time.

- An interview is a formal, high-tension situation. While working to make both parties feel at ease, it should be treated as a formal interaction, not as a bull session. Careful planning and preparation is crucial.

- Prepare questions in advance that are built to measure the candidate on the selected competencies. Each candidate must then be asked these same questions. The box to the left contains some questions that correspond to the example competencies described above. Note that several of these are behavioral questions asking candidates to describe how they have handled a specific situation previously. This type of question has been found to be effective.

- Be careful, but not paranoid, about illegal questions. The easiest rule is a simple one: Ask only questions that relate to or measure the candidate's likelihood to succeed in the position.

Although it seems difficult and time consuming, hiring outstanding candidates produces rewards far greater than the cost.

GCN



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Interview questions

Introductory

- How did you hear about our job opening?
- Had you heard of our golf course or club before seeing the position announcement? (Let the person expand if answer is "yes" but do not pressure him.)

Experience operating equipment

- Describe your job experiences, especially those related to operating equipment. (Ask follow-up questions as needed so you completely understand his job experiences.)
- Tell me about the last time you learned or improved your skills in operating equipment.
- Where do you feel your greatest training needs would be to excel in this position?

Team player

- Give me an example of when you worked effectively as part of a team.
- Do you prefer to work alone or with others? Why?
- Give me a recent example in which you had a fellow employee with a poor attitude. What did you do?

Reliable

- Give me an example of a time when you were late for work. How did you handle the situation?

Build to fit

GOLF COURSE BUILDERS HAVE HAD TO ADJUST TO THE CHANGING MARKET AS THE ECONOMY RECOVERS AND DEMAND INCREASES

by
JOHN
WALSH

Q What's the current state of golf course development?

Compared to where we were five years ago, the industry is down considerably. New golf course development is probably down 50 percent. On the same hand, things are looking good for the coming year. In the last year, it seemed like there were many more development inquiries than the previous three or four years. It seems like there's even more work today than there was a year ago. Much of that has to do with the improved economy, the fact that 9/11 happened more than three years ago and people aren't as negative about golf as they were four years ago because of the overbuilt market. Now, the type of developments has changed. There's a shift in what's being built today.

Q Have we hit the bottom of the down cycle?

The bottom was hit six months ago, maybe even a year ago. The people developing golf courses sat back. They still wanted to build their golf courses but thought maybe they ought to wait awhile to see what was going to happen. That money has loosened up again, and the people that had access to money are moving forward.

Q Who's funding golf course development projects?

There are a couple of arenas. You have the wealthy people who feel they can build a better mousetrap or have always wanted to build a course. Then there are the land developers – those who have had good projects during the past five years. They are building some big, high-end golf courses.

On the other hand, some of the middle-market housing folks have figured out that

providing open space to their development is almost as beneficial as providing a golf course, and the cost is much less. The high-end housing – especially in markets such as Southern California, Scottsdale, Ariz., and Florida – has slowed down somewhat, but there are still a lot of high-end courses being built in those markets due to the housing demands.

Q How did overbuilding happen?

First, let's look at it from the housing developer's point of view. That's where most of the golf construction was in the past. That's the market where courses were being overbuilt five to 10 years ago. Everyone thought we needed more high-end daily-fee golf courses, but that market has really slowed down. The large housing developers were pumping golf courses into the market, and they didn't care if the golf course made any sense financially as they developed them only to help sell lots.

The land developers were giving the golf course land to golf developers who had little involvement in the sale of lots, but only ended up owning the golf course. This type of golf course developer is almost extinct today because the money for these types of projects has dried up, and if the developer does have money, they can purchase existing courses for less than constructing new ones. There's not a lot of venture capital out there to build golf courses and make a profit on the golf course alone.

Q So some of these home developers built golf courses solely to boost the housing sales?

Right. They were loss leaders. They didn't care if the golf course made money. They figured the cost of building the golf course would be absorbed, and they would make

their money back by selling lots. That's fine and dandy for the housing market, but it wasn't good for the golf market. That caused the supply and demand to get way out of kilter.

Q Are there some areas of the country that are overbuilt and underbuilt?

Most areas in the country, maybe 75 percent to 80 percent of the U.S. golf market, are overexpanded. Any major city, especially in the South and maybe the Midwest, is overbuilt, but there are still a few markets that are underserved. There are still some Southern California areas that could use a little more golf. The places where it has been hard to get permits because of the bureaucracy – such as the Washington, D.C., markets and parts of California where it can be a six- to 10-year process to get a golf course approved – those are probably a little underserved.

The other underserved markets would be those specialty golf locations – the Bandon Dunes, the Whistling Straits – those are still very popular among golfers. It's the remote, boutique, high-end daily-fee courses that still have demand, which are in many markets across the United States. But that market could be saturated in five or six years as well because there are many new projects of this type in the planning stages.

Q Is there anything the industry can learn from what happened in the late 1990s?

Unfortunately, it's the supply-and-demand curve – simple economics. When the market starts looking good again, people will start building golf courses again. From a contractor's standpoint, it's difficult to operate within these cycles, although I had been calling for this slowdown for five years. Thank

GOLF COURSE NEWS INTERVIEWS BILL KUBLY, C.E.O. OF LANDSCAPES UNLIMITED, A GOLF COURSE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY BASED IN LINCOLN, NEB., ABOUT THE STATE OF GOLF COURSE DEVELOPMENT.



Photo: Mark Longwood Photography



Photo: Mark Longwood Photography

Bill Kubly, c.e.o. of Landscapes Unlimited, says there's a huge need for less-expensive golf courses to be built.

goodness I was wrong, and the boom lasted another four to six years longer than I thought it would. I saw this happening, and we were prepared for it. That's why we, as a big contractor, focused on doing more renovation and diversifying what we do. We also own 20 golf courses that we developed ourselves. We saw what was happening to our own golf courses, rounds were down, revenues were down, so it had to happen. It just took a little longer than we thought.

Q Is there a benefit to being an owner and a developer?

Absolutely. We're really the only golf course construction company that offers the full services of being able to project manage the entire project – from building the clubhouse, the maintenance building, the cart shed, the golf course, as well as having management knowledge from owning our own courses. There are probably a few builders that have done a couple turnkey projects, but we have done it many times. Turnkey golf development is a great service. It's a consulting aspect we can offer our clients. We can hold their hand. We can tell them where not to make mistakes or waste money because we've been there before ourselves.

Q As an owner, how involved are you?

My ownership division is headed up by Mike Jenkins. Of the 20 golf courses we own, we manage 12 of them. In some cases, we have management companies as one of our partners. For instance, we own part of a golf course

in Indianapolis, and Troon is our partner, and they manage it. We don't manage them all, but we still have to oversee those projects because we have an investment in them.

Q Is there something that you keep an eye on as an owner?

Four or five years ago, we would take a piece of land inside a housing development and build a golf course and own and operate it, but that market is dried up, so we don't have many of those projects anymore. I personally like to have a pet project at all times to oversee myself. Sutton Bay in South Dakota was a pet project. I probably spent 50 or 60 percent of my time on Sutton Bay. That's a property my company and I have ownership in, so that became my labor of love for several years and will continue to be for many more. I have a couple of other special courses that we own as well.

It's the fun part of the business for me, but because we're not doing many of those anymore, I focus more on operations, especially those that are close to me. We own four golf courses in the Omaha, Neb., market, and I probably stick my nose in there more than I should, but I'm a nitpicker. I'm a detail person, and if we're going to own them, I want to make sure we're doing it right. I want to be proud of our projects, even if they're not in the high-end arena. I can be just as proud of a golf course that we own and manage that makes money with a \$20 green fee than a private club with a \$75,000 initiation fee.

Q What's the company's ownership plan?

In the old days, we did the build-to-flip-type courses when the market was really good. We felt like we could build a golf course for less than anybody, and then we'd sell it as soon as the right buyer would come along. That worked well back in the heyday when many courses were being sold. Today, our rationale is that we want to own projects that can pay their way and are profitable even in the down times. We have a strike price for every course we own. If somebody wants one of our golf courses bad enough, most of them are probably for sale. We don't advertise them for sale because we really like the projects we have. We sold a couple projects last year that didn't quite fit right in our portfolio, and we also purchased a couple that were in markets that we like and understand. We like core groups of courses like our Omaha group. We like golf courses in the South, yet we have a core of two golf courses in Washington, D.C., and we love those. We want to own golf courses that can carry themselves and that don't have to be fed financially on an annual basis.

Q Is there interest in owning some of the golf courses you'll develop in the future?

If there's a project that we see that is an absolute grand slam, we'll invest our capital in it, but we don't want any surprises. We built a few six or eight years ago that are great golf courses but are in bad markets, maybe a market where people won't pay high-end daily fees. So those are the ones we have culled out of our portfolio. We've learned a lot over the years, but if it's a great location and a great opportunity, we'll jump in. In the past, the land developers almost always gave us the land, and on top of that, they gave us lot rebates or concessions to build a golf course on their property. There are some great deals out there, if a person wants to be in that business because there aren't many people with the capital anymore. There will be some good opportunities during the next five to 10 years.

Q Will the industry experience a boost in development during the next five years?

It will be very gradual. It might stay level. We're not going to see the growth we saw in the 1990s. I expect the industry to stabilize at somewhere between 150 and 200 new golf course construction projects a year in the United States.

Q From a demographic perspective, where's demand going to come from in the future?

Demand is going to come from the baby boomers who have money to spend on exclusive golf at special kinds of destinations. Much of the market today consists of high-end country clubs or high-end national clubs, such as Sutton Bay or Sand Hills or the high-end golf destinations like Pacific Dunes or Pinehurst. The demographics are the 40- to 65-year-old group right now. It's a bit beyond baby boomers, but that's the group that has the money to spend and can afford to join those types of clubs or enjoy spending that kind of money for a golf trip.

Q Is there a need for more less-expensive golf courses to be developed?

There's a huge need. The industry is poised to grow the game, but it's hard to grow the game when the average round of golf is \$50 or \$60. The problem is how do you build a golf course that can be marketed for \$20 or \$25 a round. It's difficult to get a golf course built for that kind of price, unless there's some help from municipalities that have a rationale to provide their constituents with low-cost golf. But that's out of vogue. Most of

those markets have an oversupply of golf courses, but the prices haven't come down. What's going to happen – and it's happened in a lot of markets with the pricing pressure – is that some of the middle-market golf courses, and even the high-end golf courses, will have to be repositioned as a lower-priced facility. That's going to happen for financial reasons. It will be the second, third and fourth owners of these courses who will get it down to where they can afford to have less expensive golf.

Q If there's going to be less-expensive golf, what part of golf course operations will be less funded?

First of all, if it's a new project, the construction costs have to be lower than what they have been. Secondly, players' expectations have to be lowered a bit. Everyone is conditioned to expect perfect wall-to-wall green conditions. So the superintendent will be involved in that. I get tired of people in the Midwest saying you have to spend \$600,000 or \$700,000 on maintenance a year. You don't have to. There are ways to reduce the maintenance cost. It's part maintenance, part expectations and part construction costs or low acquisition cost going in, which will reduce the cost of a round of golf.

Q What type of projects are you looking for?

We look at all golf course projects – new construction, renovations and irrigation installation. We're probably the biggest golf course contractor in the country, so we take a look at everything. We're a specialty company that probably negotiates 30 percent to 50 percent of our work. Many of the owners today are interested in their contractor's reputation and financial strength, and that is where we have flourished. The rest of our jobs are open bid, usually with a prequalified group of bidders. If it's a project that's going to have six or more bidders, we probably aren't going to waste our time looking at that project. With that many bidders, there usually are some bottom feeders out there that are taking projects just for work, so it would be hard for us to be competitive.

On top of that, we've expanded into sports fields, parks and landscaping to help us keep our volume where it needs to be because of the softer golf market.

Q Are there any other types of projects you wouldn't get involved with?

We would see who's involved in the bidding. If the owner hasn't been very selec-

tive about whom he's going to allow to bid – if we know one or two of them shouldn't be on that list – we'll back off. Or if it's a high profile project with difficult conditions – either a lot of rock or very wet conditions or an impossible schedule – we'll steer away from those as well.

Q Are there any projects you haven't done that you would like to do?

I pride myself in developing the talk-of-the-town-type golf courses – the premier courses in the United States. I like to have a couple of those under construction at all times, but we don't want all of our work to be high end. We take just as much pride in building affordable golf courses because we believe in that market. We do a lot of renovation work on the really high-end golf courses – Torrey Pines South, The Southern Hills, The Colonial, The Dupont Club, the Broadmoor Mountain course. We steer much of our work in this direction. Usually, these high-end renovations are either on a negotiated basis or with a very select bid list.

Q How much of your work is new construction and how much is renovation?

My guess is 20 percent renovation and 80 percent new golf on the golf course side. If you divide up all of our business, 15 percent is landscaping and recreational development, 15 percent renovation, and 70 percent new golf.

If you did that by numbers of projects, we might only have 15 new golf courses that we build each year. We probably work on 40 renovation projects a year, and then 15 or 20 recreation development projects. We'll be working on anywhere from 70 to 90 projects in a year, and only 20 or 25 might be new construction.

Q Is reconstruction more of a trend nowadays?

Yes. A reconstruction is actually a golf course that happens to be built on the site of another golf course. We call them blow-ups, whereas many renovations can be called restorations if the course is being reconstructed to its original state or look. There are still a lot of renovations where they are rebuilding only the greens and tees and maybe installing a new irrigation system, but many more courses are more of a rebuild. About a third of our high-end renovations are of the reconstruction type.

Q Is most of that with high-end courses?

Some are. I've also seen some in-field golf courses that might have been a low-end country club or a public course in certain markets that have been converted to a high-end private club where they get some lots designed in their excess acreage. They repositioned a lower-price course into a higher-end product because of the great location.

Q Have you done anything overseas?

We've worked in Barbados. We did the Sandy Lane project where Tiger Woods spent his honeymoon. We've worked on several projects in the Dominican Republic. We have a couple of projects in the works in Italy, and we have some upcoming work in Mexico.

Q What is the biggest difference working outside the United States?

In most cases, we'll supply the expertise, maybe five to 10 people to a job, and we become more of a construction manager in which we will show the local people how to build the golf course, and we'll manage the construction. We'll build it for them, but we'll use their work force and machinery, or we'll have the owner buy machinery. At Sandy Lane for instance, we had the owner of the project purchase all of the construction equipment necessary to build their golf courses because it was a 36-hole project. Our work outside the United States is more of a management process than it is taking a lump sum contract to do the work.

Q Is it more or less preferable to work that way?

