

UNCOVER SNOW MOLD-FREE TURF. GUARANTEED.

Feel confident with up to 130 days of control with the **GreenTrust® 365 Snow Mold Guarantee** and look forward to revealing healthy turf next spring.

Scan to download the
Snow Mold Guarantee details.
GreenCastOnline.com/SnowMold



@SyngentaTurf



syngenta®

All photos are either the property of Syngenta or are used with permission.

© 2024 Syngenta. **Important:** Always read and follow label instructions. Some products may not be registered for sale or use in all states or countries and/ or may have state-specific use requirements. Please check with your local extension service to ensure registration and proper use. GreenCast®, GreenTrust®, the Alliance Frame, the Purpose Icon and the Syngenta logo are trademarks of a Syngenta Group Company. All other trademarks are the property of their respective third-party owners. Syngenta Customer Center: 1-866-SYNGENT(A) (796-4368).

SEPTEMBER 2024 | golfcourseindustry.com

GOLF COURSE[®] INDUSTRY



THE COST OF CALIFORNIA

MINIMUM-WAGE hikes
and seemingly constant
INFLATION feels more
prevalent in the **Golden
State** than anywhere else
in the country. CAN GOLF
COURSE MAINTENANCE
— AND GOLF IN
GENERAL — KEEP UP?



VerdeLNX™

A REVOLUTIONARY LINE OF PLANT-BASED X-ION ENHANCED NUTRITION

VerdeLNX takes your turf nutrition to a new level of performance. The novel properties of fermented oilseed extract, combined with our newly-developed X-ion delivery technology derived from natural resources, create a synergistic effect that delivers nutrition to the plant more effectively than any other product on the market today.

The incorporation of highly concentrated proprietary fermented oilseed extract capitalizes on natural plant-to-plant interactions, providing consistent foliar and soil nutrient uptake and enhanced root development and turf color. This, paired with our newly developed X-ion delivery technology, delivers a maximization of both foliar absorption and root uptake of the nutrient package, while enhancing soil infiltration and ensuring uniformity of application coverage.

UNLOCK A NEW ERA OF TURF ENHANCEMENT TECHNOLOGY



THE COST OF CALIFORNIA

16

MINIMUM-WAGE hikes and seemingly constant **INFLATION** feels more prevalent in the **Golden State** than anywhere else in the country. **CAN GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE — AND GOLF IN GENERAL — KEEP UP?**

COLUMNS

- 14 GAME PLAN**
Henry DeLozier: The art of subtle persuasion
- 40 OUTSIDE THE ROPES**
Tim Moraghan: Designing details
- 50 GOLF THERAPY**
Bradley S. Klein: Margin of error: slim
- 58 AMERICA'S GREENKEEPER**
Matthew Wharton: Ut prosim

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 TEEING OFF:** Adding to the team
- 5 NOTEBOOK:** Southern golf trifecta
- 12 WONDERFUL WOMEN:** Carey Hofner
- 56 TRAVELS WITH TERRY:** Equipment ideas
- 57 CLASSIFIEDS / INDEX**

FEATURES

Cover story

16 THE COST OF CALIFORNIA

Wage hikes and constant inflation feel more prevalent in the Golden State. Can golf course maintenance keep up?

Spotlight

31 GREETINGS FROM VIRGINIA'S TALLEST TOWN

After 54 years as a private club, local love is helping Fincastle flourish for public play.

Management

42 COPING WITH COMPLAINTS

Criticism is part of the job. Fortunately, there are plenty of strategies for handling it.

Business

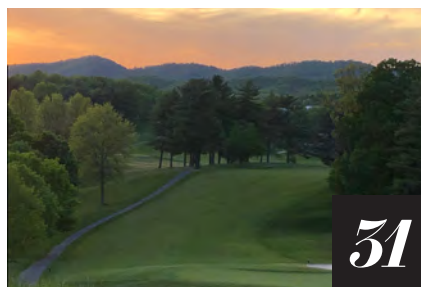
44 HOW TO HANDLE THE SELLERS

Do EOPs start too early? End too late? A veteran turf pro talks with his local reps to learn more about a confusing process.

Short course stories

52 THICK WOODS, DELIGHTFUL SHOTS

The creators of Oakwood Country Club's par-3 course have brought something unconventional to Midwest private golf.



31



25

ADDING TO THE TEAM

It's an honor for me to be writing to you as *Golf Course Industry's* new assistant editor. You may have seen a byline with my name on it in recent months, as I recently completed my internship here with our driven and creative team. At the beginning of August, I graduated from Kent State University with a bachelor's degree in journalism and joined the *Golf Course Industry* team full time.

My love for journalism started in high school but didn't fully develop until my second year of college. I have always enjoyed writing and talking with people, and journalism allows me to do both. I spent five semesters working for *KentWired/The Kent Stater*, where I learned more than I could imagine, and met some of the best people in my life. I was able to tell some amazing stories and talk with a lot of unique people, which I plan to continue to do. So, what does this mean to the people who work on golf courses?

Turns out, golf has been a bigger part of my life than I realized from nearly the beginning. I was about 3 when I first picked up a golf club. My dad coached high school girls' golf, so I would occasionally stop by a practice. My dad worked weekend mornings mowing greens and he and my grandfather both spent a lot of hours playing. I've been around the game my whole life. But my dad's golf on the television was enough to put me to sleep on Sunday afternoons and I would rarely pick up a club. My golf journey went about as far as that—until recently.

I started working at Downview Sports Center, a city-owned miniature golf course and driving range in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, when I was 16. I started working during COVID-19 and was able to remember names of the regular customers and get to know why they love the game so much—or hate it, if I caught them on a bad day.

After a few years, I moved to Brookledge Golf Club, where I worked as a beverage cart girl and behind the concessions bar. I still work some weekend shifts there, because I have come to love the people and environment so much. It was through working there that I learned golf terminology and course etiquette. But more important, the job taught me the importance of talking to people. Helping others is a lifelong passion of mine, and the job provided me an opportunity to put a smile on someone's face and create some small talk. The lessons I learned at Brookledge have stuck with me through life—and now into my career.

As a person who wants to know as much as she can when it comes to the job, when I started my internship with *Golf Course Industry* this summer, I decided I should give it my all. Which means it was time to learn how to play this ever-evolving game instead of just working around it.

I have spent the last three months eating, sleeping and breathing golf. I have read as much material on golf and golf course maintenance as possible, toured courses, talked with industry workers and gotten out to play on a course at least once a week. I have given it my all, and in turn, found a game that I love. A pair of New Balance golf shoes, a gorilla club head cover, and many pink golf balls have been added to my collection. By the time you're reading this, I'm sure there will be more additions. The investments, both financially (the shoes) and personally, have ultimately paid off, because I got the opportunity to join our team full time.

As I begin my new position as an assistant editor, I hope to provide readers with a new perspective and a new voice. As a female working in a predominantly male industry, I hope to attract an audience of all kinds and introduce new people to the ideas we present. I fell in love with writing and storytelling, bringing audiences' attention to things they should know about. And now, I plan to continue *Golf Course Industry's* role in recognizing the outstanding people and courses the golf business has to offer. 🌱



Kelsie Horner

Kelsie Horner, Assistant Editor
khorner@gie.net

GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

MISSION STATEMENT
*To provide an independent,
innovative and inclusive voice for
today's — and tomorrow's — golf
industry professionals.*

Vol. 56 No. 9

GIE Media, Inc.
5811 Canal Road
Valley View, Ohio 44125
Phone: 800-456-0707
Fax: 216-525-0515

GROUP PUBLISHER

Dave Szy
dszy@gie.net

PUBLISHER + EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Guy Cipriano
gcipriano@gie.net

EDITORIAL

Matt LaWell
Managing Editor • mlawell@gie.net

Kelsie Horner

Assistant Editor • khorner@gie.net

Terry Buchen

Senior Contributing Technical Editor

GRAPHICS / PRODUCTION

Jim Blayney
Creative Director

Kaitlin Sellers

Advertising Production Coordinator

SALES

Russell Warner

National Sales Manager
rwarner@gie.net • 216-393-0293

Jimmy Clark

Account Representative
jclark@gie.net • 216-393-0220

CORPORATE

Richard Foster
Chairman

Chris Foster

President and CEO

Dan Moreland

Publisher Emeritus

James R. Keefe

Executive Vice President

Kelly Antal

Controller

Christina Warner

Director of Data Acquisition

Michelle Wisniewski

Production Manager

Maria Miller

Director, Conferences and Events

Irene Sweeney

Marketing Director

Golf Course Industry is a member of:
*Golf Course Superintendents
Association of America
National Golf Foundation*

*Golf Course Builders Association of America
The Irrigation Association
Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment*



Southern golf trifecta

By Lee Carr

Great events thrive on three things: a worthy course, outstanding maintenance and a willing host.

Talented players and challenging conditions add to the excitement. Historical significance is created through time like bourbon aging in a barrel. The 118th Southern Amateur Championship at Idle Hour Country Club in Lexington, Kentucky, had it all.

Mind you, I didn't intend to write about it. Even as I followed the last group, I wasn't going to write about it. I was enjoying some July sunshine, unraveling the **Donald Ross** design, taking photos and trying to think like an architect: landforms, wind direction, degrees of difficulty, water features, high points, drainage, ecology, maintenance, club variety, hole locations, tees, routing and so much more.

But then, the level of golf was electric.

More than 150 participants from 14 countries had qualified. The gallery grew and grew. The award ceremony felt intimate and classy. Why, when there are so many golf events hosted every year, did this one feel special?

Maybe it started with tradition and this event being a flagstone in the careers of well-known champions. **Bobby Jones** won this event three times — 1917, 1920 and 1922. **Ben Crenshaw**, **Justin Leonard**, **Webb Simpson**, **Kyle Stanley** and **Harris English** are all Southern Amateur champions.

Gene Pearce has extensively covered the first 100 years of history of the Southern Golf Association, which governs the Southern Amateur, in a book aptly titled "Southern Golf Association." The SGA began in 1902 and the Southern Amateur is part of the Elite Amateur Golf Series. This is also the inaugural year for the Elite Am-

ateur Women's Series.

With several teenagers playing in professional events, the competitive level and undeniable talent of amateur golf is striking. **Wenyi Ding**, **Quinnton Crocker** and **Lance Simpson** took first, second and third, respectively, and were a joy to watch. They were polite, respectful and acknowledged the crowd with a grace beyond their years but a sense of fun that felt just right.

They were absolutely stripping it and even when they found themselves in trouble, they plotted a way out through mature course management. Some players saw more than others of the course that SGA executive director **Andy Priest** worked with Idle Hour superintendent **Matthew Wharton** to set up. Idle Hour golf professional **Pete Garvey** also contributed significantly and elevated the event to be ev-

everything that it was.

None of this is particularly unusual, but there was something about how it all came together. The Southern Amateur has been played on several Ross designs, including the Country Club of Birmingham (Birmingham, Alabama), Holston Hills Country Club (Knoxville, Tennessee) and Pinehurst Resort (Pinehurst, North Carolina). Idle Hour is now part of Southern Amateur history.

Views on the front nine are expansive and pastoral. Red gravel cart paths throughout the property are lovely. There is a double green at 2. Off the tees at Nos. 3 and 6, several holes can be seen.

The back nine had a different feel. Don't miss the green on No. 10. Watch the water on No. 13 and be aware of the burns that wind through the property. Enjoy the rustic bridges. No. 12, named Man O' War, is the longest hole on the course at 525 yards and No. 18





played the hardest.

Welcoming the players on the first tee and waiting there at the end of the day was the George W. Adair Memorial trophy, gleaming silver. It is elegant, sturdy, around four feet tall and named after a gentleman who was a benevolent sports enthusiast and closely associated with the legendary Jones. The trophy was first awarded in 1922.

The best thing was watching the crowd grow, reflecting the momentum of the day, as the leaderboard was finalized. The nearer everyone walked to No. 18, the more excitement could be felt. Ding had pulled away, but the excitement was not just for the golf. Idle Hour had a lot to be proud of.

From hosting the players, to opening the grounds, to working through the logistics, the conclusion was something to celebrate. The course and the maintenance were the way the SGA intended. That takes planning and communication and execution.

Members of the maintenance team followed the last group, prepping the

course for regular play and taking care of tournament accessories. A Substack post written by Wharton following the tournament noted that fall aerification was seven weeks away. The tournament had finished, but the grind never stops.

It's worth a break, though. For events at the property where you work, or golf tournaments nearby, maybe take the time to look up and breathe deep. Feel the energy as the leaders walk up No. 18. Watch some talented youth and see if you can spot the future professionals. Pick a hometown favorite. Enjoy the golf, appreciate your accomplishments and those of your maintenance colleagues.

Idle Hour made a commitment and hosted a great event. It all came together: a solid Ross design, the maintenance that showcases that design and the people of Idle Hour collaborating with the leaders of the Southern Golf Association. It was a true trifecta — a winning ticket to be remembered.

Lee Carr is a northeast Ohio-based writer and senior Golf Course Industry contributor.

Tartan Talks 98



Trees are the tallest features in golf, and they play an oversized role in how architects think about a golf course.

Stephen Kay, for example, says he can spend as much time thinking about trees as greens, tees, bunkers and fairways if he's executing design work on a heavily wooded site. Kay performs the bulk of his work in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, and he describes on a *Tartan Talks* podcast segment how mentalities toward trees have changed in markets filled with venerable clubs.

"Twenty-five years ago, it was very, very difficult to convince members to cut down trees," Kay says. "I give thanks to Oakmont and Winged Foot for convincing members to cut down trees on their golf courses. That sort of gave permission to the golf industry that it's OK to cut down trees to open courses up."

Scot Sherman has seen similar changes in the Southeast toward tree management. He followed Kay's appearance on the episode to discuss what he's seen among the oaks, pines and palms on sites where he's worked.

"We want to preserve the natural feeling of the site. Our clients, our owners and golfers demand that today," he says. "It doesn't have to be pure green grass everywhere, so trees are an important part of making it feel native and natural."

To learn more about how Kay and Sherman handle the relationship between trees and golf, find the episode on the Superintendent Radio Network page of popular podcast distribution platforms.

Fescue party in New England

By Kelsie Horner

With the hopes of making better use of the course's unique topography, The International Golf Club's Pines course is completing a full-course renovation with the implementation of fescue on its fairways.

The project began at the club in suburban Boston in 2022, as architects **Bill Coore** and **Ben Crenshaw** made the decision to grow and replace the fairways with fescue grass, a cool-season turfgrass. Maintaining a golf course with fescue is not a common task in New England.

The Pines, one of The International's two courses, opened for play in 1955. The **Geoffrey Cornish**-designed course was named the longest golf course in

the world at 8,040 yards. The property was purchased by International Telephone & Telegraph in 1961, and the course served as a retreat space and private club.

In 1967, ITT renamed the course The International Club and in 1972, **Robert Trent Jones** completed a renovation softening the bunkers and greens and lengthening the course to 8,325 yards. The club was purchased by Escalante Golf in February 2021.

The decision to use fescue on fairways came from consultation from the entire team — designers, the superintendent, ownership, environmental consultants and the golf construction contractor.

"We needed to build a consensus and

make sure everyone was on board as we would never want to dictate such a large decision," Coore & Crenshaw associate **Ryan Farrow** says.

New York's East Hampton Golf Club and Massachusetts's Old Sandwich Golf Club, both Coore & Crenshaw-designed courses, feature fescue fairways, and The International director of agronomy **Michael Galvin** has relied heavily on their experiences as well as other turf experts to help maintain the project. **Dr. R.H. Hurley**, **Dr. Leah Brilman** of Seed Research of Oregon and experts from Syngenta assisted in the formula decisions.

"Not being afraid to kind of reach out there to get some of the industry leaders to get their whole insight,"



**WZ SERIES FLEX DECK
ZERO TURN MOWERS**

DESIGNED TO CUT THE MOST CHALLENGING TURF ON THE PLANET

BUILT IN THE USA

Complete Line of WZ Series Flex Deck Zero Turn Mowers

WZ400 61" / 73" Flex Deck Gas / Diesel Commercial Starting at \$24,899*	WZ600 80" Offset Side Reach Flex Deck Starting at \$58,899*	WZ800 100" Wide Area Flex Deck Starting at \$63,899*	WZ1000 120" Wide Area Flex Deck Starting at \$69,899*
---	---	--	---

Lastec flex deck zero turn mowers feature three, four, or five independently flexing decks with up to 24° of total up/down motion, patented low maintenance belt-driven decks, and zero turn maneuverability. In addition to the massive 120" wide WZ1000 being one of the world's largest flex deck zero turn mowers, Lastec offers a complete range of flex deck commercial grade zero turn mowers for commercial landscapers, lawn care professionals, and golf courses. Perfect the Art of Mowing with Lastec commercial mowers.

©2024 Lastec LLC *Prices and specifications are subject to change.

LASTEC
ARTICULATORS
ART OF MOWING

800.515.6798

f y x i n d

lastec.com



Galvin says. “Obviously, fescue is new to me. So just really leaning on some of the industry leaders throughout the process.”

After consultation from industry professionals and Brilman, the course chose to use a fescue blend consisting of creeping red fescue and chewings fescue.

During the decision-making process, the team debated between fescue and bentgrass. Fescue has low nutrient

requirements and thrives on less fertile soils. This means a lower need for fertilization and minimal watering. The grass will help decrease the course’s water budget, and lower its mowing frequency, Galvin says.

“The fine fescue certainly has a slower growth rate than bentgrass,” Galvin adds. “And, how adaptive it is in varying conditions from full sun to deep shade, it makes it versatile for The Pines.”

Through using fescue, the course was able to design greens surrounded by short grass, allowing for a more links-like experience, Farrow says. Fescue also provides the opportunity to change mowing lines.

“We like to start out trying to mow almost everything at fairway cut during grow-in,” Farrow says. “After the grass is established and we get a chance to look at each hole, we will get back out there and start to bring

© COURTESY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

ULINE

SHIPPING SUPPLY SPECIALISTS

CHAMPION SELECTION

ORDER BY 6 PM FOR
SAME DAY SHIPPING



COMPLETE CATALOG **1-800-295-5510** uline.com

the mowing lines in and shrink the amount of maintained fairway.

"The process can also work in reverse. For example, if a fairway section becomes too difficult to mow, then you simply stop mowing it and allow the wispy grasses to mature. This is also helpful if you get a spot of the course where shots are bouncing out of play or just rolling too far away from an elevated green; in that case we can simply let the grass grow up and that will help slow the ball down and hopefully keep it in play."

As the project was introduced to make better use of the course's topography, Farrow says the "firmness and slick playing conditions" the fescue grass provides will lead to more interesting shot options.

"We also like to leave openings to access our greens from the ground. Having fescue allows for a more consistent and predictable firm bounce

so we can provide different playing options to get to certain pin positions of the green by landing the ball short," he adds. "We think golf is more fun on the ground, watching the ball roll is one of the more thrilling experiences you can have on the course."

Galvin says the project is close to being complete, but not quite there yet. Eight bunkers need to be completed, cart paths need to be finished and cart path tie-ins need to be installed. Adjustments may still need to be made after opening.

"Once we start to see some play, we will need to watch where tee shots or approach shots that land short of the green collect," Farrow says. "If the height of cut is too low, we could see hot spots with too many divots in a concentrated area."

Kelsie Horner is *Golf Course Industry's* assistant editor.

PEOPLE NEWS

TPC San Antonio assistant superintendent **Andi Meadows** won the 2024 Allan MacCurrah Jr. Award, which includes \$10,000 from the GCSAA through the GCSAA Foundation. Meadows will be honored at the 2025 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in San Diego ... **Robert Nielsen**, the superintendent at Bedford Golf & Tennis Club in Bedford, New York, was named to the EPA's Pesticide Program Dialogue Committee. He follows GCSAA environmental programs director **Mark Johnson** in the role and will serve through 2025. ... **Andy Jorgensen**, the director of community maintenance operations for On Top of the World Communities in Ocala, Florida, was honored by the Florida GCSA during its recent annual meeting with the Distinguished Service Award. ... **Mapleton Golf Club** in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, hired its first superintendent and GM: **Michael Nelson** and **Zac Gavlak**, respectively. The course is scheduled to open next summer.

Aim to Please. TORRENT 2 DEBRIS BLOWER



In today's workday, it's all about getting the job done fast, yet right, so staff can be as productive as possible. We calculated the optimum angles, so operators can go to one of 5 different stops, and be sure the angle is right. Whatever the assignment, we have the stop for you. You'll be pleased with the aim of the new Torrent™ 2 taking MagniPoint™ Technology to a new level.

That's the Beauty of being more Productive.



CALL US AT (800) 679-8201 OR VISIT TURFCO.COM



The Original & Most Powerful Turbine Debris Blowers | Made in USA

Long Run Times
Dual fuel tanks allow longer run times between fuel stops.

Fast Zero Turn Operation
Adjust speed, direction & nozzle from the same drive controls.

More Power
26HP & 40HP engine options to match your task with the same trusted turbine technology designed to be more efficient than any other on the market.

All-Day Comfort
Independent suspension offering a stable ride & reduced operator fatigue.

All-Day Productivity
360° nozzle rotation without power loss to clear all course debris in any direction fast.

**EXPLORE HOW TO
PREPARE MORE FAIRWAYS &
GREENS IN LESS TIME**



Call (716) 592-2700 • Visit BuffaloTurbine.com



»» REWARDS

GOLF

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ SEPTEMBER 1 TO DECEMBER 6 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Arm Your Course with Unbeatable Savings



3 NEW PRODUCTS

Southpaw™,
SureGuard® EZ,
Velocity® PM



2 NEW EZ BUNDLES

SAVE UP TO 21%*

Anuew™ & 3336® F,
Traction™ & 26/36® Snow Mold Solution



8 NEW VOLUME BONUS REBATES

Aloff®, Arena®, Celero®, Change Up®,
Southpaw™, SureGuard® EZ,
TetraSan®, TriStar®



9 ENHANCED PRODUCT REBATES

Aloff®, BroadStar®, Celero®, Certainty®,
Distance®, Safari®, SureGuard® EZ,
TetraSan®, TriStar®



EOP 1

September 1 –
October 31, 2024

EOP 2

November 1 –
December 6, 2024



Start saving today
by registering at
nufarmrewards.com

*Savings compared to 1 unit at the normal in-season national price. Percent discount can vary for non-MVP and MVP products.
©2024 Nufarm

3336®, Anuew®, Change Up®, Southpaw™ and Traction™ are trademarks of Nufarm. 26/36® is a trademark of Cleary Chemical, LLC. TriStar® is a trademark of Nippon Soda Co. Ltd. Aloft®, BroadStar™, Distance®, Safari®, SureGuard®, TetraSan®, Tourney® and Velocity® are trademarks of Valent U.S.A. LLC. Arena® and Celero® are trademarks of Sumitomo Chemical Company, Ltd. Certainty® is a trademark of Monsanto Technology LLC.