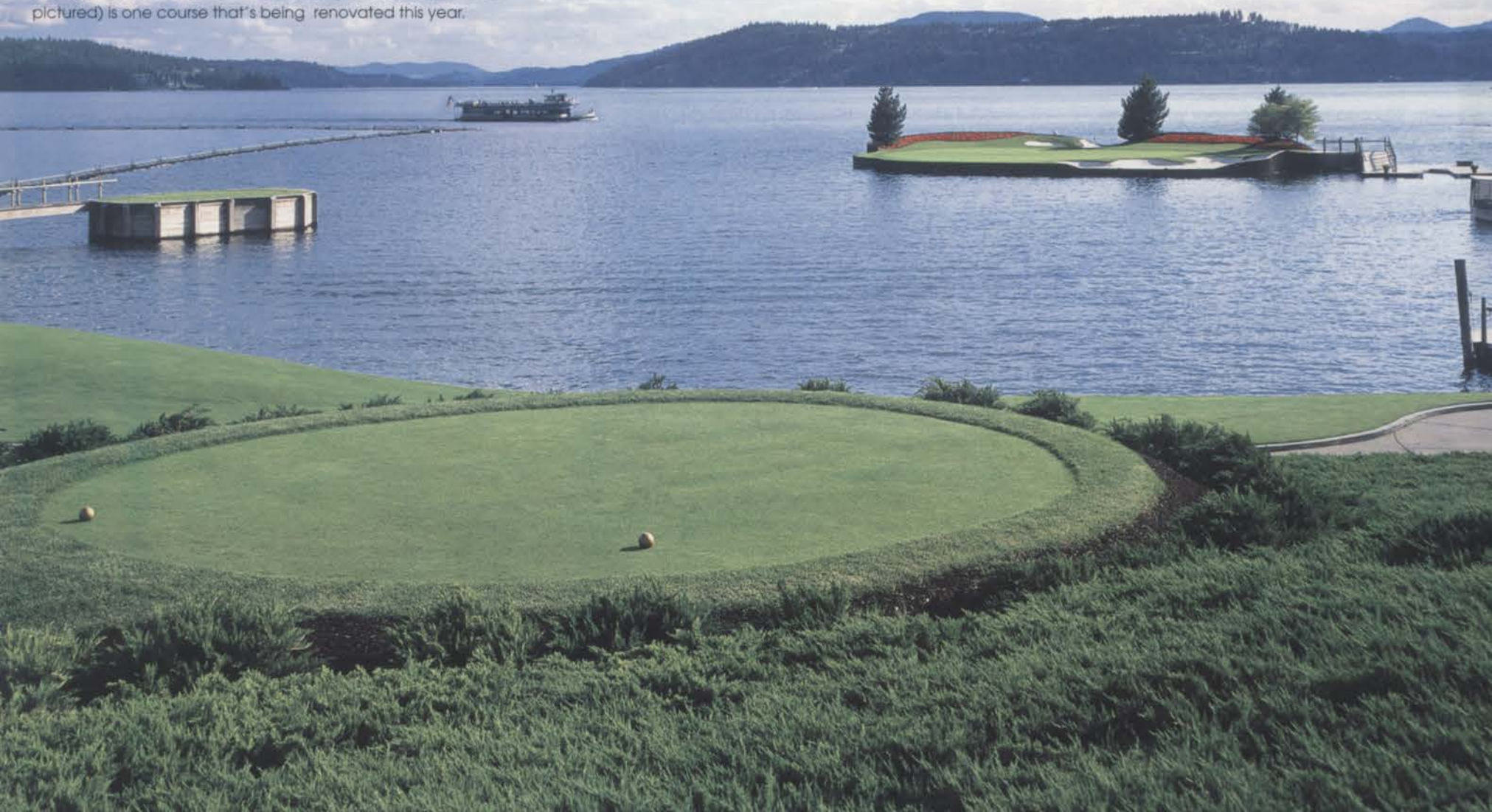
It's more preferable because the only way we'll look at those projects is on a fixed-fee basis where we'll know we're going to make a profit. The negative side of that is that we have our people out of town, traveling throughout the world, which is difficult. It's critical to make sure you have your payments lined up properly because the last thing you want to do is chase your money in a foreign country.

Q What's the easiest and most difficult part of being a developer?

The easiest part is the passion. Unfortunately or fortunately, passion drives this business a lot. Everyone thinks their golf course will be more successful than the one next door. The best part about development is this passion, and I have it for the projects we get involved in. The bad part for many developers can be the cost overruns, underestimating the mar-

(continued on page 67)

This year, the golf business is forecasted to remain similar to last year. However, some superintendents believe this year will be better than last. And some owners, despite tightening golf course maintenance budgets, have spent money to improve their course. The Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Course (14th hole pictured) is one course that's being renovated this year.



Caution: a slight improvement ahead

SOME SAY BUSINESS IN 2005 WILL BE A LITTLE BETTER THAN 2004

by
JOHN
WALSH

Overall, it looks like the business of golf will experience a slight improvement this year compared with last year. But many superintendents will still have to do more work with less money, or at least the same amount of money, because many golf course maintenance budgets won't increase that much. In a nutshell, business is steady.

During 2003, the average number of rounds played per golfer was 19, and the total rounds played was 495 million, according to the National Golf Foundation. NGF forecasts the average number of rounds played per golfer to drop slightly to 18 in 2004, and

the total number of rounds played to be between 495 and 500 million.

"In '04, we largely righted the ship," says Steve Mona, c.e.o. of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. "In '01, we began to dip, and we had three pretty tough years. In '04, there were signs of optimism, but no signs of an upswing."

The industry is trying to get out of a downturn. There had been a 2-percent to 4-percent decline of rounds played during 2002 and 2003, but there was an uptick of rounds played in 2004 largely because corporate profits have increased, causing corporate golf and corporate outings to increase, according to Mike Hughes, executive director of the National Golf Course Owners Association.

"There are larger and more fields of golfing groups at courses and clubs, and food-and-beverage sales have increased," Hughes says. "It all stems from the improved economy. That will pretty much be the same for 2005."

Luke Stavros, director of golf at the Coeur d'Alene (Idaho) Resort Golf Course, says rounds at the course increased 3.5 percent in 2004, which is better than the forecasted national average of 0.6 percent according to NGF.

"We're starting to see a positive increase in travel and spending," Stavros says, adding that most of the golfers that play the course come from the Western part of the country. "We feel good because we're better than the national average, and we attribute that to enhancing our overall product."

Even though certain sectors of the golf industry have settled, golf still isn't stable, according to Mona.

"'04 was challenging," he says. "In some cases it was better, but it was marginally better than '03."

Mona says most of the traditional, well-established private clubs that have long waiting lists managed to

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being a low concern and 10 being a high concern), please rate how much concern each of the following issues are to your business success in 2005.



Source: Golf Course News survey (403 respondents)

Golfer expectations and fuel prices are two high concerns of superintendents this year.

What is your total annual maintenance budget?



Source: Golf Course News survey (403 respondents)

Many golf course superintendents' budgets remained the same or increased slightly this year.

do fairly well in '04, even though members might not have been spending as much and clubs' waiting lists might not have been as long.

Generally, at the middle-of-the-road private clubs in the smaller metro areas, members are staying home and using their club more often because they're not traveling as much due to the economy, Mona says.

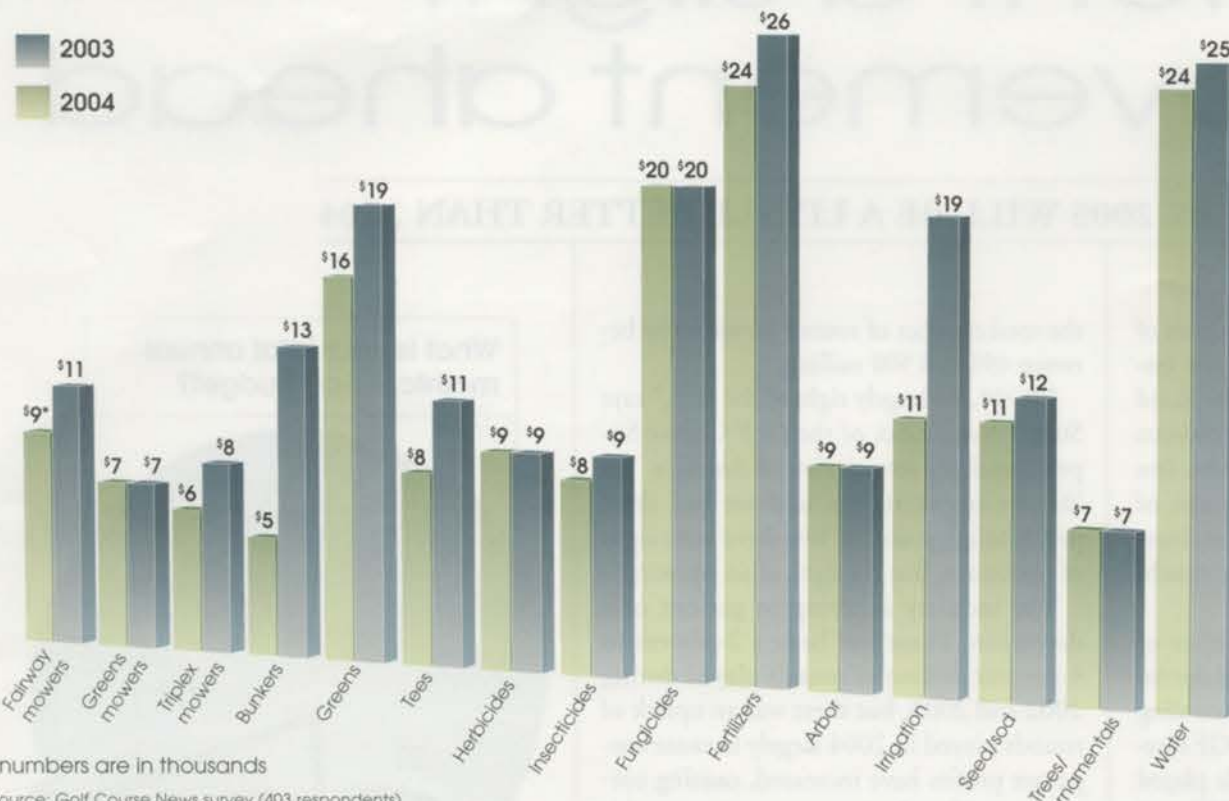
The public courses generally have been the toughest-hit area of the golf course industry, according to Mona.

"The middle to high-end facilities have a problem because they aren't private and aren't charging or collecting fees and monthly dues," he says.

However, the least expensive public courses continue to do well because they are inexpensive and attract people who can afford to play regularly, Mona says.

"There will be more optimism in '05," he says. "The stock market, which has had a wild ride, is doing better, people have more confidence and unemployment is steady.

Approximately, what is your total annual superintendent's maintenance budget the past two years for each of the following?



Despite continued budget tightening by owners, some superintendents predict 2005 will be better than 2004.

But there's a false sense of optimism that things are going to be marginally better just because the calendar turns. I'm fairly cautious."

For Hughes, course performance isn't a geographic issue, it's a market issue. He says private clubs are probably performing a bit better than public courses.

"If you're in the middle of a market, you have probably suffered more than if your

course is at the top of the market," he says.

Tim Perez, director of golf courses and grounds at Fiddlesticks Country Club in Fort Myers, Fla., estimates the bottom of the downturn was about 18 months ago.

"One of the tough things about this business is that it's a huge collaboration of factors that make the game expensive," Perez says. "The greatest hindrance to the business and the game is the cost to play. There is so much emphasis on playing-surface purity. Today, we are managing every square inch of the course. We've lost the game somehow, somehow. We are our own worst enemy. The average player will never be able to enjoy the perfect playing surface that he sees on television. I miss the challenge of the old game of golf."

Belt tightening

In these lean financial times, resourceful superintendents find ways to provide good course conditions even though budgets have tightened. Mona says efficiencies that have been created will continue even if business improves.

"One thing that will continue in 2005 is maintaining that same level of condition on the course with the same budget as last year," he says. "Many

superintendents are doing more with less or the same. There will be few budget increases in '05, but the same budget in '05 as was in '04 is really less because of inflation and the cost of living."

However, Hughes says that during the downturn owners were belt tightening and everybody was learning how to get more out of less, so there will be an immediate profit increase if the industry experiences a quick turnaround.

Improving the product

Despite the tight budgets, owners have been improving their products during the past five years and will continue to do so, according to Hughes. Because of the additional supply to the market during the past 10 years, the amount of modest renovations has increased.

"The competitive response to the supply was to renovate to compete with the new courses," he says.

During the downtimes, most facilities will make cutbacks and reduce prices, but Hagadone Hospitality Co., owner of the Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Course, is doing the opposite and is spending money to renovate.

"In 2003, we lengthened the course 500 yards and added more than 12 new tee boxes so we have five tee boxes a hole, added 21 new sand bunkers and planted 250 pine trees that are 12- to 16-feet high," Stavros says. "In 2004, we reconstructed one green and its surround and added a subair system to it."

Additional renovations to the course include new green surrounds on another hole, and new contouring and sod on the three other holes. Also, the irrigating system and landscaping are being upgraded.

In Florida, the main course at Fiddlesticks is being rebuilt.

"We're upgrading the irrigation, constructing USGA-specified greens, as well as upgrading the staff and equipment," Perez says. "We have all the right people involved. We have a good golf course construction superintendent.

"We'll be reduced to one golf course this year," he adds. "It will be tough if you are a player."

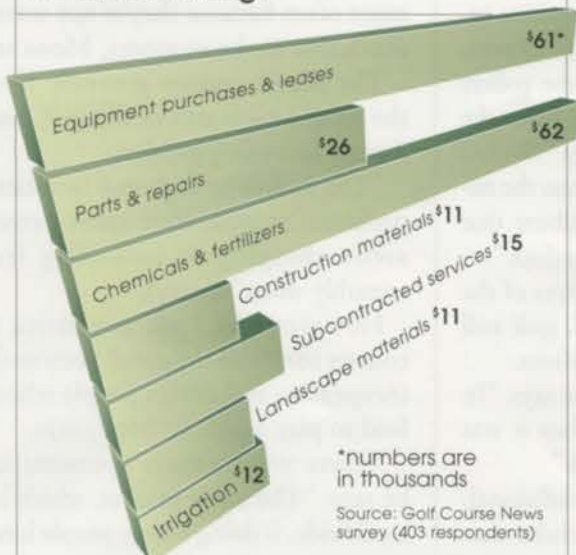
The Fiddlesticks renovation is scheduled to be completed by Nov. 1.

What to expect

Some superintendents are upbeat about 2005 and believe it will be a better year businesswise than 2004. Stavros says 60



Approximately, how much are your average annual expenditures for the following:



Golf course superintendents will continue to be expected to do more with less.



percent of the golfers at his resort come from the Pacific Northwest, 20 percent from the Western part of the United States and another 20 percent from elsewhere in the country.

"We're starting to see an increase of business outside the northwest," he says.

The Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Course also is doing well enough to raise greens fees. Last year fees were \$210, and this year they will be \$225 for a day guest fee.

The golf season at the resort is from April 15 to mid-October, and Stavros predicts 2005 will be the best year since 2000, which is a result of group business and corporate spending increases, as well as the added value Stavros says the course provides.

Rich Eichner, superintendent at the 18-hole Discovery Bay Golf and Country Club in Bryon, Calif., says his budget for 2005 increased slightly partly because of cost-of-living increases. Fuel prices and energy costs have increased, too.

"Fuel prices are a crapshoot because they have been all over the map," Eichner says. "Gas went up 40 cents a gallon, then dropped 30 cents a gallon. Even the fuel suppliers can't predict the trends."

Eichner says California state law requires him to use oxygenated fuel, which is causing problems. He can't get fuel from out-

side the state because California is the only state that requires oxygenated fuel by law. This makes fuel more expensive. Additionally, in Northern California fertilizer costs will increase, but herbicide and fungicide costs will decrease and might cancel each other out, Eichner says.

Despite an increase in operating costs, Eichner says 2005 will be a good year because of the improving economy and additional members the club expects to gain.

"For 2004 and 2005, there is an upswing in the golf industry in northern California," he says.

But despite the optimism, there still is concern in certain areas of the industry. Mona says some superintendents in the North are trying to hire H2B workers but can't because there are none left. This is because people in the North prepare for their season later than those in the South.

"That is going to create problems," he says. "We have members that will be negatively impacted."

With all the emphasis on tighter budgets and hope that this year will be better than last, the GCSAA is encouraging superintendents to view themselves as part of a formula of success at their club.

"Our members are increasingly saying, 'I'm not only responsible for the course but

also the success of the club,'" Mona says. "We are encouraging them to do things such as help boost play and help increase revenue at their clubs. Superintendents are being encouraged to be more integrally involved in the business of golf."

"Golf is a very different business than it was 25 years ago," he adds. "It's different than it was 11 years ago, and a lot of it has to do with the changing world."

But it doesn't start or stop with superintendents. More and more owners are getting involved with growing the game, according to Hughes.