Grow a better tomorrow

Carey Hofner

CASA VERDE GOLF

Never let it be said that **Carey Hofner** is afraid of a challenge. When **Rick Woelfel** caught up with her for the *Wonderful Women of Golf* podcast, Hofner was checking in from somewhere in Montana, where she is finishing a grow-in for a private client who is building a par-3 golf course on his estate.

The project was already well underway when Hofner was brought on board in May of last year. An Ohio native, she earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture from Ohio State, has a master's degree from Penn State and is now working on a second.

"I just love being in the mountains," she says. "Growing grass in the mountains can be challenging, but it's very rewarding when you can actually get it done right."

Hofner, who works for Casa Verde Golf, took on her current project after spending five years at The Club at Cordillera, a 54-hole facility in Edwards, Colorado, just west of Vail. Her tenure included two years as a superintendent. When the Montana project presented itself, she was open to a change.

"I was in Vail, Colorado, for 12 years before I moved here last year," she says. "I wanted a new part of the country, they had this open, and I said, 'Why not?' My only request when I decided to move up here was, 'I have to be in mountains.'"

The layout Hofner is helping to create features six greens and an assortment of tee boxes and some green approaches, but no fairways. Hofner calls it "the most scenic property I will ever work on."

"The landscape you have up here is unreal," she says. "Every tee shot you have on this property has a different backdrop and it is just amazing. I have three major mountain ranges around me and it's pretty spectacular."

One of the unique elements of the Montana project is that Hofner is essentially flying solo as a turf department of one, although there are occasions when Casa Verde brings in a crew. Apart from flying solo, the top tussle Hofner faces on a daily basis has to do with the elements.

"The biggest challenge here for me is actually the wind," she says. "Just because of the location where we're at. We're kind of on the side of a mountain, the wind just gusts right through it."

"The water situation is quite unique as well. That's always been a concern. 'Are we going to run out of water?' So, we make sure we have plenty."

Hofner relies on Spiio sensors to help her deal with her water issues. "What I use them for is how much (the greens) are holding moisture," she says. "I can see how fast they're drying out."

Earlier this season, Hofner found herself dealing with water issues of a different sort. "I didn't have the water in past months I typically would have," she says. "I was seeing a lot of soil. When it rained or snowed, I just saw mud and then I had mud everywhere. It's starting to come around and I have an idea of what it should look like."

Away from the inland mountains, Hofner has volunteered at the PGA Tour's Sentry Tournament of Champions the past two years.

"This past year was very humbling," she says. "At first, they didn't know if the tournament was going to even go on (because of the Maui wildfires), but that staff is one of the most resilient staffs I've ever met. It was very humbling to see that positive outlook on what was going on."

"They came in for one common goal. And the goal was to provide the best playing surface you could ever expect for the best of the best." 🏌️



I just love being in the mountains. Growing grass in the mountains can be challenging, but it's very rewarding when you can actually get it done right."



SUPERINTENDENT
R·A·D·I·O N·E·T·W·O·R·K



BESTSAND™

Golf Sand

**Now offering
Pro/Angle
bunker sand**

Saint John's Country Club
Plymouth, MI

TOP 100 COURSES CHOOSE US

Find Out Why

BESTSAND™ is a part of the fundamental building blocks for creating a signature look at your course including having a direct and visible impact on player satisfaction. BESTSAND delivers that performance and longevity through our meticulously engineered top-quality sand and silica products that are formulated to meet your players' expectations.

BUNKER SAND

From municipal courses to tour-level play we have bunker sand to fit your specific course needs. Our bunker sands offer versatility, playability, and consistency.

NETWORK

Our team spans from the East Coast to the West Coast relying on our rich legacy of credibility and expertise.

For more information on top-quality BESTSAND bunker sand, contact us at 800.243.9004 or BESTSAND@CoviaCorp.com.



CoviaCorp.com/products/golf



SUBTLE PERSUASION

Can you feel the first hints of fall? Leaves beginning to change into their autumn colors? Temperatures starting to cool?

That's wishful thinking for many superintendents mired in the dog days of summer, trying to keep their courses healthy, their golfers happy and their crews safe in the midst of record-breaking heat. But just as the weather will eventually begin to turn, so will 2025 budgets soon be due on owners' and managers' desks.

Hopefully, you are well underway with your planning: reviewing results from this year, discussing goals for next year with your club's and facility's decision-makers, projecting labor and product costs, and making fact-based assumptions about what 2025 will bring. Or maybe you're just starting to focus on next year's budget. In either case, you may be among those who are starting to feel the pressure that accompanies the annual budget development and approval process.

If so, you might remind yourself of one of the tenets of **Dale Carnegie**, whose best-selling self-improvement book, "How to Win Friends and Influence People" has helped millions improve their public speaking and interpersonal skills, is persuading — not arguing — so that others believe what you want is actually their idea.

Here's how the most effective superintendents pull that off:

1. BUDGET TO MAKE YOUR AGRONOMIC PLAN REAL. What resources do you need to make your course all that it can be? How will your plan improve golfers' enjoyment of your course?

- Describe your course in its best condition.
- Explain how your plan — adequately budgeted — will make the course what you, your owners, managers and members want.
- Be bold with your aspirations. Aim big and win big.

2. INFORM AND EDUCATE.

Those up the organizational chart are not the scientists and turf professionals that you are. Get ahead of your budget presentation by providing ample background information. They need information and understanding to support your plan. Focus on the benefits: more rounds, increased revenues, happier members and customers.

- Schedule meetings with the people who need to be persuaded and educated about your budget. Listen to their wants, needs and concerns.
- Address each of their key issues when you present your budget to demonstrate you listened and have responded.

3. FOLLOW UP. After each meeting, conduct one-on-one conversations with each of your supervisors. Listen to their observations. Help them believe you can do what they want when adequately resourced. Be confident in your abilities to accomplish the goals set for your course. Be willing to take a position that requires your best thinking and top performance.

- Don't equivocate. This is no time for "I'll do my best" and other hollow promises. Tell them and then show them what you can do.
- Engage your crew to ensure that all direct reports know what you want to accomplish and make them allies.
- Let criticism sharpen your plan and your resolve to deliver a budget that meets as many objectives as possible.

4. SCHEDULE QUARTERLY UPDATES.

Conduct on-course

tours and discussions to show those up the management organization what you and your team are accomplishing. Show them the adversities with which you are dealing. And show them your successes. Help them to be as enthusiastic about your work as you are. Carnegie might tell you, "When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion."

- Follow up with photos and videos for decision-makers and golfers to demonstrate progress toward budgetary goals.
- Invite your golfers to join you for on-course field days to see how your work is affecting their course and (hopefully) improving their enjoyment.
- Invite local Scout troops to see the course and your efforts as an environmental steward. Those children will tell their parents about your team's accomplishments.

5. OWN IT. Wrap up 2025 — and begin the 2026 budget season — with your annual report of effectiveness of your agronomic plan. Put your successes in terms of accomplishing mutually agreed-upon objectives.

- Put any missteps or unmet goals on your shoulders. Communicate lessons learned and how they will be applied.
- Produce a short video thanking everyone for their support. Carnegie may have never prepared a budget to govern the spending and agronomic practices of a golf course. But when he said, "Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get," you get the idea that he understood your challenge. 🏌️



HENRY DELOZIER is a partner at GGA Partners, trusted advisors and thought leaders. He is currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of Audubon International.



SCORE MORE SAVINGS!

WITH  **QUALI-PRO**

Quali-Pro is offering special incentives beginning September 15th, 2024.
Take advantage of the SGT early order program for the biggest rebates of the year.



Snag your rebate at simplygrowtogether.com



NUMBERS TO KNOW

MOST GOLFERS BY STATE

CALIFORNIA 2,783,236
TEXAS 1,881,477
FLORIDA 1,659,568
NEW YORK 1,601,211
OHIO 1,161,634
MICHIGAN 1,083,704
ILLINOIS 1,047,140
PENNSYLVANIA 896,683
NORTH CAROLINA 841,59
ARIZONA 778,709

Source: National Golf Foundation

MOST GOLF COURSES BY STATE

FLORIDA 1,262
CALIFORNIA 961
MICHIGAN 959
NEW YORK 833
TEXAS 821
PENNSYLVANIA 658
OHIO 648
ILLINOIS 646
WISCONSIN 528
NORTH CAROLINA 521

Source: National Golf Foundation

THE COST OF CALIFORNIA

MINIMUM-WAGE hikes and seemingly constant **INFLATION** feels more prevalent in the **Golden State** than anywhere else in the country. **CAN GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE — AND GOLF IN GENERAL — KEEP UP?**

By **Judd Spicer**

The venerable American guidance to “Go west, young man” may well still ring with all the sanguine possibilities of hope, reinvention and manifest destiny as the adage did upon its mid-19th century inception.

Though, today, the phrase carries a caveat: When heading to California, pack some cash with that hope.

Boasting the fifth-largest economy in the world, 40-million-resident-heavy California is the nation’s most populous state — and one of the most expensive places to live and operate a golf business.

Still hot on the heels of historically high national inflation numbers

seen in 2022 and currently amid the loftiest federal interest rates of the new millennium, the Golden State has undoubtedly lost some glimmer for the middle and working classes simply aiming to keep up with daily expenses.

Having declined in population annually from 2020 to 2022 before a modest 0.2 percent gain in state residents in 2023, California’s general cost of living and price barriers toward owning a home are proving a burgeoning burden to much of the populace. And, for those who do own, the ability to insure their houses has become increasingly onerous, considering the mass exo-

NUMBERS TO KNOW

LABOR IN CALIFORNIA

Total nonfarm employment: **18.06 million**

Leisure and hospitality employment: **2.04 million**

Basic hourly minimum wage: **\$16**

Average private sector hourly pay: **\$39.74**

Unemployment rate: **5.2%**

Job openings: **686,000**

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



dus of insurance companies from the state due to costs and concerns about increasing wildfire risks.

From greenbacks (or lack thereof) to green grasses, the California narrative is dichotomic. Home to the nation's most golfers (more than 2.7 million, according to the National Golf Foundation) and the second-most golf courses (961, second only to Florida), the state continues to brim with swing business. And yet, with labor shortages and/or competition impacting course and club hiring prowess and both member and daily-rate green fees rising in concert to meet the pressures of wage mandates, a coalescence of costs is nearing a critical mass, even amid an ongoing post-pandemic surge in golf participation. Toss in the state's water worries and its laudable environmental aims, and the cost of California has industry experts and those with boots on the ground planning for some bust in the boom.

DRIVE-THRU WORRIES

In concert with a state-mandated minimum wage increase this year to \$16 an hour, a California law to compensate fast-food workers a minimum of \$20 per hour took effect in April.

While the golf industry (and, uniformly, all sources herein) both supports and applauds livable — if not competitive — wages, the tally is starting to take a toll on maintenance staffs that have long wrestled with both attaining and retaining grounds talent.

“Obviously, the last four years have been a confluence of worldwide events that have had an effect in increased costs on all manner of things, including from a golf maintenance perspective, especially in California,” says **Jeff Jensen**, southwest regional field staff representative for the GCSAA. “It’s an expensive place to live, and an expensive place to do business.”

Across the (vast) checklist of cost concerns, California labor — which sees many municipalities exceed the state’s \$16 basic minimum wage — tops the list for many.

“On a national level, about 57 percent of the average maintenance budget is basically labor costs,” Jensen says. “California has the second-highest minimum wage in the nation, just slightly behind Washington state. The golf industry is certainly a believer in providing a living wage for our workers, but the increases do make it difficult to operate at the levels at

which we are operating.”

Vending value meals in lieu of verticutting is a near-existential threat to the state’s golf labor force.

“Fast-food and construction jobs have always been labor competitors for golf courses,” Jensen adds, “but now it’s even more of a challenge to find good workers. With the minimum wages for fast-food workers in California increasing, that makes it more difficult to attract golf maintenance employees. So we’ve got a little more competition there.”

Competition breeds both innovation ... and flux.

“We’re trying to figure out at what point won’t there be the appetite to pass through the rate at which wages are increasing,” says **Bill O’Brien**, senior vice president of operations at Troon, which has 15 California properties in its portfolio. “Legislation that has baked-in these minimum amounts are at the risk of outpacing what a club or course would otherwise be able to factor into the normal business operation without passing those costs on by way of higher prices. And it concerns our operators as to what extent there’ll be a ceiling there. It doesn’t seem as though there’s an end in sight.”

Across the state’s more than 155,000



square miles of land mass, superintendents are feeling the squeeze of direct competition for staff.

“The minimum for fast-food (wages) is somewhat concerning,” says **Troy Flanagan**, director of golf maintenance at The Olympic Club in San Francisco. “Luckily, our hourly employees all make over \$20 an hour, but they’re working hard for it, just like most everybody in the industry. Up early, out working in the elements. It’s a lot easier to be inside a Burger King and make close to the same amount of money.”

Even with competitive field staff wages, the demands of golf’s grounds jobs aren’t just about going to work—they demand going to work.

“It’s not just about the wage,”

Jensen says. “We’re an outdoor game with a 5 a.m. start time, and then working in the elements, whether it’s the heat of the Coachella Valley or the rain of Northern California. So, the environment and early wakeups also make it tough to attract employees.”

From NorCal to SoCal, the narrative doesn’t waver.

“You’re trying to be competitive and have these base pay scales for scope of work and different jobs,” says **Jonas Conlan**, director of agronomy at Mission Hills Country Club in the Coachella Valley pocket of Rancho Mirage. “But as these prices for per-hour jobs get higher, we find ourselves with longtime employees who are a few dollars below that

NUMBERS TO KNOW HIGHEST AVERAGE GAS PRICES BY STATE

HAWAII \$4.60 (PER GALLON)

CALIFORNIA \$4.56

WASHINGTON \$4.21

ILLINOIS \$3.93

NEVADA \$3.90

OREGON \$3.86

ALASKA \$3.73

MICHIGAN \$3.62

IDAHO \$3.61

PENNSYLVANIA \$3.60

Source: GasBuddy, Aug. 7, 2024

pay grade and it’s on us to figure a way to bring these guys or gals up to that level.”

In the current economic climate, neither the shine of history nor the allure of future glory can pay today’s bills.

Even amid the prestige of The Olympic Club — host to five U.S. Opens and future home to the 2028 PGA Championship and the 2033 Ryder Cup — or Mission Hills — former host of the LPGA’s Chevron Championship and annual home to PGA Tour Champions’ Galleri Classic — employee leveraging, while understandable, is finding more frequency.

“If a guy comes to me and tells me they can easily leave for a few more bucks at McDonald’s, I mean, I



▲ Jonas Conlan



▲ Troy Flanagan



▲ Jeff Jensen



California has the second-highest minimum wage in the nation, just slightly behind Washington state. The golf industry is certainly a believer in providing a living wage for our workers, but the increases do make it difficult to operate at the levels at which we are operating.”

— Jeff Jensen

don't want to lose a good employee who's been here for a decade over a few bucks an hour,” Conlan says. “I try to take care of my guys as best as I possibly can and will go to the extreme if I need to. And, hopefully, by doing that, there's enough of that respect in both the present and the future that I can convince them to stay here and work out their deal.”

Labor issues are nothing new to golf's maintenance leaders. Yet the time required to keep staff happy comes at its own costs.

“Back in the day, labor was still a big thing,” adds Conlan, who has worked in the desert for more than a quarter of a century. “But not like today, where you really have to be on top of it, watch those labor dollars and hours closely. It's a different challenge from even five years ago. It now kind of feels like a non-stop, perpetual thing where I'm trying to get people to stay, get them a pay bump. I'm doing this kind of thing a lot more now than I ever have in my entire career.”

THE (NOT-SO-GOLDEN) BEAR OF INFLATION, EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

The domino effect of golf's popularity translates to more play, more wear, more tear and, ultimately, more expectation for prime conditions.

The pressure of filling out a maintenance staff to meet said expectations isn't the lone woe of California cost.

“Doing business in California is much more expensive—no matter what the business is,” says Craig Kessler, the longtime director of govern-

mental affairs for the Southern California Golf Association who now works with the association as a public affairs consultant.

The name resource for course conditions comes with an increasingly high California price tag.

“The golf industry has some peculiar problems and, for a long time, one of the key costs across much of the state is water,” Kessler says. “The cost of water has been going up faster than the Consumer Price Index for some time, and it's only escalating.”

In July, California's State Water Resources Control Board approved a new policy that will force suppliers for certain municipalities to reduce water amounts by nearly 40 percent come 2040.

“A component of the water cost is that the golf industry understands that it is getting increasingly cut back on its allocation,” Kessler continues, “and the industry also needs to invest in those things, which can reduce its water consumption, whether that's new irrigation equipment or systems, turf removal, turf conversion, re-lining of lakes. And these are things that, in other places in the country where water isn't such an issue, would be less compelling.”

While California courses do enjoy the price protections of Proposition 218, such guardrails only provide so much salve. “The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California—which is the largest water district in the country and provides water to about 19 million residents—we've seen rates just recently rise 8.5 percent for 2025, with an additional rise for the same



amount come 2026,” Jensen says.

As for what the water is watering?

“The costs for seed, especially in areas like the Coachella Valley where there’s a lot of overseeding ... if you look back just to 2019-20, we were paying about \$1.10 per pound for ryegrass seed,” Jensen says. “In ’21, during the pandemic, that price was over \$2 a pound. It’s stabilized down to around \$1.60, but that’s still much more than just five years ago.”

As for the domino of what maintains the grass that comes via the expensive seed and was grown by the costly water?

Well, more problem than solution exists across the national equipment realm, especially in California, which, at the outset of 2024, and in a continually commendable effort to lead the union toward a zero-emissions future, banned the sale of new gas-powered equipment using small, off-road engines.

For course owners and operators even slightly tarrying in the contact or content game, supply-line shortages find new equipment — electric or gas-powered — both costly

and tough to find, just as concurrent borrowing costs are adding more bottom-line bruise to those who can either find or afford said materials.

To wit: New irrigation systems can now run as much as \$5 million, the

cost of a new ProGator is up more than 70 percent, and everything from GPS sprayers to fairway and rough mowers are seeing rising price tags, a tally that has made the used equipment market far more competitive.

“Equipment prices have absolutely skyrocketed, along with interest rates for leasing,” Flanagan says. “Our last lease was in 2020, rates were low and we got in before COVID really started to cause problems with the supply chain. We just went back in for our next lease, and it varies by which piece of equipment, but some items are double in price and, of course, the rates are way higher.”

While golf’s recent boon has impressively witnessed countless California courses reinvest, remodel, reinvigorate and reimagine their respective grounds with projects long deferred through the game’s static years, the burgeoning prices of equipment are now coming with both concessions and/or passed-along costs.

“We’re a big club. We do well financially. I just have a tough

NUMBERS TO KNOW HIGHEST AVERAGE HOME PRICE BY STATE

HAWAII	\$986,887
CALIFORNIA	\$806,674
MASSACHUSETTS	\$653,648
WASHINGTON	\$614,411
COLORADO	\$563,964
UTAH	\$532,928
OREGON	\$511,513
RHODE ISLAND	\$478,722
MONTANA	\$473,023
IDAHO	\$461,661

Source: Zillow Home Value Index, April to June 2024

time understanding how a lot of clubs out there can keep buying new equipment at these prices,” Flanagan says. “And it just seems like we can’t charge golfers that much more money to keep up with us. What I’m hearing from some people in, say, a daily-rate situation, is that maybe they needed 10 pieces of equipment and they were able to get six. So, they’re keeping older pieces of equipment longer.”

A FUTURE IN FLUX

For both sides of the course equation — players and workers — the concerns of a California critical mass should be very, very real.

Per the latter, enhanced attention to employee recruitment and happiness has become paramount.

“Today, being a better employer is at the top of all of our lists,” O’Brien says. “I often tell folks that we’re not in the business of hiring, we’re in the business of recruiting. And that’s not just about the wage, nor do we want to compete on the wage alone. The cool part of what we do is trying to attract employees who want more than a job but are rather focused on a career.”

At many facilities, a path of opportunity through golf is a narrative no longer reserved for the back of the book.

“We’ve gone to great lengths to build out a talent acquisition team in our HR department,” O’Brien says. “We leverage technology to make sure we’re in front of people who are looking for work on platforms like LinkedIn or Glassdoor or Indeed. What we’ve seen since COVID is almost radical amounts of turnover, though that’s been minimized a bit in recent years. But it still means that we need to give potential employees better insights into what it means to work at our clubs. And, also, finding ways to reduce turnover can go a long way toward lowering a club’s costs. And that means keeping folks engaged and committed.”

On the player side of the spectrum, keeping golfers appeased and main-



You’re trying to be competitive and have these base pay scales for scope of work and different jobs. But as these prices for per-hour jobs get higher, we find ourselves with longtime employees who are a few dollars below that pay grade and it’s on us to figure a way to bring these guys or gals up to that level.”

— **Jonas Conlan**

taining the game’s present momentum means that precarious price points trend upward at the risk of alienating much of the tee sheet.

“California has a very limited supply, but an extraordinarily high demand,” Kessler says. “So the good news is that, although you have all these costs, you also have a population — or at least a certain percentage of the population — which can absorb these costs. The worrisome part at the moment is that the top 20 percent of the population, which I would call the ‘asset class,’ is doing pretty well. Right now, they can pay these costs. Those who aren’t part of that class, right now, are very restless, very angry and demanding radical change. That presage, moving into the future, may

end up being reflected in a different set of fiscal policies which may not be all that beneficial to that asset class.”

While myriad clubs across the state are enjoying membership waiting lists and, per Kessler’s words, bustling demand on tee sheets, golf, like much of society, is ever-cyclical.

“Luckily, golf right now is still booming, so people are willing to pay,” Flanagan says. “But, for those of us who’ve been around the game for a while, we’ve seen the upswings, we’ve seen the downswings. And I know the downswing is comin’ — I just hope that’s not for many, many years. But if we keep going to the golfer and asking them to spend more money, at some point, people might stop coming out to the course.”

For the vast majority of California residents and golf guests, price points do come with a ceiling.

“It means that you need to charge more to your members or for your greens fees, so you’re just constantly making adjustments,” Conlan says. “At some point, people will say, ‘Enough is enough.’ They either won’t pay a certain amount, or they’ll play once a week instead of three times.”

Of all the game’s post-pandemic gains in participation, popularity and diversity, the present-day fairway party is trending toward a dangerous cost call. And in the mainland’s costliest state, the sobering price tags of passed-along consumer receipts may soon run the risk of undoing all the strides golf has made in recent years. If one can’t pay, one can’t play.

“Inevitably, longer term, golf needs to begin recognizing that not everything is about the next quarter,” Kessler says. “What are some of the longer-term strategies, other than the cheerleading: ‘Golf’s never been bigger or better or more successful!’? Well, we’ve seen these heights before, and then hit a long, long lull.” 📉

Judd Spicer is a Palm Desert, California-based writer and senior Golf Course Industry contributor.