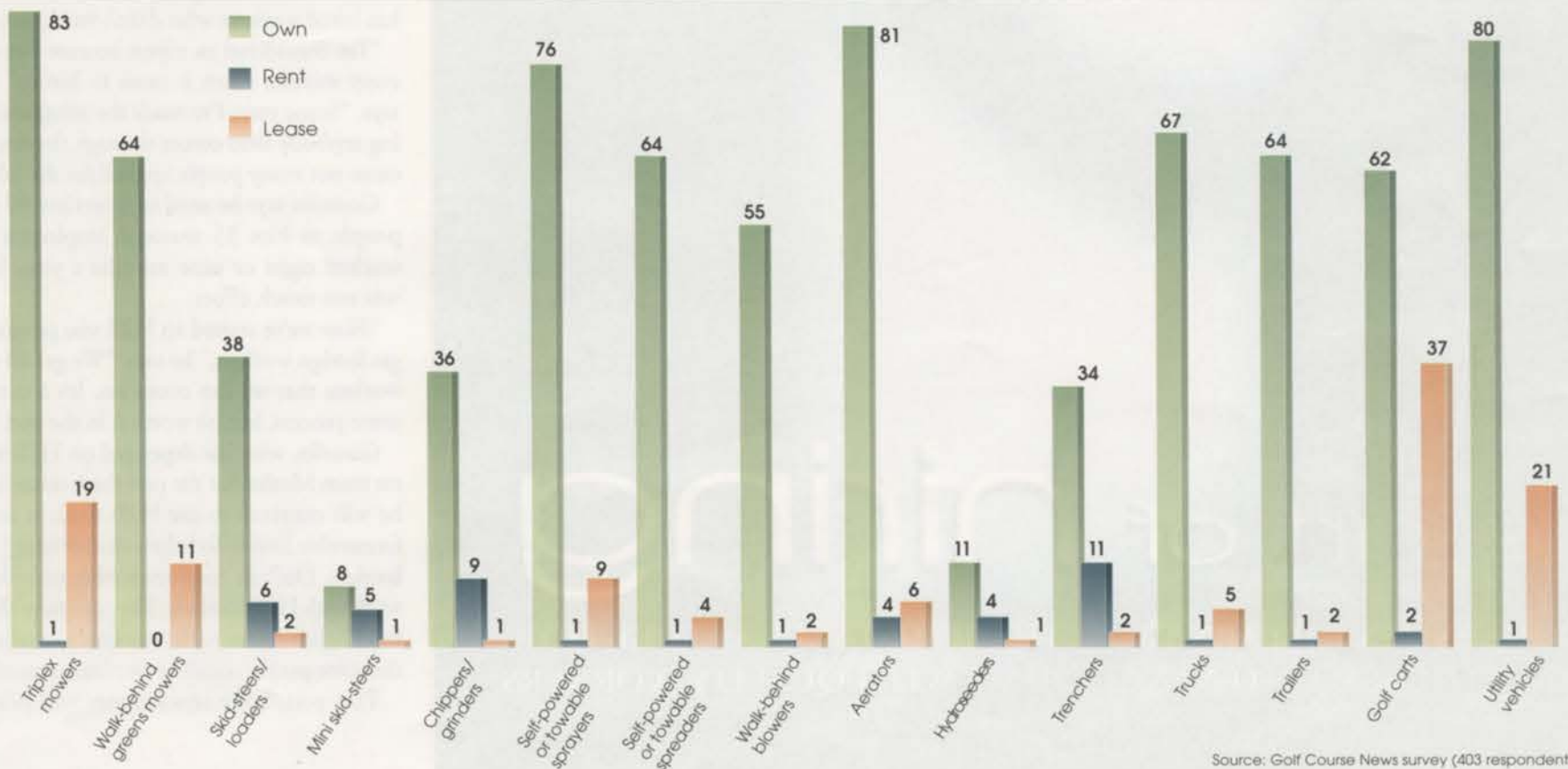
"People haven't fled the game in great numbers, but people are playing fewer and fewer rounds," he says. "Owners are producing programs to get more people out and play more often. These grassroots efforts are needed for a turnaround. There is no quick fix." GCN

John Walsh is the editor of Golf Course News. He can be reached at jwalsh@gie.net.

Visit www.golfcoursenews.com in the online extras section to read about why 2004 was a difficult year for some superintendents.



Do you own, rent or lease the following types of maintenance equipment?



Source: Golf Course News survey (403 respondents)

Many superintendents find it more valuable to purchase most pieces of maintenance equipment than to rent or lease them.

The art of hiring

SUPERINTENDENTS LEARN FROM THEIR MISTAKES AS THEY TRY TO STAFF THEIR MAINTENANCE CREWS WITH QUALITY WORKERS

by
**JOHN
WALSH**

Ask any superintendent what the most difficult aspects of his job are and hiring employees will be one of the first things mentioned. Hiring the right workers is as important as purchasing maintenance equipment, if not more, but is much more difficult.

Hiring people with the right skill sets and the right personalities is extremely important because they work as part of a team, according to John Gosselin, the assistant general manager at the 54-hole DuPont Country Club in Wilmington, Del.

"It's extremely hard to find the right help," Gosselin says. "There are a lot of good people out there, but finding and hiring them takes a lot of time and effort."

Hiring is the second or third most important thing superintendents do, according to Walt Wilkinson, superintendent at the public 36-hole Indian Creek Golf Course in Carrollton, Texas.

"It's extremely important to have the right chemistry, but it's difficult to do," Wilkinson says. "People who you interview tell you what they think you want to hear. Everybody wants to add their personal touch to the operation. I'm looking for efficiency and quality in the operation. That comes first."

Jim Loke, certified golf course superintendent and golf course manager at the 18-hole Bent Creek Country Club in Lancaster, Pa., has hired workers who didn't work out.

"I'm considered an expert because I've made every mistake when it came to hiring," Loke says. "Some years I've made the mistake of hiring anybody who comes through the door because not many people applied for the job."

Gosselin says he used to interview 80 to 90 people to hire 35 seasonal employees who worked eight or nine months a year, but it was too much effort.

"Now we've started an H2B visa program to get foreign workers," he says. "We get 20 to 25 workers that we can count on. It's a cumbersome process, but it's worth it in the end."

Gosselin, who has depended on H2B workers from Mexico for the past three seasons, says he will continue to use H2B workers for the foreseeable future. To help with communication barriers, DuPont employees who are bilingual work with H2B workers. The company also offers English classes to the workers. Gosselin says the same people usually come back annually.

This year, Loke says he, too, will bring in

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Photo: The DuPont Country Club

The DuPont Country Club likes to keep more people on staff to reduce overtime because it makes sense financially.

some H2B candidates from Mexico and is currently going through the process with the green chairman at the club.

"We are enthusiastic about it," he says. "The only red flag is that no one speaks Spanish, but they say one out of five workers will be able to translate both ways."

To fill out the rest of Gosselin's staff, he hires 10 college students from the area who aren't in turfgrass management programs, as well as retired people and people in between jobs from the area to maintain a good relationship with the community.

"Seasonal workers have limited benefits, and those are the hardest positions to fill," he says. "Full-time positions with benefits are easy to find. We carry 30 full-time positions in grounds and golf course maintenance. We have full-time equipment operators who have to be proficient on all equipment and have a good safety record. We always fill the operator positions with full-time workers."

For seasonal help, Wilkinson stopped hiring college and high school kids because school is lasting later and starting earlier and they end up working for only 12 weeks or less.

"I'm hiring contract employees as much as I can," he says. "Eight people are working on eight-month contracts, and 80 percent are foreign workers from Central America."

The interview

When interviewing candidates for a maintenance-staff position, Loke goes through an internal checklist with each. He starts by observing the appearance of an applicant, and looks at the neatness, clarity and detail of a

candidate's application. He also looks for preciseness, communication skills and style, and personality. Loke wants to hire people who are conscientious and determined.

Wilkinson asks candidates how they react in certain situations.

"If someone has experience in the field, I'm not asking where the start key is," he says. "I'm not looking for cowboys that want to hop on the equipment and go. I'm looking for someone who will take care of the assets that the employer has entrusted us with."

Wilkinson tries to give candidates as much of a feel for what they will do in a week on the job, and it's not the same thing every day.

"If they're looking for continuity at the work place, arriving early for work is the only continuity I can give them," he says.

Hiring assistants

Hiring an assistant superintendent is a more involved process. Loke's checklist is similar to the summer-help applicants, but there are more steps. He begins with the resume, cover letter and application, looking for clarity, grammar and detail, as well as for education and field experience.

Loke has at least two face-to-face interviews with an applicant for an assistant superintendent position and looks at the person's communication style, appearance, attitude, sincerity, intuition and willingness to work, learn and be managed.

"Is he able to lead and manage a crew, and is he someone who will become a superintendent in the future," he asks. "Will the person represent the industry and the coun-

try club in a responsible way?

"I'm looking for perspective," he adds. "Will they provide me new, insightful ways to do things, will the person intellectually stimulate me and does he have natural curiosity about the industry?"

Loke has an informal discussion about various topics with a candidate and then has him spend time with other members of the staff. He also goes through an assessment program generated by an outside company that determines energy level, truthfulness and the ability to answer SAT-type questions, as well as how candidates think through easy and complex problems.

"This test separates the four closest applicants," he says. "This assessment provides me with questions I can further delve into with each interviewee, i.e., behavioral situations, and focus on their strengths and weaknesses. It does a much better job than I can do."

Gosselin enjoys finding someone for a leadership position, such as an assistant superintendent, superintendent or mechanic, to make his operation better.

"It seems like we hire one or two leadership positions a year," he says. "We generally look for someone with diversified experience — someone who has worked at private clubs and public courses and has worked with small, medium and large budgets."

When interviewing for assistant superintendents, Wilkinson asks technical questions such as, "What's the difference between sulfur-coated urea and ammonium nitrate?"

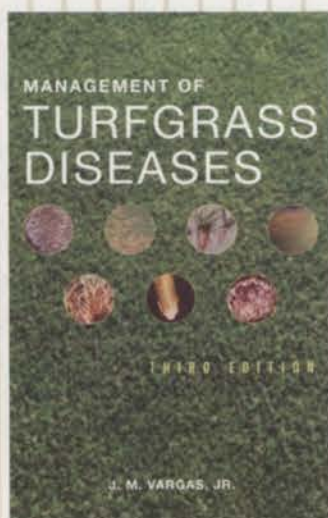
"I want them to understand the physics of the soil and the product they are putting down," he says. "They should be able to respond to people in the field. If they are asked



Photo: Indian Creek Golf Course

Matt Conrad is part of the maintenance staff at Indian Creek Golf Course in Texas.

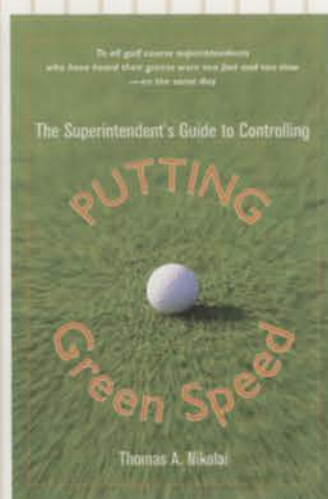
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\$110
J. M. Vargas, Jr.
ISBN: 0-471-47411-8, Hardcover,
336 pages, November 2004

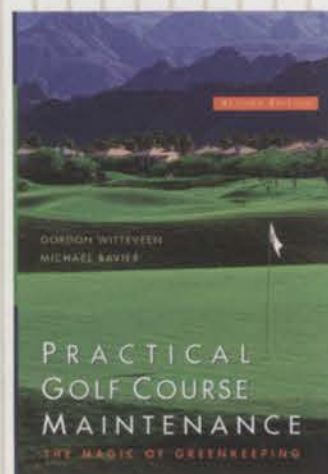
This newly revised and updated Third Edition of the successful *Management of Turfgrass Diseases* provides professionals the most current practical information for maintaining the best playable turfgrass on their courses. *Management of Turfgrass Diseases*, offers golf course superintendents, lawn care operators, and landscapers a comprehensive, decision-making tool.



The Superintendent's Guide to Controlling Putting Green Speed

\$60
Thomas Nikolai
ISBN: 0-471-47272-7, Hardcover,
160 pages, October 2004

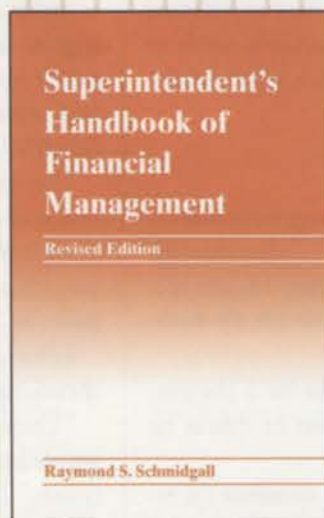
It is critical for golf course superintendents to know the factors that impact green speed. This book covers every aspect of green speed maintenance including playability, environmental considerations, mowing and pest management. It also provides practical decision-making advice relative to financial and budgeting issues.



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\$65
Gordon Witteveen, Michael Bavier
ISBN: 1-57504-047-6, Hardcover,
280 pages, July 2002

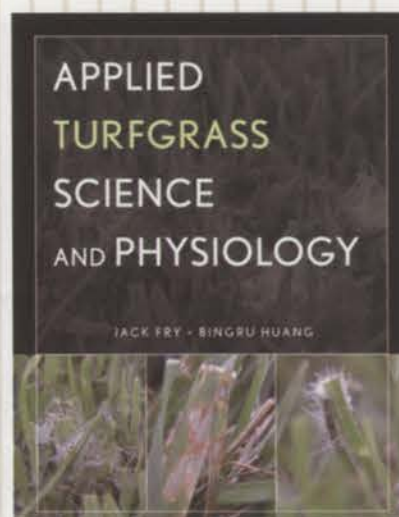
Practical Golf Course Maintenance has hundreds of helpful tips you can use every day! Presented in a step-by-step format, it includes advice on maintaining consistent bunkers, sand topdressing and aerifying, using chemicals and fertilizers safely and effectively, irrigation principles and techniques, mowing techniques for greens, fairways and tees, and much more.



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\$45
Raymond S. Schmidgall
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176 pages, October 2003

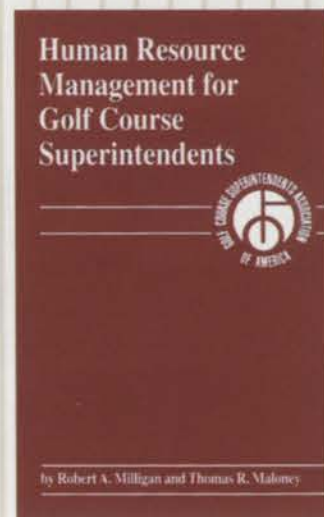
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Jack Fry, Bingru Huang
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what they are putting down, fertilizer shouldn't be the answer. It needs to be more specific than that.

"The golden rule with assistants is that I will hire attitude over skills any day," he adds. "I can train skills, but I can't train attitude, which is very important."

Wilkinson says sometimes he will pay a mechanic or a technician more than an assistant superintendent because a mechanic needs to be a good engine mechanic, a good welder and a good troubleshooter.

Lessons learned

Loke recommends other superintendents don't just hire anybody who walks through the door even if they're desperate. He also recommends not hiring someone for \$9 when he is accustomed to \$15.

One red flag Gosselin looks for is the person who's not willing to learn or thinks he knows everything.

"I like people who always question themselves and us," Gosselin says. "Those who claim to know it all tend to make mistakes,

and mistakes cost money and reputation."

Gosselin says it's better to have more people on staff to reduce overtime because it makes more sense financially. He also suggests not chintzing on a good superintendent's salary.

"Don't save \$5,000 or \$10,000 on salary," he says. "Get the good superintendent. It saves money in the long run because they make fewer mistakes. I would rather pay \$20,000 more for a good superintendent and take that money out of his budget, than to pay less for a superintendent who isn't as good and have that \$20,000 in the maintenance budget.

"I would rather have an ambitious, assertive and confident superintendent for three years and have him leave than have someone who does enough just to get by and is here for 20 years," he adds.

Loke says the labor pool in his area is shrinking.

"There were unique years in which we had ample bodies because there was less competition," he says. "We opened in 1993, and throughout the past 10 years, strip malls have been popping up and have taken much of

our resources. We can't compete against fast food restaurants that pay more and provide uniforms. We used to have 40 applicants per one opening, now we're down to five applicants per one opening."

Loke also likes a diverse work force.

"I have found that having a blend of age groups and sexes provides a chemistry that is very positive because there's a unique support system," he says. "For example, college boys don't like to be outperformed by older people and females."

One of the red flags Wilkinson sees when interviewing candidates is if they tell him they like to work outside and like to play golf.

"I won't hire them if they say that because that means they just want to take advantage of the golfing privileges workers have," he says. "It's a crapshoot. You can make bad hires. Some people I thought would rule the world and then they end up not making six weeks with us." GCN

John Walsh is the editor of Golf Course News. He can be reached at jwalsh@gie.net.



At Indian Creek Golf Course in Carrollton, Texas, superintendent Walt Wilkinson lets job candidates for the maintenance staff know they will be doing something different every day.