TURF

REPORTS

GREENS MAINTENANCE

syngenta®





GREENS: WE HAVE A SOLUTION FOR THAT

Thank you to *Golf Course Industry* for the opportunity to sponsor this Turf Report on maintaining greens. The superintendents surveyed provided valuable insights about their management and challenges on greens, many of which Syngenta is proud to offer solutions for.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GREENS

As you know, greens are the most important surface on the course. This research shows superintendents allocate **almost 40% of their labor hours** to maintaining these vital playing surfaces. And for good reason - golfers spend roughly 35% of their time during a round on putting greens.

AERIFICATION RECOVERY

On average, superintendents reported they **aerify their greens 2.8 times per year** to relieve compaction and promote healthy turf, but this critical practice can conflict with golfers' expectations for fast, consistent ball roll. However, the Action™ brand fungicides can provide quicker recovery from aerification:

"[In our trials] with the combination of Appear® II and Action brands, we saw turf **recover 2 to 3 days faster** from aerification." - **Jim Kerns, Ph.D.**, North Carolina State University

Respondents also mentioned the following concerns for their greens' health:

- Drought stress 48%
- Heat stress 46%
- Resistance 22%
- Shade stress 29%

Visit [GreenCastOnline.com/ActionBrands](https://greencastonline.com/ActionBrands) to learn how the Action brand fungicides can help alleviate these concerns.

DATA-DRIVEN GREENS MANAGEMENT

The research also shows how superintendents use data to provide added insights into their greens, with **76% measuring soil moisture**. Spiio™ soil sensors automatically provide hyperlocal soil data, including moisture, temperature, salinity and light, without manual collection or uploading, and make the data easily accessible. Syngenta also offers a full suite of agronomic alerts to help track Growing Degree Days, the Smith-Kerns Dollar Spot model and much more.

DISEASE & INSECT PRESSURES

Dollar spot is the #1 disease concern on greens for 63% of superintendents. The Posterity® fungicide brands have become leading solutions for this disease, delivering up to 28 days of control. For help determining which brand is right for you, visit [GreenCastOnline.com/PosterityBrands](https://greencastonline.com/PosterityBrands).

Additionally, the top 5 problematic insects reported – ants, cutworms, white grubs, annual bluegrass weevil and armyworms – can all be reliably controlled with Ference® and Acelepryn® brand insecticides. Purchasing these products during GreenTrust® 365 from Oct. 1 – Dec. 10, means superintendents can **save up to 46% on Acelepryn brands and 50% on Ference**.

Syngenta is proud to provide comprehensive solutions, agronomic programs, a leading team of 36 agronomists as well as research like this to help superintendents maintain exceptional greens. We hope you benefit from these insights gathered by the *Golf Course Industry* team.

— **Stephanie Schwenke**, Turf Market Manager, Syngenta

ACTION BRAND FUNGICIDES



POSTERITY BRAND FUNGICIDES



ACELEPRYN BRAND INSECTICIDES



© 2024 Syngenta. **Important: Always read and follow label instructions. Some products may not be registered for sale or use in all states or counties and/or may have state-specific use requirements. Please check with your local extension service to ensure registration and proper use.** The trademarks displayed or otherwise used herein are trademarks of a Syngenta Group Company. All other trademarks are property of their respective third-party owners.

TINE-TUNING

Calling St. John's Golf Club a busy place is an understatement. Located in St. Augustine, Florida, the club hosted 69,000 rounds last year, with its peak season falling in the window from Thanksgiving through May.

The club opened for play in 1989, then closed in early 2022 for a renovation guided by architect **Erik Larsen** that included the installation of TifEagle Bermudagrass greens and collars. It reopened in November of that year, following the Thanksgiving holiday.

Superintendent **Anthony Baur** has been at the club for a decade. Protecting his greens while dealing with a high volume of play is an ongoing priority.

"We had to do a lot of spiking, needle tining and Ninja tining the greens this year to keep them as healthy as we could," he says. "In the past, we only needle tined monthly, but now we're biweekly or every three weeks. This is the first year I've had to use this many hexagon plugs for repair. We have been consistent on using fungicides to prevent disease and wetting agents to hold the water."

When it comes to weather conditions, Baur has seen changes in his time at the club — changes that have led to his doing some things differently.

"Conditions have changed," he says. "I've used more full aerifications throughout the whole property to improve water drainage. This year was a lot warmer. We only had two frosts, which were very light, not even to the point where we had to water them off. The year before that we had at least three,

and five before that, so this year was really warm compared to years past."

One weather-related issue that particularly concerns Baur is the increased cloud cover he's dealt with over the last year.

"You're not growing healthy grass," Baur says. "(Cloudy weather) is not killing anything, but disease chance is there. Full sun is what the grass wants. I'm watching my water, watching aerification, trying to make sure it can breathe and trying to keep it as healthy as I can."

Baur's disease problems are minimal, in part due to his preventative efforts.

"We tend to do preventative maintenance on fungicides," Baur says. "That being said, I'm not religious on (applying fungicides) every two weeks or anything, but I do pay attention to what the vendors recommend and then I kind of go by that for my preventative applications."

Baur, who was charged with the care of 36 holes at Doral earlier in his career, does his best to regulate cart traffic around his putting surfaces.

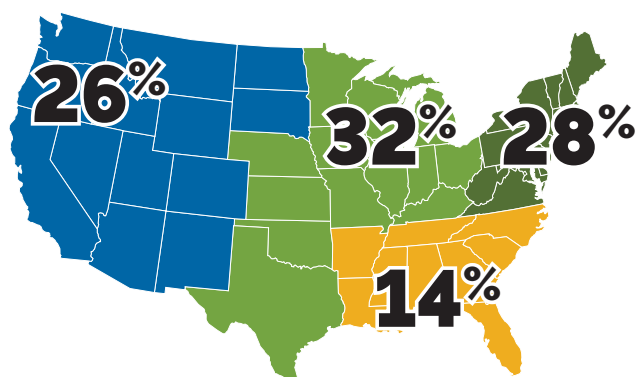
"There are sometimes one or two entry/exit points (adjacent to a green)," he says, "so we're trying to rope off one of the areas to push them to another area of the green to reduce the wear in that area. When you put a bunker on the cart path side, you tend to get a funneling of traffic. We tend to put ropes around those areas to funnel them to the other side."

— Rick Woelfel

MAINTAINING SPORTS' MOST INTRICATE SURFACES

No playing surfaces in sports require more attention or intensive maintenance programs than golf greens. With the understanding of the value of high-quality putting surfaces to golf maintenance success, *Golf Course Industry* partnered with Syngenta for "Turf Reports" on greens maintenance. The data in this report includes the results of a 21-question survey collaboration between *Golf Course Industry* and Signet Research, a New Jersey-based independent research firm. The survey was distributed from May 16 through June 6 to an email list of subscribers holding director of agronomy, superintendent or assistant superintendent titles. Results are based on 177 returns with a confidence level of 95 percent and sampling tolerance of approximately +/- 7.4 percent.

Where is your course located?



Dominant turfgrass species on your greens

COOL SEASON	
Bentgrass	56%
<i>Poa annua</i>	23%
WARM SEASON	
Bermudagrass	17%
Paspalum	2%
Zoysiagrass	2%



SOUTH CAROLINA SPEED

Summertime is a slow time for **Alex Tolbert** when it comes to volume of play. Tolbert maintains the turf at South Carolina's Orangeburg Country Club, a single-owner private club that allows some outside play. His rounds peak in the spring and fall, and level off around the holidays.

But during the summer months he is as vigilant as ever when it comes to protecting the club's Champion Bermudagrass greens.

According to Tolbert, who has been at Orangeburg for 12½ years, the **Ellis Maples**-designed golf course was the first East of the Mississippi with Champion Bermudagrass greens. They were installed in 1997—the course dates back to 1960—and rebuilt 12 years later as part of a renovation by **Richard Mandell**.

In part due to drainage concerns, Tolbert keeps a close eye on the moisture levels in his putting surfaces.

"It's all surface drainage," he says. "Once they're wet, they kind of stay wet for a little while. Once they dry out, they're dry. We monitor how much water we put on during

the day. Every day we'll take moisture readings. We have a certain number where we like to try to keep them

as moisture is concerned. That dictates how much water we put on them at night even if we have to pull a hose or do something during the day to try to kind of them through.

"We also are on a pretty aggressive fungicide program."

Tolbert and his crew of 17 work to strike the right balance between the green speeds he's looking for and the health of the turf.

"We're spraying growth regulators during the week," he says. "When it's really hot, we go out every single week with a little bit of fertilizer to keep the amount of growth not to a minimum. We want a little bit of growth, but we don't want so much that they slow down."

"We have to aerify and verticut during the growing season" — the summer — "so

Top three insect concerns on... Cool-season greens

Ants | Cutworms | White grubs

Warm-season greens

Cutworms | Ants | Mole crickets

the plant does get injured, but this is the environment that it grows the best in."

Tolbert strives for green heights of ¼ to ½ inch of an inch.

"We can get the green speeds we want out of that height," he says. "We do roll trying to help us out and get a little more speed out of them for tournaments and even just for regular play. The owner wanted fast greens. That's what he dictated to me, so since I've been here, that's kind of what we've done."

Away from the summer heat, Tolbert alters his approach to mowing.

"(Mowing height) varies throughout the year," he says. "During the summer we can definitely be more aggressive because it's aggressively growing, but in the fall and definitely the wintertime, we're mowing at much higher heights to kind of make sure (the plant) can survive the winter."

— Rick Woelfel

Top five disease concerns on...

Warm-season greens

- 1 **Pythium**
- 2 **Fairy ring**
- 3 **Bermudagrass decline**
- 4 **Take-all root rot**
- 5 **Dollar spot**

Cool-season greens

- 1 **Dollar spot**
- 2 **Anthraxnose**
- 3 **Snow mold**
- 4 **Pythium**
- 5 **Brown patch**

Frequency of PGR applications on greens

	Greens	
	Cool-season	Warm-season
Weekly	17%	51%
Biweekly	58%	30%
Monthly	6%	0%
A few times a year	7%	14%
Never	12%	5%

TOPDRESSING YIELDS TOP CONDITIONS

Even by the standards of her profession, **Amanda Fontaine** must be vigilant. Fontaine is the superintendent at Ledges Golf Club, a municipally owned daily-fee club in South Hadley, Massachusetts, less than 15 miles north of Springfield.

The area's climate dictates that Fontaine and her team be constantly alert.

"The course is located in the Connecticut River Valley," she says. "All the courses that are in this little area of western Mass and northern Connecticut right on the river are a little bit lower and have their own little climate."

"The humidity is through the roof. The disease pressure is through the roof, so we get crazy conditions when it comes to humidity, rain and heat throughout the summer. So, we have to be hyper vigilant in this area. Even 20 miles away from here, east or west, it's totally different than this little valley."

Fontaine's golf season typically runs from Masters Week to around Thanksgiving. To protect her greens, Fontaine, who is in her fourth season in charge, aerates prior to the opening of the season. From then on, her focus is preparing for the summer's heat and humidity.

"Through the spring and leading up to the summer, definitely like to do heavy topdressing," Fontaine says. "We hit them with a very heavy topdress, just to be ahead of the game. before the weather starts getting warm. And then we focus on promoting good rooting. That's really the basis for how we get through the summer."

Fontaine takes a proactive approach to dealing with summertime issues like heat, humidity and disease pressure by having a spray program in place. But, she points out, the human element is a factor as well.

"We have a very extensive spray program to stay on top of stuff like that," Fontaine says.

"(But) the best tool that we have to indicate something is wrong is your eyes. Seeing it is the best way to know that something is wrong. Whether that be heat stress, disease stress, or even wet, humid stress. The only way you're going to know what's going on is to look at it."

"What we usually do is have a very comprehensive spray program to prevent (problems). Worst case, we have curative action, but some time in August, usually when we've hit our peak and everything is starting to get a little tired, we'll do a little pencil tine or needle tine depending on what we've got scheduled for tournaments and stuff like that, just to give (the greens) a little relief. And then usually in September, we'll do our fall aeration and jump on them with fertilizer and stuff like that."

After the season closes, Fontaine has the following summer and the health of her greens on her mind.

"Even as late as right before Christmas we'll do another solid tine-heavy topdress on top of that."

"But the biggest thing we do is keep driving roots down. The more topdressing we put on, the more protected the crown is and the more root density we can find."

"We do a heavy snow mold spray as well and lots of colorant to keep the grass a little bit warmer with that pigment in there. That's all just to keep everything warm because the weather fluctuates so much and you can't really prepare for everything."

"We don't tarp our greens in the winter or anything like that. Usually there's snow that acts as our topping. But if there's no snow, the best thing we can do is have a nice heavy topdress on it to protect it."

— Rick Woelfel

Top three weed concerns on warm-season greens

- 1 **Goosegrass**
- 2 **Poa annua**
- 3 **Nutsedge**

Top three weed concerns on cool-season greens

- 1 **Poa annua**
- 2 **Crabgrass**
- 3 **Goosegrass**

Description of your greens topdressing philosophy

	Greens	
	Cool-season	Warm-season
Aggressive	16%	36%
Modest	62%	56%
Passive	20%	5%
Non-existent	2%	3%

Peak-season daily Stimpmeter reading target



STRIVING FOR **HYDRO** **CONSISTENCY**

David Swift takes a back-to-basics approach when it comes to protecting his greens, but he utilizes modern technology to achieve the results he wants.

Swift is the superintendent at Minnehaha Country Club in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where he's in his 16th season. He oversees a crew of 35, half of whom are part-timers.

Over the course of a six-month golf season that begins on or shortly before May 1, Swift, a South Dakota native, will host approximately 20,000 rounds, plus a PGA Tour Champions tournament in September.

Dealing with weather extremes is part of his job description.

"We can get to 20 to 30 below zero in the winter," Swift says. "We can get over 105 degrees in the summer. We probably get 30 days a year over 90 degrees and we can have 20 inches of rain or 35 inches of rain."

Swift's primary focus involves regulating the moisture levels in his bentgrass greens, which he does with the help of moisture meters.

"We've been using moisture meters since 2012 or so," Swift says. "That, more or less, has taken all the questions out of our summertime programs. For us, it's all about moisture, making sure we don't have too much and making sure we have just enough. Ever since we've had a moisture meter in our hands, our summers have gotten a lot easier."

Swift, a graduate of the two-year program at Penn State, disdains the one-size-fits-all model when it comes to greens.

"One philosophy that we've always had is we don't have to do the same thing to every single hole," Swift says. "If we were to have a problem green, we're going to go aerify just that green. We're just striving for consistency, so if something kind of falls out of line, we try to stop the world and bring back that green or area of the course. We pull out all stops to make sure it's on track to be as good as everything else as soon as possible."

"We strive for consistency, but at the same time, if something's off, we stop the world and take corrective action if possible."

Swift's protocol for preserving and protecting greens in the summer heat involves demonstrating mechanical restraint.

"We roll six days a week and only mow about five times a week," he says. "Sometimes during the heat, we will only roll the greens that day. If we have a hot stretch, we will mow with solid front rollers. Sometimes we will raise the height for a week or two. The wind blows here, we get some wobble."

Over the last decade, the greens have benefited from a tree-removal effort.

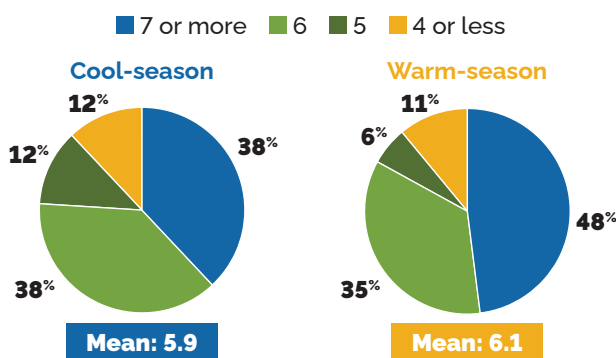
"We've taken out a lot of

trees, making sure that all of our shade problems have been eliminated," Swift says. "And the last handful of years, our bentgrass populations have improved greatly, just because of the shade reductions. That was kind of the first thing that helped."

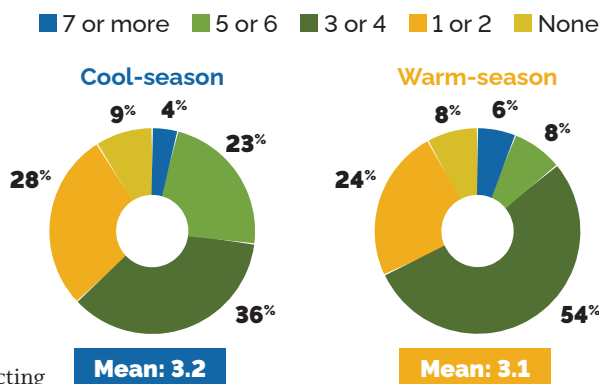
"But between removing trees and having moisture meters, we've done a lot of hand watering. We have a handful of guys that are trained pretty well with a hose and moisture meters. They're the unsung heroes that should get all the credit because it usually has to do with moisture in our world — making sure we have just enough and never too much."

— Rick Woelfel

Times per peak-season week greens are mowed



Times per peak-season week greens are rolled



Times per year you aerify greens

	Cool-season greens	Warm-season greens
Three or more times	21%	48%
Twice	56%	38%
Once	21%	11%
None	2%	3%
Mean:	2.6	3.8

QUALITY VIA TINKERING

Though the considerable turf under his watch is situated amid a 55-and-older community, **Tyler Truman** isn't one to work his grounds and greens with a "puttering around in the garage" purview.

Rather, the director of agronomy and grounds at the Coachella Valley's bustling, 5,000-home Sun City Palm Desert and the on-site 36 holes of member/public access Mountain Vista Golf Club is always aiming to improve the product offered to golfers.

"Maintenance of the greens, it's the most important part of the golf course. If your greens aren't good, then everything else is gonna look horrible, whether it's good or not," says Truman, a past present of the Hi-Lo Desert Chapter of the GCSAA. "And we do everything we can here, looking at different areas, from clipping yields to fertility to top-dressing to verticutting in an effort to get and keep those quality greens."

Such quality often comes by way of tinkering. Three years ago, Mountain Vista was among the first Coachella Valley tracks to renovate to non-overseed MiniVerde greens, which Truman implemented upon Mountain Vista's San Gorgonio Course. Conversely, the property's Santa Rosa Course has stuck with Tifdwarf Bermudagrass (for now).

"They're managed differently at different times of the year, from transition to overseeding," Truman says of the courses' respective greens. "And I think we've done very well in recent years with the switch to MiniVerde; it

gives our guests and membership a different playing opportunity and a different playing surface than what they'd typically see."

Today, nearly a dozen Coachella Valley courses have gone to MiniVerde, with more and more locales now converting each year.

"You need to really watch your water, watch your fertility, and once it gets cold, you need to also closely watch your mowing practices," Truman says. "Our first year with MiniVerde, our green speeds shot up to 13, which is really fast for our residents and not conducive to their games. So, there are times during the winter months where we rolled 'em maybe once a week."

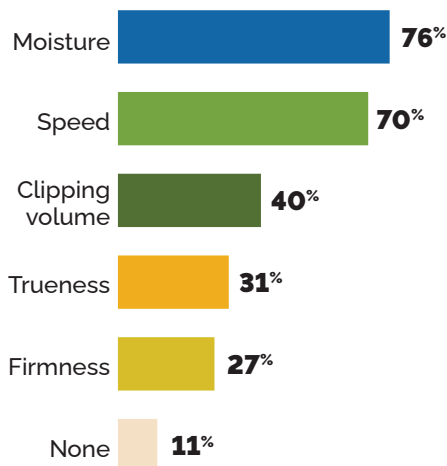
Ever working with a view on the shot ahead, Truman is always eyeing rolls of the future.

Resulting from discussions with Bladerunner Farms of Poteet, Texas, Truman is now looking at a potential transition to zoysiagrass surfaces on the Santa Rosa in the next three to five years. This past season, he created a 2,000-square-foot zoysia sample space on property to begin assessment.

"And we arranged that in comparison right next to MiniVerde greens," Truman says, "so we could see side-by-side how they looked during season, how they rolled different, what extra maintenance might be required and maintaining green speeds."

The implement of zoysia, far more commonly seen in the Midwest and Southern regions, could prove a game-changer for desert agronomists. The slower-growing strain, if

What greens-related data do you measure?



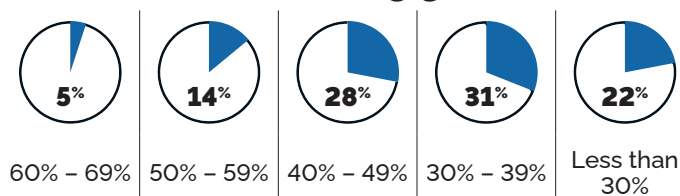
successful, could dramatically reduce water usage and, moreover, omit the desert ritual of annual course closure for overseed during the autumn season.

For the year ahead, Truman and his crew will soon expand a select hole to approximately an acre of zoysia on both fairway and rough for additional study; the effort will then enjoy further sample and study by way of zoysia grow-in on the grounds' practice area.

"If we see things we like maintenance-wise, we might have an all-zoysia course with zoysia putting greens," Truman concludes. "And while I probably take it to the extreme compared to some other people, I think everybody (out here) is always tinkering with some different things, tinkering with their overseed, looking at their greens and trying to make things better."

— Judd Spicer

Percentage of labor hours allocated to maintaining greens



Mean: 39.3%

Have you dealt with damage from any of the following on your course's greens?

Hydraulic leaks	76%	Natural disasters	31%
Vandalism	61%	Nematodes	25%
Wildlife	55%	Misapplied product	19%
Winter damage	45%	None of the above	6%

THE REBATE RIPPLE EFFECT

ONLY WITH GREENTRUST® 365

Start the wave of savings with a NEW Bonus for **up to 46% savings on Acelepryn® brands** and **up to 50% on Ference® insecticides**.



NEW Acelepryn/Ference
Bonus



Plan It
Your Way



NEW
Multipaks



GT Bonus
Booster

To see the full wave of savings, visit
GreenTrust365.com



@SyngentaTurf #GreenTrust365 #RebateRippleEffect

 **GreenTrust® 365**

syngenta®

All photos are either the property of Syngenta or are used with permission.

© 2024 Syngenta. Important: Always read and follow label instructions. Some products may not be registered for sale or use in all states or counties and/or may have state-specific use requirements. Please check with your local extension service to ensure registration and proper use. Acelepryn®, Ference®, GreenTrust®, the Alliance Frame, the Purpose Icon, and the Syngenta logo are trademarks of a Syngenta Group Company. All other trademarks are the property of their respective third-party owners.

Greetings from 'Virginia's Tallest Town'

After 54 years as a private club, a Dick Wilson-designed course in a small community opened to the public in 2020. Local love is helping Fincastle flourish in its accessible life.

By Lee Carr

You're on to something good when you hear about a course but details are scant. The directions you get lack street names, more of "one left, then two rights." When you find the course, the locals welcome you, friendly enough. The driving range is "over there." When you reach the first tee, you smile.

In the Appalachian Mountains, Fincastle is a few minutes off Interstate 77 and even closer to Graham High School in the town of Bluefield, Virginia. The course was designed by Dick Wilson and opened for play as a private, member-owned

club in 1965. In 2013, a family purchased the course and kept it private until 2019, when the town bought it and opened it to the public. Fincastle now hosts around 20,000 rounds annually.