Photo: Indian Creek Golf Course

Design case study

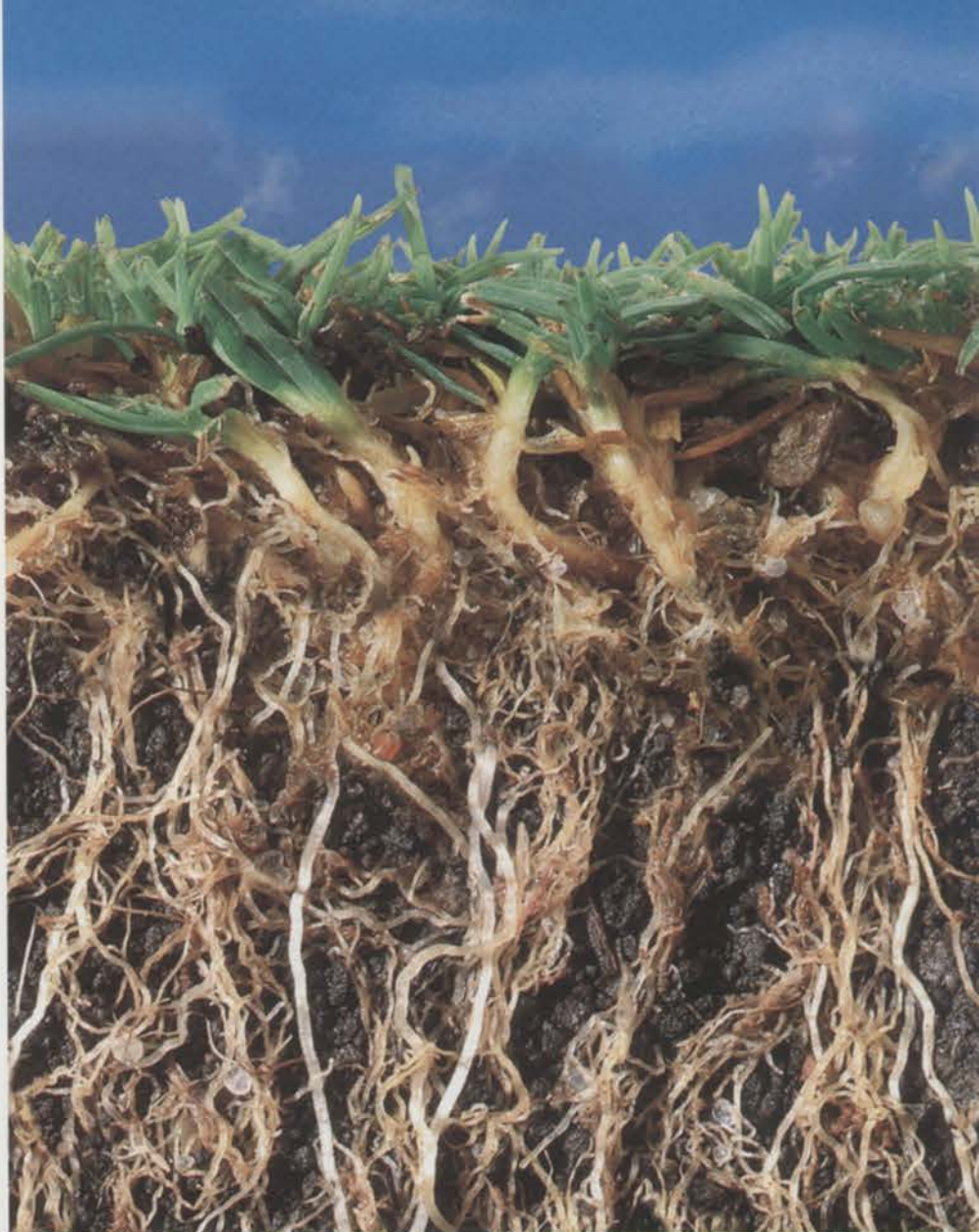
Isleworth Country Club's golf course was transformed for the game of high-tech equipment and long hitters. It is now Florida's longest course at 7,544 yards, according to general manager Kurt Kuebler.



Photo: Isleworth Country Club



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ARCHITECT STEVE SMYERS UPDATES THE ARNOLD PALMER-DESIGNED COURSE IN FLORIDA WITH ADDITIONAL CONTOURS, AN IMPROVED IRRIGATION SYSTEM AND HILLSIDE BUNKERS

by
MARK
LESLIE

When your members include people known simply by their first names – like Tiger, Shaq and Junior (Ken Griffey); when the foursomes gracing your fairways include Lee Janzen, Mark O'Meara, Darren Clarke, Stuart Appleby, Robert Allenby, Charles Howell III, Craig Parry and Scott Hoch; and when you host what's expected to become the country's premier collegiate invitational tournament, you want to stun golfers with the most challenging golf course in the region.

That's what management at Isleworth Country Club in Windermere, Fla., set out to accomplish when they hired golf course architect Steve Smyers to rebuild completely what they saw as an outdated layout. And that's what Isleworth and Smyers achieved, even while building multiple tees for middle- and high-handicap players, according to general manager Kurt Kuebler. As proof, Kuebler reported that players from 16 of the top university golf teams in the country, competing in the First Annual Isleworth Collegiate Invitational Golf Tournament Oct. 25 and 26, 2004, scored an average 76 in a practice round on the par-72 course. And they weren't even playing from the tips.

"These guys can knock the socks off the ball," Kuebler says. "They were awestruck by the course and our facilities."

Not lost on the collegiate golfers was that the new Isleworth – transformed for the game of high-tech equipment and long hitters – stretches 7,544 yards and carries a rating of 77.5 and a slope of 142. Previously, the course was 7,179 yards long and carried a rating of 77.5 and a slope of 135.

"We're now the longest course with the highest slope in Florida," Kuebler says. "Steve [Smyers] did a terrific job putting

together a great multiple set of tees. So if you play the right tee, you'll truly enjoy this course."

Smyers says the slope could have been higher but the courses he designs always play harder than the slope because he doesn't create penalties, he creates obstacles.

"The way [the U.S. Golf Association] calculates slopes is if you go so many feet and don't have a water hazard, bunker or out-of-bounds marker, it doesn't consider that a penalty," he says. "Our obstacles are in a contour, hollow, mound or angle. Conversely, you can always find your golf ball and have the ability to recover on our courses."

Smyers started from scratch because the old course was torn down.

"This was a massive makeover, not only aesthetically, but from a shot-making perspective," he says.

While challenging great golfers, Smyers kept in mind the fellow who retires, moves to Florida and wants to play well in the latter years of his life. From the far-forward tees, the course plays 5,747 yards.

"Whenever we build, we design so whoever plays it will become a better player," Smyers says. "We keep everybody in mind, but we put an emphasis on challenging their shot-making ability and stimulating their thought process."

A complete change

Isleworth Country Club, which opened in 1986, was designed first by Arnold Palmer and Ed Seay. The 600-acre property, which is almost surrounded by the Butler chain of lakes, serves as Palmer's answer to Muirfield Village in Ohio, which is replete with flowers and flowering shrubs. Ten years ago, Smyers was hired to renovate all of Isleworth's 18

greens complexes and surrounds, infusing them with a better setting that still fits the existing layout. He also converted the putting surfaces from bentgrass to Bermudagrass. This time, Smyers worked with then-superintendent David Steel and current superintendent Steve Keller to replace the turfgrasses and irrigation system and craft a course built for 2020.

"They wanted to improve the golf course for the modern-day player as well as for future generations who would be members," Smyers says. "A lot of the features were outdated and didn't function anymore. Today's players hit the ball right past those hazards."

At the same time, Smyers addressed Steel's and Keller's maintenance needs – most notably, drainage, irrigation and faster green speeds.

That resulted in changing everything. The course was regraded, creating swells and swales of movement and a range of depth where it was previously flat. Trees were cut down and others planted. Before Steel left the project, Smyers worked closely with him on slopes and contours that might impact mowing.

Smyers didn't construct his trademark bunkers on every hole, but where he did use them, he did so to catch the eye – to accentuate hilltops and hollows – as a contrast to help golfers read the course and to set up playing strategy.

Slopes also were designed to shed water off the course quickly and efficiently and help with



Golf course architect Steve Smyers constructed the bunkers at Isleworth to catch the eye, accentuating hilltops and hollows.

Photo: Isleworth Country Club

AT A GLANCE

Isleworth Country Club

Location: Windermere, Fla.

Course type: 18-hole private

Course reopened: December 2003

Yardage: 5,747; 6,409; 6,765; 7,069; and 7,544

Par: 72

Average green size: 6,000 square feet

Number of bunkers: 65

Fairways: Tifway 419 Bermudagrass

Tees: Tifway 419 Bermudagrass

Greens: TifEagle

Slope: 125, 135, 135, 139 and 142

Rating: 68.3, 71.4, 73.1, 74.7 and 77.5

Superintendent: Steve Keller

Developer: Tavistock Group

Construction Co.: Quality Grassing & Services

Architect: Steve Smyers

Owner: Tavistock Group

the growth, establishment and daily maintenance of the turfgrasses. To accomplish quicker green speeds, Steel chose TifEagle.

"The scope of work was bigger than a new course," Smyers says.

Irrigation overhaul

In addition to other work, Lithia, Fla.-based golf course builder Quality Grassing & Services rebuilt 14 greens. The development team worked with the Southwest Florida Water Management District to bring in natural plant material to restore the shorelines and allow the course to feel more in harmony with the lakes. Ten holes interact with water.

Keller, who had recently grown-in 36 holes at Berkeley Hall in Bluffton, S.C., came on board as superintendent during the shaping and irrigation-installation stage. He quickly put his mark on the project, learning the infrastructure, developing a grow-in program, and consulting in the field with Smyers and his design associate Patrick Andrews. He suggested adding drainage basins and adjusting the irrigation system.

"You want to make sure the irrigation heads are located to best fill your needs," Keller says. "More irrigation is always better, and you need to get it when the getting's good – that's during construction. I look at it as if you have only one shot. If you don't do it right the first time, you're stuck for years to come.

"Superintendents will be judged on the quality of your turf," he adds. "As a turf manager, everything is about how water moves and the ability to get rid of it."

Keller says the most critical irrigation ele-

ments for superintendents to understand is the pump station, where the water will be drawn from and making sure it's installed properly.

"I see a lot of golf courses that put their pump stations in too late," he says. "They're concerned about putting in power, and when the pump station comes in, they're scrambling ... in too much of a hurry. I've heard horror stories. Our pump station was put in properly. I recommend you get a diver and let him look at where the water is being drawn from, what type of clearance there is, if it's silty, if you will create a vortex, etc. You should sod the banks of the irrigation lake immediately. When they dig an irrigation lake, over time, the bottom will come up in the process of settling. It's a problem everywhere."

Water quality also is crucial.

"You're only as good as your water, so make sure the area you are drawing from is deep enough and the construction is done properly because silt can be a nightmare."

Keller says Isleworth has good-quality water because it's surrounded by deep lakes.

Defining bunkers

Keeping a close eye on the soils, the water table and contours, Keller contributed to the design in ways that will help maintain the course for years to come.

"Our interaction was on a daily basis on everything, and we're still interacting with them on the landscaping program," Smyers says.

To make sure the owner, Tavistock Group, which also owns Lake Nona in Florida, understood the nature of the property well, Smyers wanted to display the ridges, hillsides

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The course at Isleworth Country Club was regraded, creating swells and swales of movement and a range of depth where it was previously flat.

and cut bunkers into the hillsides to give the course a sand-dune look and feel.

"This is the old dunes of Florida, and we wanted to expose them with high, flashed-up sand," he says.

To accomplish this, Smyers consulted with Keller to find a product that would prevent bunker erosion. They decided on Bunker-Aid Plus, a fabric to which the sand adheres while allowing water to flow through.

Also, because the bunkers were flashed high, they wanted to ensure the pitch wasn't too great.

"We hold to the hard, fast, firm concept on the greens approaches, so we worked closely with superintendent and irrigation

consultant Mike Pignato on how much water each head controlled, and we made sure we had the right sandy soils to accomplish that," Smyers says.

Continued work

A treat for Keller was major reconstruction of the maintenance complex. Construction crews gutted and rebuilt everything under the roof, including administrative offices and the locker and break rooms. They also built a recycling and wash-down center, a fueling station and a storage unit for chemicals, fertilizers, divot sand, bunker sand and top soil.

Although the golf course construction is complete, the group at Isleworth con-

tinues to make improvements. Smyers and Andrews are working with Keller to phase in considerable tree planting.

"Even before the hurricanes, our program included transplanting several hundred trees and thousand flowering shrubs and other plant materials," Kuebler says. "The storms nearly delayed that process, but we have made a remarkable comeback."

And the landscaping will continue.

"We will keep working anytime we can enhance the property," Kuebler says. GCN

Mark Leslie is a freelance writer from Monmouth, Maine. He can be reached at gripfast@ctel.net.

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Photo: David Wolff

J.D. Franz, superintendent at Cottonwood Creek Golf Course in Waco, Texas, used soil testing to help his course handle more than 53,000 rounds of golf in 2004.

The science of nutrient management

NITROGEN HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT ON TURFGRASS GROWTH

by
DAVID
WOLFF

Ask a dozen superintendents about the nutrient management programs for their greens, and you'll probably get 12 different answers – each one of them correct.

Different climates, root-zone mix composition, golfer expectations and budgets all play a role, making fertility management something of an art. However, recent advances in the understanding of nutrient behavior have put more science into the process.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-

Madison contend that management of nitrogen stands apart from all other nutrients in its impact on turfgrass growth.

"If you want to increase the content of any other nutrient, you have to put down nitrogen (N) because that is what drives the uptake of everything else," says Wayne Kussow, Ph.D., of the department of soil science. "Our research shows that most soils on greens are perpetually nitrogen deficient. Nitrogen results in a surge of growth, which also requires more phosphorus (P) and potassium (K). That's what we call nutrient demand."

Nutrient demand occurs at the root surface. A precondition is a growth factor such as the supply of a particular nutrient that's limiting shoot growth. When the limitation is overcome, the plant strives to increase its growth rate. The shoots then signal to the roots that additional quantities of other nutrients are required.

"In the way we fertilize turfgrass, nitrogen is the most limiting nutrient and drives plant growth in the absence of heat or moisture stress," Kussow says. "There are times when nitrogen is not the most limiting

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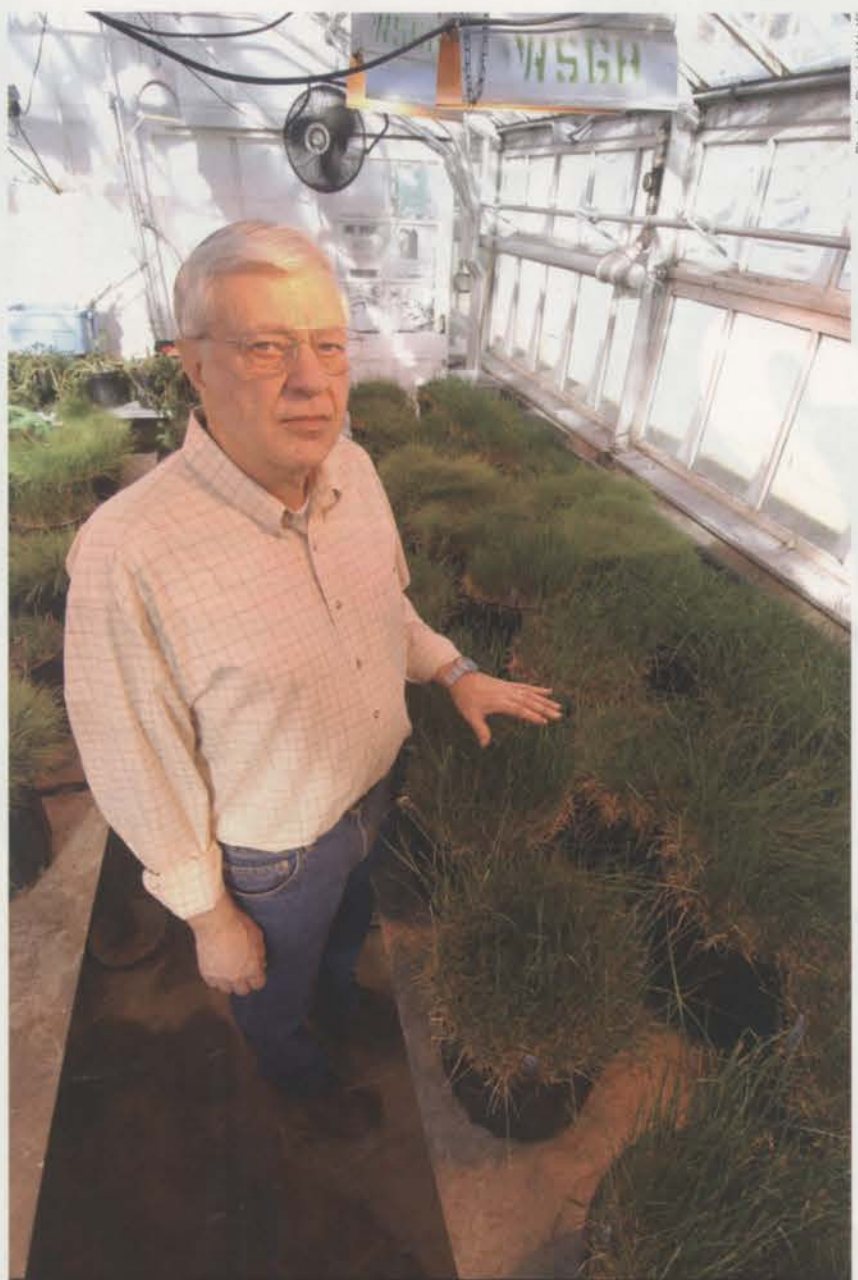


Photo: David Wolff

Wayne Kussow, Ph.D., of the soil science department at the University of Wisconsin, says nitrogen drives plant growth in the absence of heat or moisture.

growth factor, but as a whole, clipping production is limited more by nitrogen supply than anything else. Nitrogen-stimulated growth requires additional phosphorus and potassium, and the uptake of these nutrients becomes a function of the nitrogen supply.”