Anthony Phillips is the superintendent and he has been working at Fincastle for 14 years, through all of the management changes. He had taken a few college business classes before he realized "sitting in an office was not going to be a thing for me." He then enrolled in the Virginia Tech turf program. His business background has helped him navigate change and he earned his first job as a superintendent at Tazewell County Country Club



in Pounding Mill, Virginia, at the age of 23.

John O'Neal is Fincastle's general manager; his son **Hunter O'Neal** is the director of golf and recreation. Phillips and O'Neal

are town employees. Hunter played college golf and shifted from a job in IT to join the Fincastle team. When asked what it's like to work with his father, he smiles and says, "We have been through it before. He was the principal at my high school." Fincastle represents John's "retirement job."

They have been beyond dedicated to this course and its operations for many years and so have others. The course can support itself, but private donors make a difference. For instance, a restroom is being built on the course. An individual funded the addition. There are multiple anonymous examples of people contributing.

"I worked at the high school for 33 years, so I know everyone in town," John says. "It helps with the community aspect because I can reach out and say, 'I need \$10,000. Can you please help us?' I did the same thing at the school. If you want to do something special, it takes money. With Anthony managing the budget, and with Hunter taking care of the

marketing and IT, we have put it all together."

The clubhouse was old, and they have been modernizing the structure little by little. There are expenses the town has subsidized such as a new roof for the building, and pool and restaurant upgrades.

"The town manager is a retired colonel in the United States Army," John says. "We talk about how much Bluefield has going for it, including the people and Fincastle." It's truly a collaborative effort.

Phillips agrees that the whole town seems invested with the property in some way. "If they don't play golf, they use the pool. If they don't use the pool, they play pickleball and use the tennis courts. Several people come out and run in the morning and bring their dogs. They're out of here by 7:30 a.m."

The course is surrounded by houses, one of them Hunter's. Phillips lives on the property, too — his home is next to the maintenance facility. "About an hour and a half before dark, people will bring their kids out," Phillips says. "They might play a few holes and the kids will run down the fairway and do cartwheels."

"It's my favorite time to come out,





Bunker wins

Bunker renovations contributed significantly to the improvements at Fincastle. The bunkers are flatter and several tongues were removed or softened. The number of bunkers was reduced from 88 to 55. The Better Billy Bunker system was installed in every bunker. Even in heavy rainfall or with water

coming off the mountain, drainage has not been an issue.

Meyer zoysiagrass covers bunker faces, which means they only need to be mowed about six times a year instead of weekly like when they were surrounded by cool-season turf. Zoysiagrass also provides a striking aesthetic contrast during spring and fall.

about 7:30 p.m.," Hunter adds. "I hit balls for a while or just go to a hole and putt for a bit. We have a trail fee for people who own carts. That number has near doubled." Fincastle is appreciated and enjoyed from sunup to sundown, including by deer and a big black bear.

Fincastle is fun. They have an annual Masters Menu that reflects the Champions Dinner at Augusta National Golf Club—some years are easier than others! —and they host

weddings and receptions, parties and live music. **Noah Spencer**, a contestant from "The Voice," recently performed. Other famous people have thrived here, too.

Stacy Lewis won the Women's Western Amateur in 2006 and **Brendon de Jonge** is a Fincastle champion. **Lanto Griffin** played for several years on The Blue Ridge Junior Golf Tour, which started at Fincastle in 1999 and still has its headquarters here. All three turned professional.

Phillips is also a sought-after professional, supporting his colleagues with advice or helping them with their nutrition plans. Camaraderie and community are at the heart of this property but make no mistake, its soul belongs to golf.

AT 2,600 FEET, Bluefield (population: 5,001) is "Virginia's Tallest Town," a moniker proudly displayed on apparel worn by town employees. Views are serene throughout the 18-hole

layout. The course plays up to 6,357 yards on the north slope of East River Mountain. The front nine has an open feel before shifting into significant elevation changes on the back.

With several Wilson characteristics, including offset tees, elevated putting surfaces and the requirement for a demanding variety of shots, Fincastle is a tough track despite the meager yardage. The turf is bentgrass, ryegrass and approximately 70 percent *Poa annua*, with three acres of greens, including the collars.

Fincastle had line valves around the greens until 1984 when single-row irrigation and a block system was installed. Timber was sold off the mountain to fund that system and it's still in use. There's no natural water on the course, but a pond holding 400,000 gallons was built. The pond is replenished by pumping water from over two miles away.

Unfortunately, the irrigation pump failed in early 2019 and it took four months to get it replaced.

"We lost 60 percent of the golf course," Phillips says. There was a drought, and dry conditions are one of Fincastle's biggest challenges. No. 10 green was unplayable with a crack several inches wide and most of the other greens were 80 percent dirt. Despite the obstacles, the town considered buying the course.

Phillips met with the town leaders. "They said, 'Can you bring it back?'" Phillips remembers. "I said, 'I believe I can.' We did it with six people. Part of me hated it and I thought about leaving. If you let this business get to you, it will eat you every day. All you can do is do the

Budget yoga

The agronomic budget at Fincastle is less than \$500,000 and the management team is united in being cash conscious.

Superintendent **Anthony Phillips** is clever about focusing on the playing areas, which he designates as the tees, greens, fairways and 30 yards of rough on each side. He annually varies his plan based on what is available. The team takes advantage of Early Order Programs and says "yes" to course improvements that serve the bottom line such as low-maintenance bunkers. They also thoughtfully structure activity fees.

Wetting agents on greens and tees help reduce water needs, and golfers are accustomed to brown fairways, liking the increased bounce and ball roll. Labor is carefully managed as some areas of the fairways are left untreated and test plots provide research for ways to improve.

These measures help stretch the budget as far as it can go.

best you can. And I hate to say this but part of me really loved trying to do it. I thought if I can do this, I have done something."

Before it was clear how well the land would recover, a decision was made. "The best part was when we found out that the town was going to purchase the property," Phillips says. "It was going to stay a golf course.

That's what drove everything to get going and we started talking about renovations." Calculated improvements were made to ensure its viability as a public facility.

In August 2020, a \$1.2 million renovation commenced. Aspen, a golf construction firm based in nearby Daniels, West Virginia, executed the work and the team worked with architects **Damian Pascuzzo** and **Steve Pate** from Pascuzzo/Pate Golf

▼ Fincastle director of golf and recreation Hunter O'Neal, general manager John O'Neal and superintendent Anthony Phillips.



The Game is Won on the Green



Replenish 5-4-5 greens grade is the fast, surefire way to build healthy greens and tees. Ideal for summer recovery. Rich in carbon and minerals to build a sustainable soil.

EarthWorks 

A Deeper Respect

www.EarthWorksTurf.com



LISTEN



WATCH

View from a legend

Arizona Golf Hall of Fame honoree **Shawn Emerson** currently works for Ethos Club and Leisure and is recognizable from his decades of experience in golf course maintenance. His brother **Scott** played minor-league baseball in Bluefield in 1992 and Emerson's son, **Jacob**, helps coach the Bluefield State University baseball team. Emerson played Fincastle for the first time during a fundraising event for the baseball team.

"Fincastle does a lot with very little," Emerson says. "Anthony is a hands-on superintendent. The love and passion he has for that place — you can see it in the quality of the golf course. I didn't have a bad lie, the bunkers were great and the greens putted smooth. Fincastle stacks up with a lot of golf courses because of the design and the conditioning, but the affordability was also incredible."

The Fincastle team worked to stay open every day throughout the renovation. They redid the irrigation pond and four greens. "On the greens, I insisted on keeping my *Poa*," Phillips says. "All we did was strip the sod, refloat them, add mix, and put it right back on."

To make the course more playable, they widened corridors and reduced the speed and slope of the greens — some of which were at 8 percent.

The greens were hurting scores and the pace of play. Natural areas were also reduced by about 15 acres as too much time was being spent looking for balls.

Drainage throughout the course is good despite being situated on heavy clay soil and catching runoff from the

Design.

"We changed some of their stuff," says Phillips, laughing alongside John and Hunter in an early spring 2024 clubhouse conversation. "It was so funny because Damian came in and he was like, 'How did that bunker get back there on the right-hand side of 17?' And we were like, 'We just thought it fit!'" No one would argue that it didn't turn out beautifully.

mountain. Even though Fincastle would command higher green fees as a public facility, the town wanted to respect the local economy and charge as little as possible. That impacts the agronomy budget.

Fincastle sees eight months of good weather. It's drier and they have more play in fall than in spring.

"We aerify less because we can't be down three months," Phillips says. "I aerify during spring and I verticut in two directions. We

use our Wiedemann and deep tine the greens 8 to 10 inches. In the fall, we core aerify with a quad-tine setup. It's about 60 tines and that's sufficient. It works for us."

What is not working are the more than 600 pine trees growing on property since the 1970s.

They will be hit hard over the next few years with the fast-moving pine bark beetle. The pest took about 20 trees last year. Clearing the trees is a lot of work. The crew knows what is coming, and Phillips will tell you how much the maintenance team means to this property.

"The core crew that come to work every day, I couldn't do it without them," he says. Phillips lays out their schedules for the day and they get to work. "They understand my way of doing things, but you have to have employees that take pride. If you don't have that, you are screwed and that's all there is to it."

MOST OF THE maintenance team is related, spanning three generations. **John Hurley** is the grandfather, **Jacob Hurley** is the grandson, and everyone else is in between, including **Paul Watkins**, **PJ Watkins** and **Matt Puckett**. Two employees — **Greg Morgan** and **Todd Baker** — are enjoying "retirement."

"They all make Fincastle what it is," Phillips says. "They are reliable, hard workers and they take pride in the job they do. They had zero golf



About an hour and a half before dark, people will bring their kids out. They might play a few holes and the kids will run down the fairway and do cartwheels."

— **Anthony Phillips**

ORDER EARLY SAVE GREEN

2025 EARLY ORDER PROGRAM

September 1st through December 13th, 2024

Purchase a minimum of **\$2,500 worth of product
from qualifying suppliers to earn rebates**

- ▶ Earn **1-7%** based on total spend
- ▶ **1%** bonus if booked by October 31st
- ▶ **\$25** gift card for every \$1,000 of
Heritage PPG Products purchased

QUALIFYING SUPPLIERS: AQUATROLS • ATTICUS • BAYER • BASF • CIVITAS • CORTEVA • ENVU
FMC • GRIGG • HERITAGE PPG • NUFARM • OHP • PBI GORDON • QUALI-PRO • SEPRO • SYNGENTA



Visit heritagelandscapesupplygroup.com
to learn more and find a distributor near you.





The reason Fincastle is alive five years after the town has bought it is because of the love of the game — and that's it. If it wasn't for the love of the game, we wouldn't have a golf course."

— **John O'Neal**

course experience before they started, except John. I have no assistant, no spray tech, no irrigation tech. Everyone just jumps in where needed."

Nearly every Friday from May through October the team hosts events, mostly fundraisers for various organizations. On holidays, they set the course up for a

par-3 tournament. "We have so much fun," Hunter says. "The biggest thing I have focused on is trying to get a golf community built because we had no golf community."

The course's leaders lament a lost generation of golfers when the cost of a country club membership was prohibitive for young adults and there was nowhere nearby to play. The nearest course is 35 minutes away. "We sell out our Appalachian Amateur Tournament and we put off 45 teams in our Spring Four-Ball," Hunter says. The course supports two college golf teams and the teams at Graham High School. The young-

er golfers are coming back.