Consequences

There are several consequences of nutrient demand. First, what constitutes an adequate supply of phosphorus and potassium in sand greens varies with the application rate of nitrogen. The greater the amount of nitrogen, the greater the demand for the other two nutrients.

“We’ve documented this by noting the rate of ‘drawdown’ of soil phosphorus and potassium when increased annual rates of nitrogen were applied to creeping bentgrass,” Kussow says.

A second consequence of nutrient demand occurs when soil levels of phosphorus and potassium are already at levels that satisfy this demand. Applying additional amounts serves no purpose because it has no influence on their concentrations in or the amount of clippings produced.

“In short, once turfgrass demand for phosphorus and potassium is met, there is no further uptake, even when supplies are increased through fertilization,” Kussow says. “Nutrient demand gives rise to a strong link between the concentrations of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in turfgrass shoots. It will vary somewhat with the time of year and weather, but on an annual basis, it stays close to a 9:1:7 ratio for a high-quality creeping bentgrass green. In fertilizer terms, this equates to an N-P₂O₅-K₂O ratio of 4:1:3. In other words, the bentgrass utilizes the equivalent of ¼ pound P₂O₅ and ¾ pound K₂O for every pound of nitrogen applied. But to compensate for potassium leaching in sand putting greens, one pound of K₂O needs to be applied for every pound of nitrogen.”

Soil testing

University researchers have analyzed more than 300 greens throughout Wisconsin, and the results vary. For example, the greens on one course had a phosphorus concentration of 175 parts-per-million when they only needed 4 ppm. On another course, the pH level on the greens was less than five. The superintendent didn’t know because he had never done a soil test.

“People have said for years that there seems to be a fairly constant ratio of N-P-K, but didn’t know why,” Kussow says. “Now we know it’s because nitrogen is driving the uptake of phosphorus and potassium. I call it the ‘4:1:3’ because that’s about the ratio a bentgrass green is going to utilize. And that becomes a very useful management tool. Let’s say a superintendent wants to increase his soil test phosphorus. All he has to do is apply more than ¼ pound P₂O₅ for every pound of nitrogen. If the phosphorus level is high, don’t put any down and over time the level will drop.”

Using these ratios from soil tests, superintendents can pick out a grade of fertilizer that will increase, maintain or reduce the levels of

these nutrients. Fertilization rates should be based on soil tests. While the frequency of testing varies, the key is studying trends.

“A superintendent should look at his soil tests and note increases or declines in nutrient levels over time,” Kussow says. “If he doesn’t need to increase the level, then back off. From our research, the constancy in plant tissue N-P-K ratios implies that if your current soil test levels of phosphorus and potassium are where you want them to be, you can hold them near those levels simply by adhering to the 4:1:3 ratio in your fertilizer applications.”

Many superintendents strive to keep bentgrass shoot potassium levels high with the belief that this improves drought tolerance and reduces winter injury.

“If your soil test potassium levels are high, all you have to do to increase tissue potassium concentrations is apply nitrogen,” Kussow says. “If you do choose to apply potassium, create some demand for it by applying nitrogen as well.”

Superintendents often ask Kussow what lab to use. He tells them they’re all good, just stay with one.

“Different labs give different results, so just be consistent,” Kussow says. “Over time they can track the results and determine how well they’re managing the soil. Soil testing is a very useful tool to tell superintendents if they have a problem at the moment. Repetitive testing over time is the best guide. It tells them what they need to be doing.”

Test critical areas

At Blackhawk Country Club, an 18-hole private course in Madison, Wis., superintendent Monroe Miller, who has been at the facility more than 32 years, only conducts soil tests every three to five years because of his familiarity with the property.

“On greens, we take about 20 subsamples to get one composite sample,” Miller says. “We take fewer subsamples on tees. Fairways are where experience and local knowledge really come into play. There can be quite a variation in soils within 500 yards. We take samples in critical areas for more meaningful results.”

Fertilizer application rates on greens depend on yearly conditions, but Miller’s primary concern is the nitrogen-potassium ratio.

“We don’t concern ourselves much about

“If you want to increase the content of any other nutrient, you have to put down nitrogen because that is what drives the uptake of everything else.” – WAYNE KUSSOW



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A championship plan

The following is the month-by-month fertility plan for greens developed by Straits Course superintendent David Swift for the 2004 PGA Championship at Whistling Straits in Kohler, Wis.

"Our fertilization program hasn't changed too much in the last few years," Swift says. "The course is six years old now, and our soil tests show we are starting to mature, which has helped make our program easier to monitor."

Whistling Straits plays host to 30,000 rounds annually, and gets additional traffic from caddies because it is a walking-only course.

"Along with soil testing, we really monitor thatch accumulation and wear patterns to help keep the fertility as simple as possible," he says. "Fairways and rough are fescues, and greens and tees are bentgrass, which require totally different programs and products. With this in mind, we watch how the different plants are responding from the contrast between them and sometimes adjust fertilization applications accordingly."

"Nearly two-thirds of our fertilizer applied to the greens comes through applications of slow-release granular products," he adds. "The additional applications of nutrients come from a biweekly spray program that can be adjusted according to traffic, Mother Nature and cultural practices."

April

14 - spray greens with soluble fertilizer
19 - apply Anderson's Super K, 0-0-45
28 - spray greens with soluble fertilizer

May

6 - granular fertilizer application
12 - spray greens with soluble fertilizer
26 - spray greens with soluble fertilizer

June

7 - granular fertilizer application
9 - spray with soluble fertilizer
23 - spray with soluble fertilizer

July

7 - spray with soluble fertilizer
9 - granular fertilizer application
21 - spray with soluble fertilizer

August

18 - spray greens
20 - granular fertilizer application

September

1 - spray greens with soluble fertilizer
15 - spray greens with soluble fertilizer
29 - spray greens with soluble fertilizer

October

4 - granular fertilizer application

November

22 - dormant granular fertilizer application

phosphorus because at this course it doesn't move through the soil," he says. "On greens, we strive for a 1:1 nitrogen-potassium ratio, putting down about three to five pounds of nitrogen a year. This seems to increase the winter hardiness of the turf."

On fairways, the grass tells Blackhawk's staff when it needs to be fertilized.

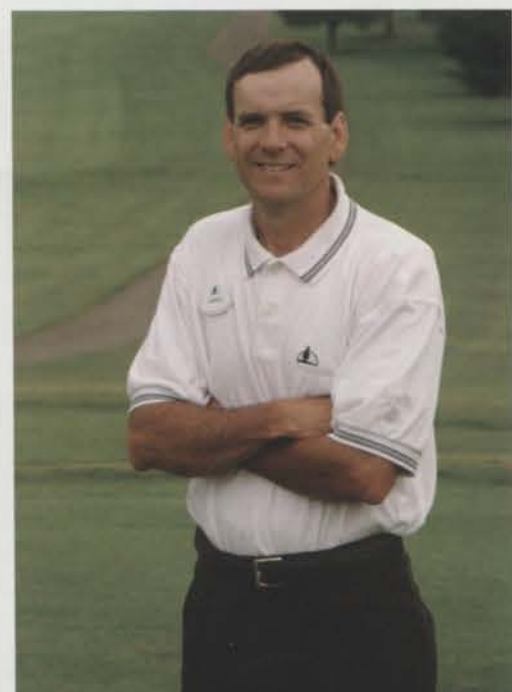
"When we fertilize, it also depends on the product we're using," Miller says. "Last year we used 1.5 to 1.75 pounds per 1,000 square feet of coated spray fertilizer incorporating a couple of ounces of fine-grade urea fertilizer with a foliar application. We fertilize greens in spring using one pound of nitrogen before we aerify. In the warm season, we use foliar

applications. In the fall, we go back to granular when most of the events are over and we're not mowing as frequently."

Battling high pH levels

Superintendent J.D. Franz has been testing the soil at Cottonwood Creek Golf Course in Waco, Texas, since he arrived in 1997. Soil testing helps him determine the amounts of primary, secondary and micronutrients needed to keep the turf healthy and growing. The 18-hole public course struggles with high alkaline and pH levels, due primarily to the high sodium content in irrigation water.

"We add gypsum when we aerify to help rebuild the soil with calcium," Franz says.



John Stawovy, superintendent at Cedarbrook Golf Course, has been testing the soil at the course for 15 years.

"This also helps with the cation exchange capacity so we get better nutrient uptake. We keep our nitrogen and potassium ratios relatively close. We add phosphorus only when we overseed to make sure the top one quarter inch of the soil has enough for the new seedlings to develop."

Traffic also is an issue for the fertilization program. Cottonwood Creek recorded more than 53,000 rounds last year.

"All that play wears down the turf and requires more fertilization," Franz says. "We try to keep the course a little lean, but we also want good color. Soil testing, water quality and traffic all play a significant role in determining our cultural practices."

At Cedarbrook Golf Course in Belle Vernon, Pa., superintendent John Stawovy also battles high sodium content in the soil. He uses gypsum to flush the soil.

"If the soil is better biologically, there will be a better environment for growing good, healthy turf," Stawovy says. "We've been testing our soil extensively in spring and fall for 15 years and can't operate without it. Soil testing is vital."

Cedarbrook's fertilization program uses an organic product after spring aerification to build up the microbial population in the soil, which also enhances the relationship with the root system. High calcium lime in a foliar feeding is used during the summer, and organic fertilizer is used in fall to get the turf ready for winter. GCN

David Wolff is a freelance writer based in Watertown, Wis. He can be reached at dwolff@charter.net.

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by
DOUG
SAUNDERS

When the game of golf began along the Scottish coastline, rolling sand mounds framed the route from the rudimentary teeing ground to the target hole. The mounds provided grazing sheep that burrowed into the hillocks shelter from the wind. These sandy holes created by the sheep were considered unsavory places for golfers to hit their ball, and the hazard known as the bunker was born.

As golf became more popular and designers began to create golf layouts on different types of terrain, sand bunkers became an important feature to defend the golf hole and added more strategy to the game. Players learned to avoid these hazards or develop the skill to play a shot out of them.

In the modern era, bunkers are much different than they were years ago. Bunkers have become road signs to guide players around a course and have become an integral part of the photogenic look of golf courses.

At the same time, the golfing public's perception has changed. Bunkers are the subject of as many complaints as any other feature on the golf course. While bunkers used to be considered a penalty zone, now players demand they are maintained like any other area of the course. Currently, golfers are concerned about sand type, compaction,

drainage and consistency to a degree that was unimaginable 10 years ago.

The public sees PGA Tour players preferring a bunker lie to a rough lie and feels this is proper strategy. They also are concerned about the playability of bunkers.

"Sand bunkers and their care have become more intense as golfers now look upon them as playable features," says Paul B. Latshaw, certified golf course superintendent of Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin, Ohio. "Every superintendent must address bunkers with a new intensity."

Latshaw has seen this transformation while working with his father, Paul R. Latshaw, preparing for seven major championships at such venues as Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia, Congressional Golf Club in Bethesda, Md. and Oak Hill Golf Club in Rochester, N.Y.

What makes bunker care so challenging is the combination of variables – sand quality, the strata under the sand, the effect of irrigation water around bunkers, and shapes and angles of the faces and edges of bunkers. Added to that are golfers shifting the surface sand and displacing it with shots.

Sand type

The first priority for most superintendents is assessing the condition of the sand. Throughout time, bunker sand will deteriorate and become contaminated from rain, the intermingling with rocks and pebbles from the substrata, and the collection of debris in them. Most courses will see a need to add or replace sand every four or five years, but this expensive process dictates a careful plan to extend the life of additional sand.

First, it's important to consider proper sand to use. U.S. Golf Association standards for bunker sand set a range for particle sizes between 0.25 mm and 1 mm with 75 percent of the particles ranging in size between 0.25 and 0.50 mm. This size helps promote effective drainage by providing a percolation rate of 20 to 25 inches per hour. Angular particles are important because they cling together to create a consistent texture.

Next to consider are texture, color and cost.

Because the USGA-specified sands are specialized, finding the right local suppliers is important because it can be difficult to find the required sand. Sand color varies from bright white to tans, browns and grays. Color choice can be driven by preference and cost.

"You could purchase good bunker sand 15 years ago for \$18 to \$22 a ton, and now it runs about \$30 to \$40 per ton," says John McDonald of Jessup, Md.-based McDonald & Sons Construction. "I have even seen some courses paying up to \$60 to \$65 per ton."

Bunker lining

Another aspect of bunkers is liners. Geotextile liners have improved bunkers. The fabric materials form a barrier between the bunker sand and the substrata that will control the migration of soil and rocks up into the bunker but will not impede drainage. Some of the newer fabrics come in a spun form similar to air filters for furnaces and vary in thickness. These materials also help hold sand better on steep-faced bunkers, which helps reduce repair time.

At the 36-hole, private Arrow Creek Golf Club in Reno, Nev., superintendent Mike Donahue had some concerns with a complete bunker renovation project last summer.

"Our first concern was dealing with a severe contamination problem by lining all of the bunkers," Donahue says. "I knew that this would be costly and time consuming, so rather than buying new sand, we recycled the original sand by screening it on site. We considered using a gunnite-sprayed bunker stabilizer to line the bunkers, but I felt the cost – almost 50 percent more than the fabric – was too steep. We rebuilt 130 bunkers on one course in a five-month period and never closed down the golf course."

Although fabric linings have shown to protect against migration of subsoil effectively, they have presented other problems. Throughout time, the fabrics can shift, loosen or be pulled up by thoughtless raking or mechanical rakes and appear around the edges of the bunkers.

Matt Shaffer, superintendent at Merion



Photo: Kyle Phillips Golf Course Design

Architect Kyle Phillips says sand might be the best medium on which to place bunker drain pipes.

Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa., which recently remodeled its bunkers, says the course prides itself on its traditional look but wanted to improve the bunker quality through the use of modern materials. Geotextile linings were installed in all bunkers, and Shaffer found some helpful ways to deal with some of the problems they create.

"I find that you should occasionally check the staples that secure the liners to the bunker walls to make sure there is a solid connection to the soil," Shaffer says. "You must be careful not to pull the fabric up and let

sand start to work under it. I have found that using a propane torch to burn off any exposed edges of the fabric is much handier than trying cut away any fabric."

To maintain the distinctive, ragged-looking bunkers at Merion, Shaffer has let the fescues grow around and over the bunker edges and maintains them with pitchforks by working the edges of the grass to the sand on a regular basis.

Drainage

When rebuilding a bunker, drainage must

be addressed. Because players want more consistency in bunkers and expect quicker recovery after heavy rains, it's necessary to use more piping. Usually this drain system is set in gravel, but there are other ideas about what material should be used.

Granite Bay, Calif.-based golf course architect Kyle Phillips, whose designs include the Kingsbarns Golf Links in St. Andrews, Scotland, says sand could be the best medium on which to place drain pipes in bunkers.

"An all-sand medium will naturally draw

Glen Arbor Golf Club in Bedford, N.Y., recently completed a major bunker renovation project.



Photo: Glen Arbor Golf Club



Photo: Muirfield Village Golf Club

Muirfield Village Golf Club superintendent Paul B. Latshaw says he cares for bunkers on his course with added intensity to please golfers.



Photo: Muirfield Village Golf Club

Mechanical rakes are fine for large bunkers or bunkers with multiple exit points, but smaller bunkers might need to be raked by hand.

water to the drain pipe, where gravel can trap the water, causing ponding in the bunker," Phillips says.

Raking

Adding sand, protecting against soil migration and improving drainage makes for a better bunker. Still, bunkers need to be maintained on a regular basis to prolong the life of the sand and maintain satisfactory playing conditions.

Many private clubs and high-end daily-fee facilities have opted to hand-rake bunkers to provide consistency players demand. Mechan-

ical rakes were introduced to quicken bunker preparation, but for many, using mechanical rakes has created problems. The mechanical rakes can help greatly in large bunkers and waste areas, but their use is limited in smaller greenside bunkers. The machines can turn on a dime, but in small bunkers there might only be one point of entry that, throughout time, will become an unsightly, compressed area. The machines can form piles of sand, leading to an inconsistent sand depth. Also, tongs on the machines can grab onto the geotextile linings, causing severe damage.

"I feel the best way to maintain bunkers is

by hand-raking," Latshaw says. "You can get a more uniform look and texture to the bunkers by hand-raking. The mechanical rakes are helpful if we have heavy rain damage and need to move a lot of sand back into place. We use them in some fairway bunkers, but only where there are numerous entry points. It's a good idea to provide a lot of training to the operator of these machines to avoid causing any major damage."

Ken Benoit, certified golf course superintendent at Glen Arbor Golf Club in Bedford, N.Y., recently completed a major bunker renovation project and also feels hand-raking is the best way to give players what they want.

"Bunkers are a completely contained environment that demands care and observation," Benoit says. "I train all of my employees on how to rake them properly to give me more flexibility with my manpower. Through hand-raking, crew members develop a better feel for the depth of the sand and can notice situations that could be the first signs of problems."

All of the care for and work on bunkers is going toward one goal: providing the best sand surface for golfers to play and at the same time maintaining a natural look to the hazard. Latshaw describes the work as trying to create a look of benign neglect. Shaffer puts it another way.

"We spend so much time and money to make it look like we did nothing at all," Shaffer says. GCN

Doug Saunders is a freelance writer based in Truckee, Calif. He can be reached at dougs@sierra.net.



Photo: Glen Arbor Golf Club

Workers at Glen Arbor Golf Club are trained how to hand-rake bunkers so they can notice situations that could be the first signs of problems.



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Getting along

COURSES OFFER TIPS FOR COEXISTING WITH NEIGHBORS

by
DEREK
RICE

Owning a home on a golf course is a dream for many people, but for those who have made it a reality, errant golf shots, noisy equipment, flooding and other issues can turn that dream into a nightmare.

So how do clubs and courses deal with these issues? After all, it's not as if a course can ban golfers who hit bad shots or morning maintenance. Both are vital to a course's survival. And while it's reasonable to expect that homeowners understand what they're getting into when they purchase a home on a golf course, there always are gray areas that can compromise the relationship between a course and homeowners.

Fore!

At one time or another, every golfer has hit a shot that didn't go exactly where he or she

was aiming. In most cases, this results in a tough next shot, but when there are homes lining a fairway, that off-target shot can result in property damage.

This is something Brad Dutler, the general manager of Plantation Golf Club in Frisco, Texas, has come to expect. All of Plantation's fairways are lined on both sides with homes, creating a rather unforgiving space for golfers.

"I've never seen homes as close to being in play as they are at Plantation," Dutler says. "You have your playing corridor, 20 to 25 yards of rough, then you have a fence line all the way around the golf course, five to 10 yards of homeowner grass, and then the house. So it's tight."

While Dutler couldn't say exactly how many broken-window complaints the club receives in a year, he says there are a lot of

issues, but nothing too serious. How those incidents are resolved depends mainly on the golfer.

"Golfers are responsible for their actions," he says. "We hope that if they do break a window, they're honest and come forward and talk with the homeowner, but I can't make them do that. If a homeowner calls, and his window has just been broken and says the person wasn't forthcoming, we'll try to help them out. I, or a member of my staff, will go out if they've got a good description of the group or a cart number, we'll try to talk to them and mediate that way if possible. Sometimes we're successful, and sometimes we're not."

Plantation, which is owned and operated by Evergreen Golf Alliance, doesn't have the market cornered on broken windows, though. At Weymouth Valley's Fox Meadow



Drainage is one of the biggest complaints from homeowners living near Fox Meadows Golf Course in Medina, Ohio.

Photo: Fox Meadows Golf Course

Golf Course in Medina, Ohio, superintendent Tim Cunningham has heard plenty of complaints.

"We've had the situation come up, and the club takes the stance that golfers are out there at their own risk," he says. "Most of the time, they'll knock on the door or leave a business card, but not always. That doesn't make the homeowner very happy because they then have to pay the deductible on their insurance."

While Don Sutton, superintendent at Kinsale Golf Club in Powell, Ohio, hasn't had much trouble with errant shots on his course, which opened in 2004, that doesn't mean he's unfamiliar with the problem.

"At a previous course where I worked, there was this certain house that tended to get hit a lot," Sutton says. "In that situation, the homeowner decided he wanted to plant trees and asked if he could plant them on the golf course, so that was a win-win situation for us and for him."

Maintenance

For those homeowners who live close to a tee, green or maintenance facility, the sound of equipment starting at the crack of dawn during the summer can be a nuisance. But at the same time, it has to be done to keep a course in tip-top shape. Fortunately for Dutler, that hasn't been an issue at Plantation.

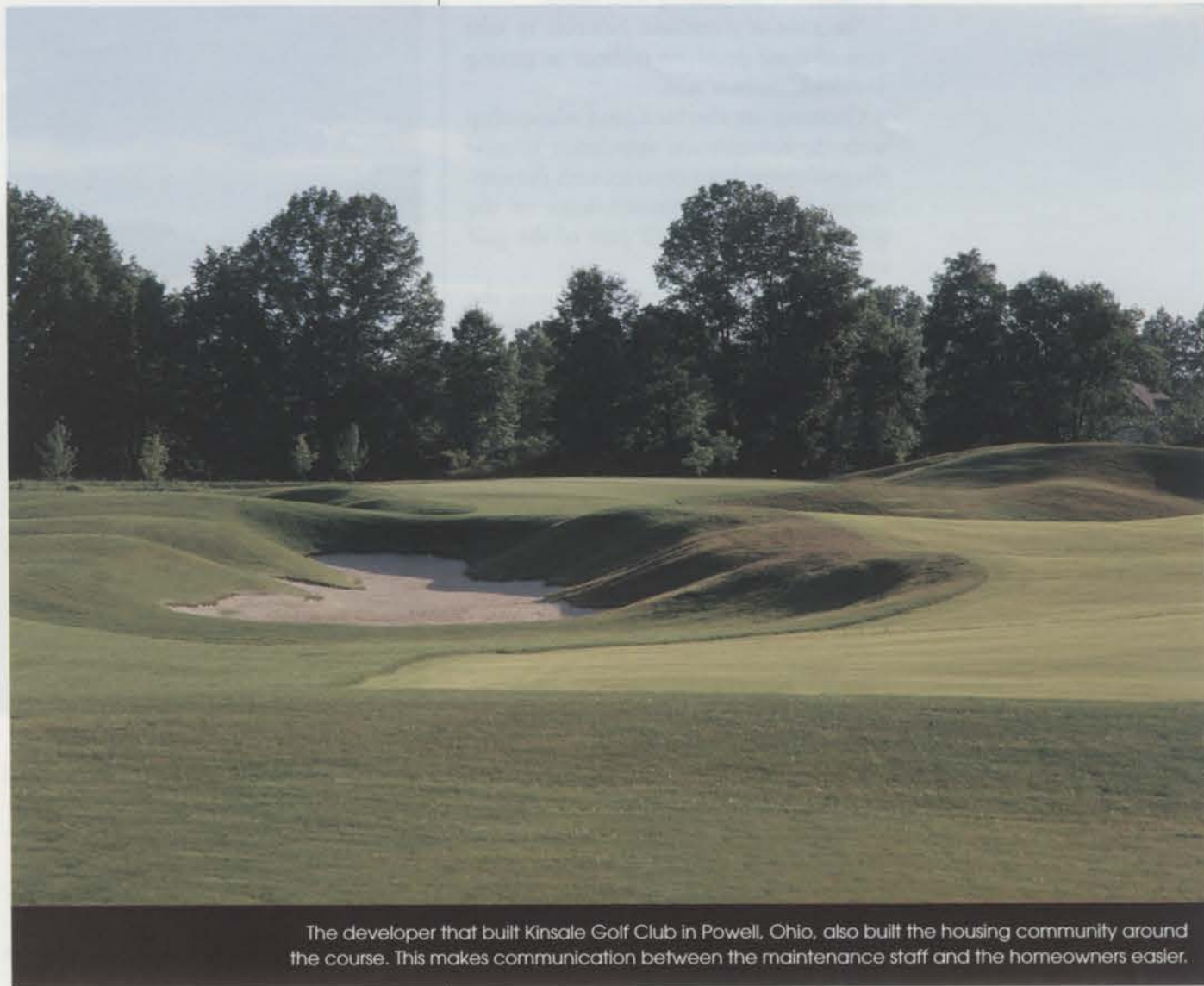
"The City of Frisco has a noise ordinance that states we can't operate machinery until a specific time each day, and we try to abide by that as much as we can," he says. "Obviously, there are some days when we can't because we have to get golfers on the course. If it's heavy machinery, we're not going to operate that until the specified time."

According to Cunningham, noise hasn't been an issue at Fox Meadow, which might be surprising given the proximity of one of the homes to the maintenance facility.

"He was good about working things out before building," Cunningham says. "Before he built, the homeowner did his due diligence – he wanted to know what time we normally started our equipment."

One misconception some homeowners have is that golf course maintenance staffs also are their own personal maintenance staffs. Whenever Sutton sees that, he makes sure to nip it in the bud.

"From time to time, some people think we can stop and pick up their clippings from their yard," Sutton says. "That's not a service we offer to them, so as quickly as I see that starting, I will approach the homeowner and ask them not to do that."



The developer that built Kinsale Golf Club in Powell, Ohio, also built the housing community around the course. This makes communication between the maintenance staff and the homeowners easier.

Drainage, water issues

Drainage and flooding can be rather contentious issues between homeowners and golf courses. At Plantation, most of the homes sit higher than the course, but there are those that sit lower.

"All the water from the homes will run onto the golf course, and it just happens to run toward these other people's homes because they're a little bit lower," Dutler says. "For the most part, however, it doesn't cause too many problems, except in the spring, when the rains are at their most torrential."

Fox Meadow has dealt with drainage and flooding as well. Cunningham says it's one of the biggest homeowner complaints.

"Drainage has been one of the big problems that we try and rectify," he says. "If there is a problem we correct it. In one particular situation on our driving range, we made an adjustment – we brought a bulldozer in here and did some regrading to redirect water."

Besides flooding, the most common water-related issue Dutler has at Plantation is

the occasional sprinkler head that misfires.

"Sometimes the settings get knocked off and at two or three in the morning, they get peppered with perimeter heads hitting their house," he says. "Our perimeter heads are set to cover 180 degrees, but sometimes the setting that keeps it from making a full circle will get knocked loose. That might happen once every couple of years."

Building good will

One advantage Kinsale has is the developer who built the housing community also owns the golf course. This allows the company to have a person in charge of the homeowners association, making communication and cooperation between homeowners and the course much easier.

"He can field a lot of the questions and deal with any contractor we might use for mowing open spaces and things like that," Sutton says. "He's really a liaison between the homeowners association, the golf course and the developer. So that's something that has worked out really well for us."

Having that liaison allows Kinsale to be proactive when dealing with issues.

"In a lot of situations, he's able to take care of those problems without us getting involved," Sutton says.

Cunningham also has a good relationship with the homeowners association because the golf course has a contract with the association to perform maintenance on the green spaces that aren't part of the golf course.

"It benefits the company because the green spaces, which you would assume are part of the golf course, are actually owned by the association," Cunningham says. "We worked out an arrangement with them in which we are contracted to do the fertilization, weed treatment and mowing of the bigger green spaces that are closer to entrances to the development."

Attentiveness is the key to Cunningham's approach when dealing with homeowner complaints.

"We need them like they need us, so when they call with any concerns, I make sure I listen and then meet with them and look at the situation," he says.

Often, even minor situations command Cunningham's attention.

"We have a restroom out on the fifth hole," he says. "It's a well-done restroom – not a portable one – but we had a homeowner who complained that they could see it from their backyard. They asked if we could screen it with some pine trees, and we did that just to alleviate any other problems."

When dealing with homeowners, Dutler agrees listening and being polite can go a long way toward keeping the peace – although that's not always the case.

"We try to be as cordial and helpful as we absolutely can, but sometimes we aren't able to give them the result they're looking for,"



Photo: Revere Country Club

When dealing with homeowners, listening and being polite can go a long way toward keeping the peace between a golf course maintenance staff and homeowners.

he says. "We've got to be sure we're doing things that everybody can live with as opposed to being ultra-aggressive and drawing a line in the sand."

Dutler says being cordial is a two-way street, and while golf course staff at Plantation technically doesn't offer services to homeowners, there are exceptions.

"Sometimes a homeowner might need some help with something, and they'll ask my superintendent to help out with something they don't have the equipment for," he says. "If they ask and they're friendly about it, our superintendent is more than willing to help out with those issues when he has time to do that. If they ask nicely,

generally it's not a problem. It's those little things that really help us develop a good relationship with the individual homeowner and with the homeowners association as well."

But perhaps the best advice for keeping the peace with homeowners comes from Cunningham.

"Try to alleviate anything you see that might flare up and become volatile," he says. "Nip it in the bud and be proactive, because it can come back to hurt you." GCN

Derek Rice is a freelance writer and editor from Portland, Maine. He can be reached at derekrice@maine.rr.com.



Equipment noise hasn't been an issue for homeowners near Fox Meadows Golf Course.

Photo: Fox Meadows Golf Club

Tips for keeping the peace with the neighbors

- **Be proactive.** If you see a potential problem that might arise in the future, head it off early.
- **Communicate.** In most cases, you can keep in touch with the surrounding community through a homeowners or neighborhood association.
- **Lend a hand.** If it doesn't stress your schedule or your budget, help out a homeowner who asks for it. The good will you develop will pay off in the long run.
- **Be attentive.** If you ignore homeowners, their complaints will only multiply. Listening to their issues and realizing you need them as much as they need you will go a long way toward smoothing out any problems.
- **Don't be a pushover.** If you feel a homeowner is taking advantage of you or your staff, speak to them. Often, the root of the problem will be a simple misunderstanding.

Curative management of dollar spot in fairways

A curative management test was conducted at The Ohio State University Turfgrass Research Center in Columbus, Ohio, on Penncross creeping bentgrass and annual bluegrass. The mowing height was 0.4 inches with the clippings removed, and the area was irrigated as needed.

The condition of the sward was poor because of active dollar spot with fair color, no thatch and good density. No fertilizer was applied before or during the evaluation unless noted in the treatments. The soil was Crosby B silt loam with a pH of 7.3. Individual plots measured 6 feet by 10 feet and 2 feet between blocks. They were arranged in a randomized complete block design with four replications.

Treatments were applied with a hand-held, carbon-dioxide-powered boom sprayer with 6503 TeeJet nozzles at 40 psi (a water equivalent to 2 gallons of water per 1,000 square feet). All treatments were started July 24, 2003. A single application was made with each of the fungicide treatments.

The percentage of plot area blighted was assessed visually on a linear 0-to-100-percent scale in which zero equals no blight, and 100 equals the entire plot blighted. The average high and low air temperatures (F) and rainfall (inches) for each month were: 83.6, 62.7 and 4.3 in July and 84.0, 64.1 and 12.9 in August.

Environmental conditions were favorable for dollar-spot development and activity from mid-July to mid-August. At the be-

ginning of the evaluation, high levels of the disease symptoms were expressed in the test area from natural inoculum. The test area has no resistance to fungicides.

The study was to evaluate how rapidly a single application of a fungicide, or combination of fungicides and other products, would reduce dollar spot to an acceptable level and how long the disease would be managed. After six days, all treatments showed a significant reduction of disease compared with the untreated check. A less-than-2-percent disease rating was required to be considered acceptable. Low label rates, single applications of contact fungicides, fertilizer alone and the use of growth regulators were unacceptable in the management of the disease. GCN

Product evaluations

| Treatment, formulation, rate per 1,000 square feet | % plot blighted by dollar spot | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | July 15 1 DAT* | July 30 6 DAT | Aug. 8 15 DAT | Aug. 20 27 DAT |
| 1. Untreated | 27.5 | 43.8 | 62.5 | 22.5 |
| 2. Emerald, 70WG, 0.18 oz. | 23.8 | 4.5 | 0.3 | 1.8 |
| 3. Banner Maxx, 2EC, 1.0 oz. | 27.5 | 4.5 | 1.8 | 14.8 |
| 4. Daconil Ultrex, 82.5WG, 1.8 oz. | 30.0 | 13.0 | 38.8 | 31.3 |
| 5. Daconil Ultrex, 82.5 WG, 3.2 oz. | 31.3 | 8.0 | 18.8 | 32.5 |
| 6. Daconil Ultrex, 82.5WG, 1.8 oz., plus Banner Maxx, 2EC, 0.5 oz. | 23.8 | 5.5 | 3.3 | 22.5 |
| 7. Daconil Ultrex, 82.5WG, 3.2 oz., plus Banner Maxx, 2EC, 1.0 oz. | 30.0 | 6.8 | 0.5 | 4.8 |
| 8. Daconil Ultrex, 82.5 WG, 3.2 oz., followed by Banner Maxx, 2EC, 1.0 oz. 7 days later | 28.8 | 8.5 | 0.8 | 0.5 |
| 9. Daconil Ultrex, 82.5WG, 3.2 oz., plus Banner Maxx, 2EC, 1.0 oz., plus Green Relief, 0.75 lb. N per 1,000 sq. ft. | 23.8 | 7.3 | 0.3 | 5.8 |
| 10. Daconil Ultrex, 82.5WG, 3.2 oz., plus Banner Maxx, 2EC, 1.0 oz., plus Primo, 1ME, 0.25 oz. | 26.3 | 13.3 | 20.0 | 45.0 |
| 11. Fertilizer 18-3-18, 0.75 lb. N per 1,000 sq. ft. | 20.0 | 47.5 | 48.8 | 22.5 |
| 12. Chipco, 26GT 2SC, 2.0 oz. | 23.8 | 3.3 | 1.8 | 14.3 |
| 13. Chipco, 26GT 2SC, 4.0 oz. | 27.5 | 5.3 | 1.0 | 18.8 |
| 14. Banner Maxx, 2EC, 0.25 oz., plus Bayleton, 50WG, 0.13 oz. | 21.3 | 3.0 | 5.8 | 26.3 |
| Least significant difference 0.05 | 14.17 | 15.05 | 14.67 | 13.17 |

* Denotes days after treatment

Source: The Ohio State University, Department of plant pathology, J.W. Rimelspach, T.E. Hicks and M.J. Boehm; 2003.



Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 35-year member of the GCSAA and can be reached at terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

Globetrotting consulting agronomist Terry Buchen visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in-hand. He will share helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits – as well as a few ideas of his own – with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.

travels with TERRY

A dedicated greens roller is useful for increasing the speed of a putting surface and smoothing out ball roll. Using walk-behind models has its advantages over riding models because they're easier to use on significantly contoured greens. Moving along the contours better, they cause less damage and can be turned around much easier when bunker surrounds are close to the putting surface.

The walk-behind greens roller (at right) began as a 1949 Toro Series IV greens mower that was significantly modified by David Kimmelman, a former equipment mechanic who envisioned, designed and constructed the greens rollers. The bed bar and reel were removed, and a large stock front roller from a Toro GM3 roller kit was installed with greaseable bearings and seals where the reel used to be mounted. To add more weight, a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick steel plate (weighing about 110 pounds) was placed on the frame, replacing the sheet metal the motor was formerly sitting on. A metal rack was built in-house to hold the 4-inch-by-18-inch-by- $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch weight bars. The weight can be adjusted by using one to four bars at a time. Each bar weighs about 20 pounds. The mower alone weighs about 225 pounds, and by adding four weight bars, it weighs 305 pounds.

Tom Walker, golf course manager at The Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio, uses five dedicated greens rollers, including the one pictured, in his routine maintenance regimen to help improve playing conditions for his members and their guests.

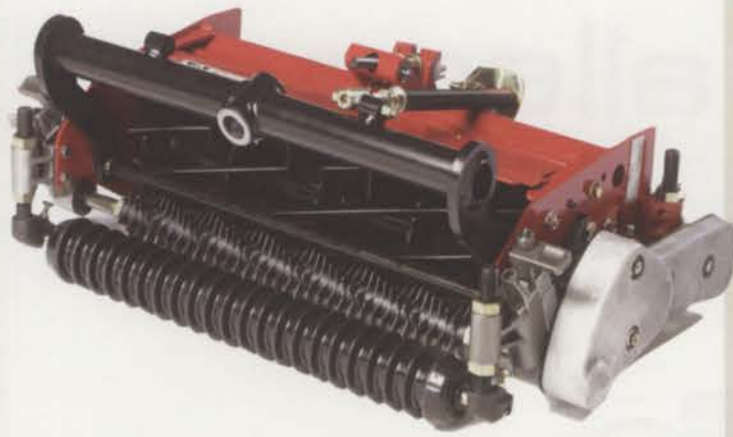


As soon as maintenance equipment usage is done for the day, and then after it's refueled, thoroughly cleaned and parked in its designated space, the engine compartment is raised to the open position. This helps remind the maintenance employees to check all the fluid levels prior to the next usage.

Examples include: raising hoods to expose the engines on the riding green, tee, fairway and rough mowers; raising the dump bodies on the turf trucksters; raising the seats on the gasoline and electric turf vehicles, etc. This simple, but highly effective procedure, helps perform a pre-engine startup check of the fluid levels – engine oil, radiator, battery water, power steering, hydraulic fluid – as directed by the golf course manager and equipment technician before they're used.

The procedure has been in use for the past seven years at Golf und Country Club Seddiner See in Wildenbruch, Germany, and no equipment failures have occurred from lack of fluids. The procedure encourages the maintenance staff to take ownership and better care of the maintenance equipment.

David Duke, MG, course manager at the Golf und Country Club Seddiner See is pleased with the pride his employees have taken in this procedure, which has helped improve the reliability of the maintenance equipment and reduce equipment-repair costs. GCN



Reelmaster fairway groomer

- Stands up turf and reduces grain for a cleaner, more uniform cut
- Improves the appearance and playability of fairways by enhancing turf health and providing consistent conditions
- Knocks off morning dew to minimize grass clumping and helps with clipping dispersion
- Available for 7-inch cutting units
- Can be used in conjunction with the company's powered rear-roller brushes

Toro

Circle 200 on reader service form



1200 hydro rake

- Handles varied course terrain, and grooms bunkers and greens efficiently and smoothly
- Equipped with a standard 3-wheel-drive, 16-hp, Vanguard two-cylinder gasoline engine
- Hydrostatic transmission offers simple control with two foot pedals – forward and reverse
- Swing-away body allows easy access to the engine and drive system for maintenance
- Features a front blade, as well as a standard rear rake, to move aeration cores or sand
- The mid-cultivator is designed to break up compaction of sand bunkers
- Available with a box grader for light surface grading and a spring steel fan rake
- Roller/brush/spiker system helps aerate root zones on greens

John Deere

Circle 202 on reader service form

Caster carts

- Functional and flexible
- Handlebar, easy-glide casters and a floor lock allow easy maneuverability, stability and access
- Built-in grip block secures the cart when used in conjunction with the pallet clamp of a stock-picking vehicle to access product in elevated pick locations
- Second cart features a low profile and a convenient spotting handle for easy movement of a standard 48-inch-by-48-inch pallet
- Carts can be used individually or linked together and pulled in a train

Rivers Group

Circle 203 on reader service form



Hose reels

- Promotes water conservation
- Reduces labor
- Improves safety and efficiency
- Extends the life of the hose
- Cart- and trailer-mounted reels provide quick mobility of hoses
- Underground reel permanently stores the hose underground so it can be quickly retrieved to hand-water drought-stressed areas

Reelcraft

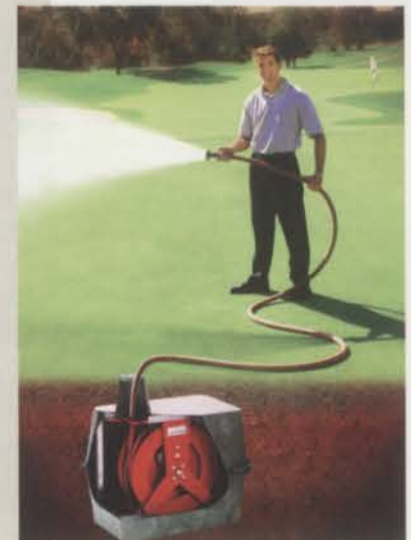
Circle 204 on reader service form

Smart-fit cup and ferrule system

- Flagsticks don't lean, rotate or walk out of the cup
- Cup sockets and ferrules don't excessively wear
- Flagsticks drop in and lift out easily without twisting
- Wide-shoulder ferrules fit better and wear less in any cup style

Standard Golf

Circle 201 on reader service form



Allectus G insecticide

- Controls turf pests above and below the surface
- 90 percent or greater control when used as indicated
- One application provides eight to 12 weeks of residual control; two applications per season for season-long control
- Effective on white grubs, billbug larvae, annual bluegrass weevil larvae, mole crickets, chinch bugs, cutworms and sod webworms
- Application of the granular form ranges from 50 to 125 pounds per acre
- Liquid and fertilizer formulations are pending registration

Bayer Environmental Science

Circle 205 on reader service form

allectus™



Echo Ultimate fungicide

- 82.5 percent spray-dried chlorothalonil fungicide
- Resuspendible in water
- Packaged in a resealable 5-pound, acre-increment container

Sipcam Agro

Circle 206 on reader service form

Basamid G fumigant

- Eliminates weeds, nematodes, grasses and soil diseases
- Can reseed in as soon as 10 to 12 days
- Contains the active ingredient dazomet, which is activated by the addition of water and breaks down into safe, non-ozone depleting components
- Nonrestricted granular formulation requires no complicated application equipment or tarps, thereby reducing labor costs

Certis USA

Circle 208 on reader service form



Liquid formulation of Heritage fungicide

- Offers enhanced efficacy and application flexibility
- Has a faster and higher uptake into the leaf, coupled with a slightly less rainfall leaf surface residue, which allows more uptake from the roots and subsequently greater delivery of active ingredient into the leaves
- Allows a long application interval of strobilurin fungicides
- Provides as much as 28 days of preventive control of more than 33 disease organisms on turfgrass and ornamental plants
- Available in 10-gallon LinkPak

Syngenta Professional Products

Circle 207 on reader service form



Precise pesticide

- Slow and consistent pesticide release
- Allows for accurate and predictable results
- Offers time and placement precision

Pursell Technologies

Circle 209 on reader service form



syngenta

Lose the weeds. Keep the wildlife.



With Reward® aquatic herbicide, it's easy to have well-maintained ponds that add beauty to your course. Reward controls a wide range of submersed, marginal, and floating weeds, including certain algae species. It works extremely fast, within hours of application. To learn more, call 1-866-SYNGENTA or visit online at syngentaprofessionalproducts.com



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Nitamin nitrogen fertilizer

- Ensures a steady release of nitrogen within the soil for extended periods of time
- University and golf course studies show that turf recovery/grow-in is thicker and faster by one to three weeks
- Helps turf develop with dense composition and deep root system
- Keeps turf green for months with fewer applications
- Ideal for new turf establishment, topdressing and divot repair
- Especially effective on high-traffic areas
- Low risk of turf burn
- Binds to the soil, resulting in environmental and nitrogen efficiency benefits
- Effective on a variety of turf species

Georgia-Pacific

Circle 210 on reader service form



THE NEW NITROGEN™



EBZ8000 backpack blower

- The 4.6-hp, 72-cc strato-charged, two-cycle engine doesn't need a catalytic converter
- Air speed is 203 mph
- Weighs 24.9 pounds
- FreeFlow system protects the blower's mechanics from leaves and other debris
- FreshFlow two-stage air cleaner protects the engine from dust and dirt, preventing overheating and piston seizure
- Air-cooled back pad with lumbar support, extra-wide shoulder straps and left or right hand throttle available for the operator
- Waist belt included

RedMax

Circle 213 on reader service form

TurfBreeze fans

- The TB-30-3 model is a 3-hp fan
- Provides 130 feet of air throw, while maintaining the small fan size
- The TB-36-3 model is marginally less quiet and matches the TB-36Q's throw and air volume at a cheaper price

TurfBreeze

Circle 212 on reader service form



SGN100 fertilizer

- MU-40 controlled-release nitrogen
- Designed for high-maintenance turfgrass mowed at 1/2 inch or less
- 90 to 100 SGN sizing allows better penetration into turf canopy
- Covers 10,000 square feet

Howard Johnson's Enterprises

Circle 211 on reader service form



PondPak aquatic pesticide

- Controls excessive aquatic weeds, algae and nutrient overload
- Comes with Sonar Quick Release aquatic herbicide
- Includes Captain algaecide, Revive biological water clarifier, blue pond colorant and a pH test kit
- Available in 1/2-acre and 1-acre sizes

SePRO

Circle 214 on reader service form



(continued from page 29)

ket and underestimating their actual rounds and what the actual yield per round will be. There are many bad projections out there, and they've gotten many developers in trouble. The unfortunate thing is that many times golfers are unwilling to pay the green fees you need to make your project viable.

Q What mistakes do you see other builders make?

Some builders are succumbing to the fact they need a job so bad they're taking the work for less money than they ever have before. Their margins are so thin they can get into trouble. Most golf course contractors self perform 60 to 80 percent of the work. If you get one of those bad jobs and you didn't have enough margin in that job to begin with, you can get into financial trouble. We haven't done that at Landscapes Unlimited. We have a margin structure that if we can't make a reasonable profit, we won't take the work.

Fortunately, not everybody is dropping their prices. If everyone's bid is within 2 percent to 4 percent you feel pretty good about it, but I've seen so many bids in the last year where somebody might be 15 or 20 percent lower, and we don't have that kind of margin on a job. The problem in this case is that everybody loses. We lose because I didn't get the job, the contractor that got the job is probably going to lose money or maybe go out of business, and at the end of the day if that happens, the owner loses because the project won't get done on time if at all, and they will struggle to get their project open on time.

Q Other than price, what's important in the bidding process?

The staff. It's easy to find new people to do a job today because there are many guys looking for work. However, they're an unknown quantity, and having a staff that has worked for a company for some time is important.

And then there's the schedule – is it realistic? Is the contractor telling an owner he can get it done by an unrealistic date? The worst thing that can happen as an owner is to get done late because you might miss your market by a year. Those are two real important things. And the contractor you're hiring – what is their track record, what have they done in the past, can they perform and what are they going to do when the project gets in trouble, e.g., bad weather and tough conditions – can they step up to the plate and accelerate the work to get it done no matter what it takes? There are a lot of contractors that don't have a history of doing that.

Q What's the biggest thing you've learned throughout the years?

Hire the best people you can find – people with a passion for the golf business. Surround yourself with people smarter than you. Hire people that know the parts of the business that maybe you're not as good at or doesn't

business about 28 years, and I'm proud to say that almost all of the clients we've worked for would say good things about us.

Q What's your favorite golf course you've built?

Well, it's not always just the golf course. It's the experience. It's the people that we've

“Some builders are succumbing to the fact they need a job so bad they're taking work for less money than they ever have before.”

interest you. My biggest success in business has been the people that I've hired and surrounded myself with.

Q Is there an aspect of building golf courses that's consistently difficult?

The biggest complication is schedule. We're rarely given enough time to do the project the way it should be done. If you're starting out on a project that should take nine months and you're given six, that project isn't going to be fun. This is a business that we're in because we like it, and if you have to do a project in which you are under then gun from day one, it isn't fun. It all comes down to schedule, and it's the most important thing to the owner.

The owner can't underestimate how valuable it is to hire somebody who's committed to getting your project done when you have to have it done. Carrying costs on a golf course for an extra eight months to a year can cost a project well over a million dollars more than a project that gets done on time. If you're out here in Palm Desert and you're not open by Dec. 1 and you don't open until April 1, you've missed the entire season, and now you have to maintain and water that golf course for another eight months before you have a decent market again, so getting done on time is critical.

Q What's the key to being a successful builder?

Resiliency, doing quality work, doing the simple things well and doing the things you tell the owner you're going to do. We won't take on a project in which we can't perform. Many times the schedules aren't reachable, so we don't take those jobs. It's important to make sure the owner is happy. Be honest and straightforward with the owner. We lose projects from time to time because we're dreadfully honest to the owner. I've been in

worked with. My favorite is Sutton Bay in Agar, S.D. It's near and dear to me because I was so involved in it's development, finding the partners, decorating the clubhouse. It's a beautiful piece of land. It was a labor of love.

Another would be Caves Valley in Baltimore. It's a wonderful golf course, but as wonderful as the course, are the people that we worked with when we built it. It's one of the first big projects we completed. The people there are first class, and they took a chance on a small company. There are so many wonderful people throughout the golf industry and people that have become long-term friends. There aren't a lot of professions in which you can say that you've had a long-term effect on people or that they've had a long-term effect on you. That's why it's such as rewarding business.

Q What's the biggest change in the industry since you started?

The quality of contractors. Twenty-eight years ago, when I started my company, there were only two or three high-quality contractors – Wadsworth being the largest and the best. Today, because of the support and education by the Golf Course Builders Association of America and the evolution of the industry, there are many good contractors.

Q Is retirement on the horizon for you?

I'm 55. I've changed what I do on a daily basis. I don't want to run the business day to day and be tied up with the little details of running a business, but I'll never retire. I'll always have some involvement with a course we own or a golf course we're building. You won't ever see me totally hang it up. Even though I'm in California for the winter, I'm tracking 13 projects out here. I still enjoy working every day. I'm calling on clients or one of our courses every day. I'm having too much fun to retire. GCN

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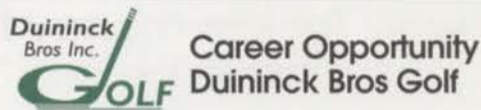
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BY THE NUMBERS

The following numbers are based on the *Golf Course News* 2004 subscriber survey, which had 403 respondents.

The percentage of courses that have a total annual maintenance budget of \$1 million or more

14

\$5,753

The dollar level that must be approved before making scheduled or unscheduled maintenance purchases for those that need one

5 The average number of lakes or ponds on a golf course

6,531

The average total yardage of a golf course

The average number of bunkers on a golf course

49

The average number of years golf course superintendents have been in the golf course industry

20

The percentage of superintendents who have a total of 18 holes on their golf course

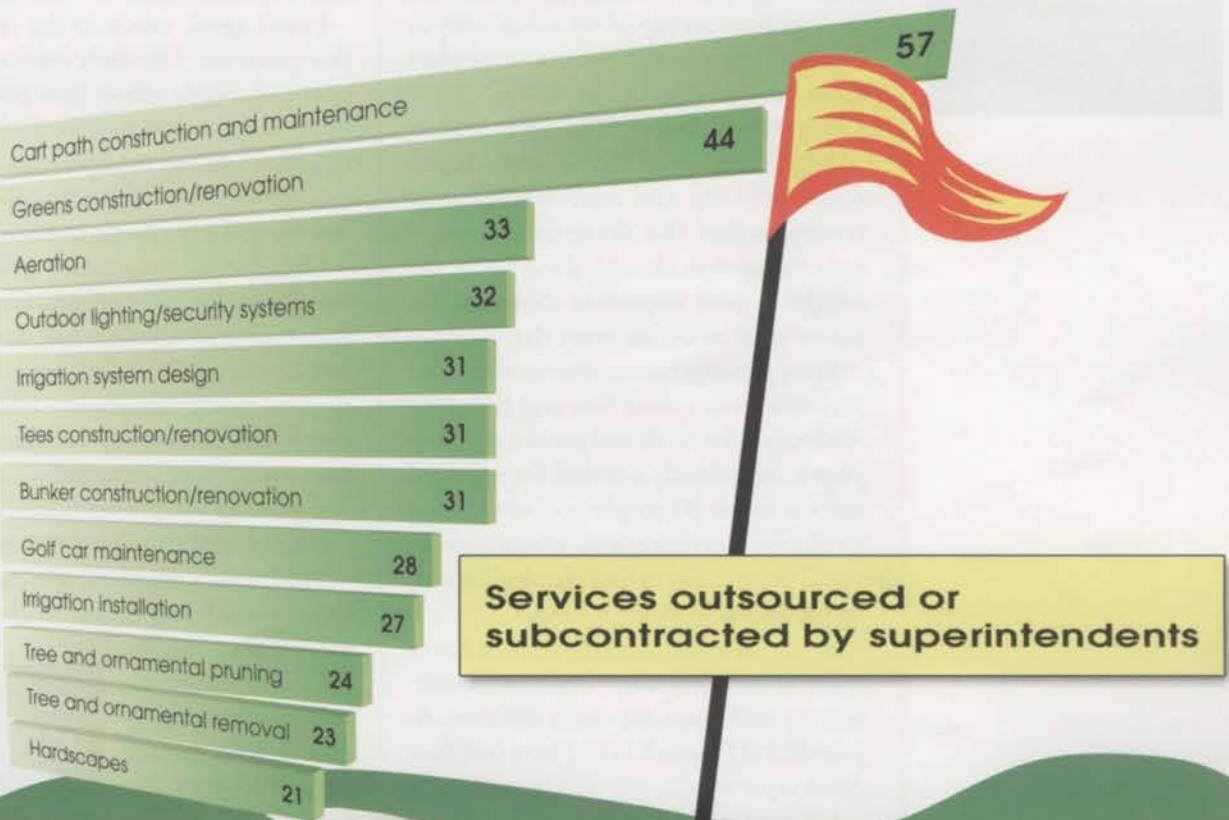
75

The average number of years golf course superintendents have been in their present position at their current course

9



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Services outsourced or subcontracted by superintendents

Source: *Golf Course News* 2004 subscriber survey, which had 403 respondents

QUOTABLE

"When hiring an assistant superintendent, I will hire attitude over skill any day. I can train skills, but I can't train attitude, which is very important."
— **Walt Wilkinson**, superintendent at the public 36-hole Indian Creek Golf Course in Carrollton, Texas

"Some superintendents in the North have tried to employ H2B workers and can't because there are none left. That is going to create problems."
— **Steve Mona**, c.e.o. of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

"Trees in the course are a serious defect, and even when in close proximity prove a detriment."
— **C.B. Macdonald**, golf course architect, in 1906

"You could purchase good bunker sand 15 years ago for \$18 to \$22 a ton, and now it runs around \$30 to \$40 per ton. I have even seen some courses paying as much as \$60 to \$65 per ton."
— **John McDonald** of Jessup, Md.-based McDonald & Sons Construction

First things first

I'm not a big fan of those cliché-ridden management books written by super-wealthy executive types. It steams me to drop \$28 at Barnes & Noble for 300 pages of chest-thumping egotism punctuated by the occasional business success "secret" (e.g., "Hire good people and let them do their jobs" or "Make sure your parents are millionaires before you're born").

But, there is the occasional useful tidbit among all the buzzwords and other leadership tripe. One that stuck with me and has been on top of my mind lately as I'm building a new business, is Stephen Covey's maxim: "First things first." Covey, the author of "The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People" and a zillion other self-help and time-management tomes, makes the deceptively simple point that you should always put the toughest, most important things on the top of your to-do list every day.

In my previous careers, that usually meant personnel issues were first and foremost. Addressing the needs and problems of employees immediately is critical. I've managed staffs as big as 20 people, so I know what it's like for superintendents who seemingly spend the majority of their day dealing with people issues. In short, it stinks.

In my new life, working from a home office as an independent business consultant, my staff issues are much different. As president of Flagstick LLC, I have only four direct reports:

- Executive vice president of finance and chief soccer mom (Mrs. Jones);
- Vice president of fetching daddy a cold one (Michael, age 12);
- Vice president of beating the snot out of daddy at Nintendo (Ryan, age 9); and
- Director of canine affairs (a not-so-bright Airedale terrier called Indy).

As a result of assembling this lean and highly qualified team, I'm able to focus my attention outward, on my clients and customers. Balancing their satisfaction with my financial and operational goals now is first on my list. (That and going fishing a lot more.)

My question to you is: What's first on your list?

It seems that the first waking thought for many superintendents is "What fires will I have to put out today?" It's a natural question in any occupation, but considering the vagaries of Mother Nature

and Murphy's Law, it seems to come up more often for those engaged in the art and science of greenkeeping.

But, I'd suggest your first waking thought ought to be, "What can I do today to balance turf health with golfer satisfaction?" The two things aren't mutually exclusive, but sometimes it seems like it. Achieving both is a difficult and elusive task. It's also a transitory thing ... a moving target that flits from place to place like a hummingbird in a flower garden.

I can't speak much to the turf side of that equation. The daily habits of my director of canine affairs have pretty much made any attempt to grow a nice lawn at Flagstick's global headquarters a futile effort. But, I have a few ideas about golfer satisfaction you should consider.

OK, let's stipulate golfers are knuckleheads. Their expectations are silly, their demands ridiculous and their tastes in fashion often bizarre. But never forget that they are your knuckleheads. Like it or not, these goofballs are your customers. They're the consumers of your product, and they're not showing up at your place because the snack bar makes a mean patty melt.

They're also consumers who can afford to shop around and be more choosy than moms who choose Jiff. Why? Because we built way too many golf courses during the past 15 years. We went from, "If you build it, they will come" to discount programs, bargain-basement initiation fees and otherwise begging for rounds.

So the bottom line is that all of us – superintendents, owners, developers, golf professionals, etc. – need to get over the idea that golfers are a necessary evil. We need to embrace the same philosophy and methods used by retail marketers to survive and thrive until the golf market corrects itself.

For golf course superintendents in particular, that means taking a new look at courses with a consumer's eye. Consider the following questions:

What frustrates players? Are there unmaintained areas or underbrush along fairways that eat balls like trees eat Charlie Brown's kite? I know it frustrates me, as a high handicapper, to spend my day looking for (and likely losing) golf balls. What other

maintenance-related, but fixable frustrations are there on your track?

Also, think about what delights players (other than playing better than usual). Think about simple things, such as sprucing up tee boxes, improving signage – heck, adding better beverage-cart service or drinking water stations – that will stick in the mind of Joe and Susie Hacker.

Most golfer satisfaction studies I've seen come down to perceived value for the dollar. Sure, it all starts with the quality of your putting surfaces, but little things can matter. So, contrary to the old saying, sweat the small stuff. Better yet, assign an assistant to sweat it for you. It's an excellent exercise in reality for a young person who wants to be the head guy some day.

So, I return to my original question: What's first on your list? Given the economy, overbuilding and extreme competition, isn't it time that we make golfer satisfaction our "first thing"?

Just one humble scribbler's opinion.

Speaking of which, this is a good time to speak about what a friend of mine calls "the elephant in the living room." It's his phrase for asking an obvious question to which everyone wants to know the answer. The elephant, in this case, is my rather unexpected presence in a

different venue.

I'm delighted that, after six years at another publication, I've been offered the chance to rant, vent, editorialize, antago-

nize and otherwise open a vein in a brand new place. To me, *Golf Course News* represents something very important in our industry: a forum for business ideas that attempts to address the interests of today's complete golf business, including superintendents, owners, developers, architects, builders and the guy who parks your car at the club (just kidding).

My role with *Golf Course News* is a perfect complement to the establishment of my new business, so it's a great fit for me. I hope it's also a great fit for this magazine, which continues to improve with every issue. Most importantly, I hope my presence with this magazine serves as an invitation to continue our long strange trip together. I'm loving the journey, and I hope you are too. GCN

MOST GOLFER SATISFACTION STUDIES I'VE SEEN COME DOWN TO PERCEIVED VALUE FOR THE DOLLAR.



Pat Jones is president of Flagstick LLC, a consulting firm that provides sales and marketing intelligence to green-industry businesses. He can be reached at psjhawk@cox.net or 440-478-4763.

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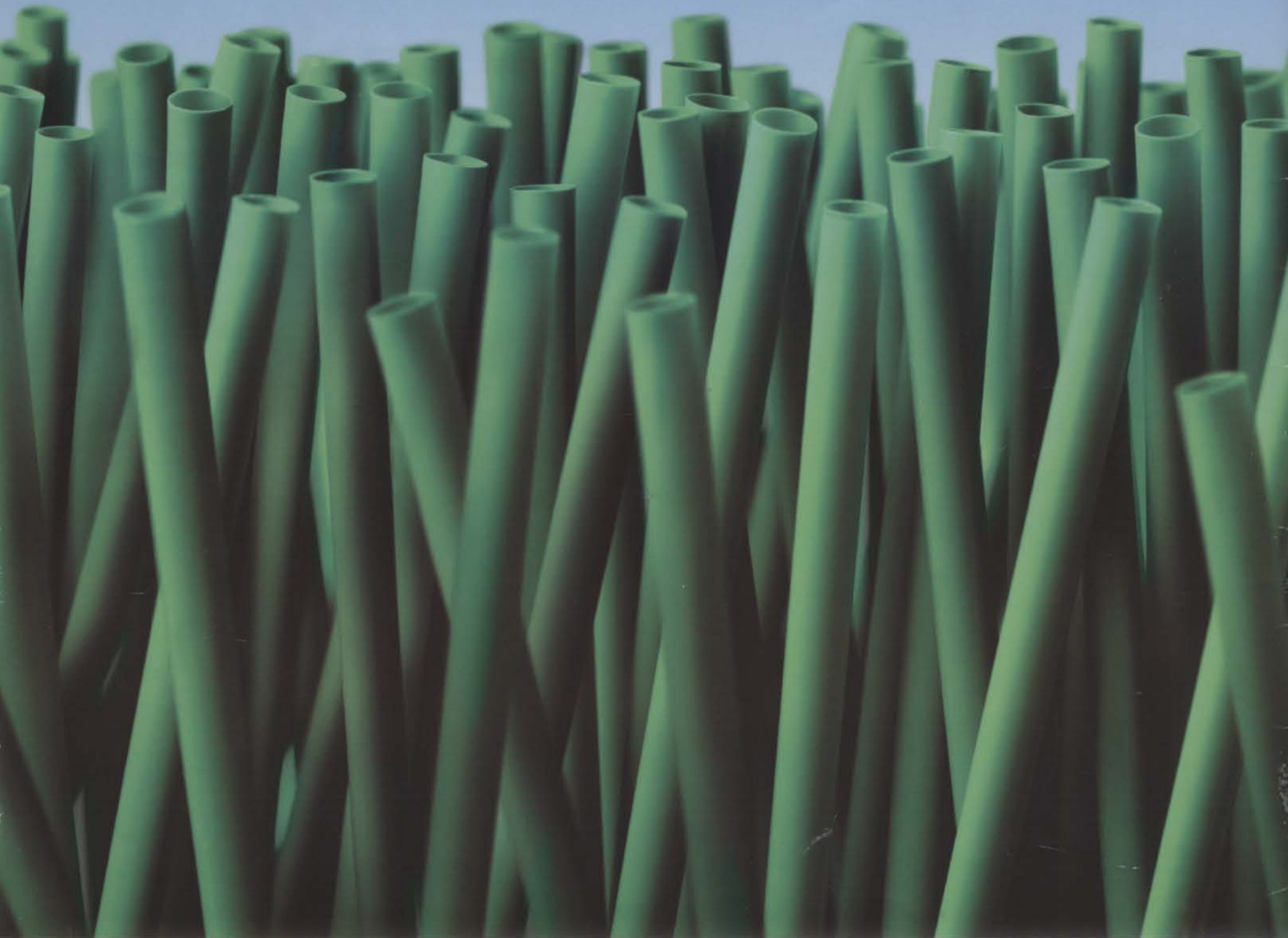
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