"The reason Fincastle is alive five years after the town has bought it is because of the love of the game — and that's it," John says. "If it wasn't for the love of the game, we wouldn't have a golf course."

Fincastle is proudly owned by the town of Bluefield. A strong golf facility is part of the town's appeal.

"You have a few restaurants, you got golf, you got Walmart," Phillips says. "You don't really need anything else." 🏌️

Lee Carr is a northeast Ohio-based writer and senior Golf Course Industry contributor.

2024 **AMGUARD™** **EARLY ORDER PROGRAM**

No enrollment form. No signing up.
Simply order **September 1 – November 30, 2024.**

basamidG



Get Cleaner Regrassing Results Sooner

Kill existing bermudagrass
fast and **sprig nearly
two months earlier.**

PREMION™
FUNGICIDE



Attack Anthracnose

**Dual modes of action
delivering contact and
systemic activity.**

Turfcide® 400
TURF FUNGICIDE



Stop Snow Mold

Get maximum snow mold
protection with the
power of PCNB.



View savings and included products at
AMGUARDTECH.COM/2024-EOP



BASAMID G, PREMION FUNGICIDE, and TURFCIDE 400 are EPA registered products of AMVAC Chemical Corporation. BASAMID G is a restricted use pesticide. Important: Always read and follow label instructions. Some products may not be registered for sale or use in all states or counties. Please check with your state agency responsible for pesticide registration to ensure registration status.

©2024 AMVAC Chemical Corporation. All rights reserved. AMERICAN VANGUARD, AMVAC, AMGUARD, PREMION, TURFCIDE, and respective logos are trademarks owned by AMVAC Chemical Corporation. AMGUARD Environmental Technologies is the specialty markets division of AMVAC Chemical Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of American Vanguard Corporation. BASAMID is a trademark of Kanesho Soil Treatment SPRL/BVBA. AMGUARDTECH.COM AET-24035

AMGUARD™
ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGIES



DESIGNING WAYS

As golf experiences its latest boom — more than 120 new courses are under development, renovation or transformation in the U.S. — there's increasing pressure on the other 15,000 or so to up their game and attract their share of new players. Which means you might find yourself involved in a redo of your course, and that usually means working with a golf course architect.

I have nothing against architects as a rule. Their vision has helped propel the game forward and keep it interesting. But when brought in to “restore,” “reinvigorate” or “reimagine” an existing course, sometimes their personal biases can overwhelm what's best for the property. That could mean trouble for you.

If/when you find yourself about to work with an architect, keep these key points in mind:

- No one knows your golf course as well as you do.
- You're not only representing your own interests — how the course is maintained — but those of the golfers/members who play it.
- Do not be reluctant to speak up. Remember, once the architect is done and gone, maintaining their work is your responsibility.

Fortunately, deciding to renovate or transform a golf course is not an overnight decision. Substantial planning is required to develop a budget, secure financing, verify the accuracy of estimates, ac-

quire vendors, order supplies and equipment, and to communicate with stakeholders. This gives you plenty of time to plan and to forge a relationship with the architect, the builder and other contractors.

As soon as you learn management wants to bring in an architect — a decision you should be in on — start doing your research. Look into that person's other renovations, particularly any in your neighborhood. Talk with other superintendents who've gone through renos: Find out what surprised them, what was easy and hard, and who to watch out for. And if you can find a fellow superintendent who worked with the same architect, pump them for details.

While you do all you can to protect yourself, here are some key areas on the golf course that need protecting. I spoke with a number of superintendents who've been involved with renovations lately. Of course, this is not a comprehensive list. Only you know where the trouble spots are on your course. But it's a start.

Putting greens

Since they're 50 percent of the game, they're almost always a focus of a redo. Making them hard to play is easy; maintaining them is not.

Greens need a proper grass-growing environment, where sun and air cross the surface. They must be built to move water across the surfaces and into subsurface green drainage. Greens must be designed to spread out the traffic of golfers walking on and off, so make sure they are large

enough for your audience. Also make sure each green has at least seven hole placement options — one for each day of the week.

The green's perimeter edges should be clearly defined so there is no issue where the surface stops and collars begin. This is how shrinkage begins.

Greens that are too sloped or too mounded are difficult to maintain, leading to scalping or worse, turf loss. Designing greens requires imagination, but depends on drainage, drainage and more drainage ... and the proper amount of space for fair hole locations.

Watch out for last-minute negligence, such as dragging “leftover” green mix to the edge of the green and leaving it there. That's a surefire recipe for trouble.

Grassing lines

Here is where the superintendent and architect must be in sync from day one.

Can you fit their design into your corridors? Is your mowing equipment able to move easily around the corridors, or will it have to contend with bumps, humps, obstacles and crowded bunkers? The width of fairway mowers dictates maintenance and eventually, the look of the golf course.

Grassing lines need to be at a uniform width. Tell the architect what size and kind of equipment you use, as well as how the rough will be mowed so maintenance can avoid time-consuming hand mowing and weed eating.

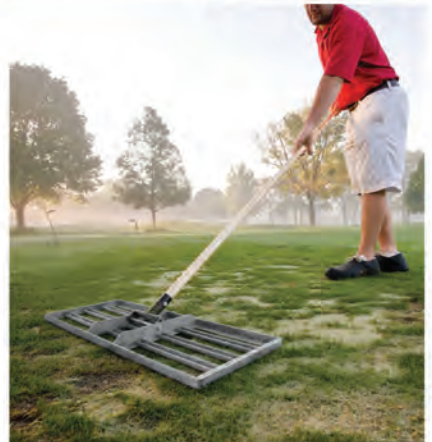
MORAGHAN continues on 55



TIM MORAGHAN, principal, ASPIRE Golf (tmoraghan@aspire-golf.com). Follow Tim online at Golf Course Confidential at www.aspire-golf.com/or on X at @TimMoraghan.

WHY WAIT?

FULLY STOCKED & READY TO SHIP



While you're waiting for the next rain fall or dollar spot to go away, something you don't need to wait for are your golf course accessories and maintenance tools from Standard Golf. From cups, to bunker rakes, to our new SG Pro Hole Cutter and everything in between, we are fully stocked and ready to ship!. Call your favorite distributor, order Standard Golf today, and we'll ship tomorrow.

1-800-553-1707 • StandardGolf.com
Setting the Standard in Golf Course Accessories since 1910
© 2024 Standard Golf Company. All rights reserved.



An illustration of a hand dropping a white ballot box into a larger white ballot box. The ballot box has a red stamp that says "COMPLAINT". The background is a solid orange color with a large, faint, circular shape in the center.

COMPLAINT

DEFTLY COPING WITH COMPLAINTS

By **Kelsie Horner**

Unfortunately, criticism is part of a golf maintenance job. Fortunately, there are strategies developed by your peers for effectively handling it.

Veteran superintendent **Randy Pinckney** had just opened a course after a full tee-to-green renovation. While driving his mentor around the site, an unhappy golfer stopped his cart. “The greens are extremely slow, they’re terrible, and you should be ashamed of yourself,” the golfer told Pinckney.

Despite the many positive compliments the course received, Pinckney couldn’t stop thinking about the one negative complaint. His mentor told him, “I know it’s hard, but you have to find a way to let it go.”

No matter the industry, no matter the job, criticism happens. For golf maintenance professionals, criticism often

consists of complaints about green speeds, tee times, cart paths, hole closures — the list goes on.

As superintendents, assistant superintendents, greenkeepers and general managers, how do you best handle the critics? How do you “let it go?” How do you know when to take a critic seriously?

Let’s learn how some of the industry’s best compartmentalize and address complaints.

JUDGE YOUR PRODUCT YOURSELF

With 44 years of experience in the golf industry—and 40 of those as a superintendent — **Rafael Barajas** suggests experiencing your product yourself. Just as a chef may try their own food, or a designer may wear their

own clothes, go out and play the course.

Now the principal owner of International Turf Services, Barajas has found that being a player himself has helped when conversing with golfers and members. Along with his experience as a former GCSAA president, Barajas’s decades in the industry have taught him how to not let critics bother him.

“Just evaluate your job performance every day, and when you look yourself in the mirror, get up in the morning and you know that you’re doing a great effort,” he says. “The rest of it doesn’t matter. What matters is your family. Have a great balance. Understand that if you work harder, the criticisms are going to be there regardless.”

TALK TO THOSE WITH MORE EXPERIENCE

Longtime industry stalwart **Tim Hiers** recommends delaying a response to complaints by bouncing ideas off more experienced peers in the golf industry.

“For example, if a member comes up with a complaint that’s a little bit stuffy, you should be like, ‘Can you give me a little bit of time to think about it? I’m gonna get back to you within three days, if that’s OK,’” Hiers says. “He needs to put it on his phone as a reminder, he puts it on the wall. He does not want to fail to get back to him within three days, but he might bounce it off two or three savvy veterans and between the three, help come up with a decent response, because sometimes responses can create more agitation and more animosity, and more unnecessary work.”

Pinckney also recommends surrounding yourself with a team of industry confidants.

“They’re going to understand exactly what you’re going through, and they’re going to give you a bite to deal with,” Pinckney says. “You know, you can’t hold it in, or else you might take it out on a member or a golfer, or an employee. It’s very difficult for people to hold in negativity and not let it release. And you have to have a network of people to make sure that you can get that release and that you can laugh about it.”

NEVER SAY YOU’RE NOT CONCERNED

Hiers has also learned not to brush off complaints. “That’s a red flag,” he says. “All you’re telling them is you don’t care.”

Instead, Pinckney suggests hearing that concern, and keeping a consistent response.

“I think one of the most important things is you say the same things,” Pinckney says. “You say, ‘I’m sorry, sir or ma’am, I’ll make sure I’m aware of it now.’ And then you call your network of friends that do what you do and you ask them. Acknowledge their complaint and move on.”

EMBRACE IT

Carlos Arraya, general manager and CEO of Bellerive Country Club just outside St. Louis, has learned to embrace the criticism.

“There’s a variety of players with a variety of skills that have a variety of opinions. So, they’re gonna give you a variety of feedback,” says Arraya, a former superintendent who moved into an executive role in 2021. “If you can’t handle feedback, it’s going to be very difficult for you to be successful long term in the environment.

“I think we’re in a feedback-rich environment, and it’s not going to go away. It’s going to get exponential in nature. The more we pay for things, especially the game of golf, the more people are gonna give you feedback, so just be ready.”

TRY NOT TO TAKE IT TOO PERSONALLY

In Batavia, New York, Terry Hills Golf Course superintendent **Thad Thompson** says that, after years of experience, he knows how his greens are playing. Because of this, he knows a valid complaint before someone can even voice it.

“I know what my golf course looks like or is playing like at the end of the day,” Thompson says. “So, if there’s actual criticism that’s valid, I know it before I hear anybody criticize me about anything.”

Thompson has learned through experience that most complaints come after a bad golf round. Don’t take the criticism too personally, because it could be a golfer’s way of getting over that bad score, he says.

NEVER GET INTO AN ARGUMENT

After 39 years in the industry, Meadow Brook Club superintendent **John Carlone** has learned to never get into an argument with a member or a customer.

The longer he has been in the industry, the more frequent the complaints have become. In fact, the Long Island turf pro even has a nickname for the criticism: “The case of the ‘toos,’” Carlone says. “I hear it every day. The

NUMBERS TO KNOW

Most common complaint you hear from golfers

BUNKERS	51%
GREEN SPEEDS	31%
ROUGH HEIGHTS	16%
FAIRWAY CONDITIONS	2%

Source: @GCIMagazine X poll, July 23, 2024, 201 respondents

bunkers are too firm, the bunkers are too soft, the bunkers are inconsistent, they’re too wet, they’re too dry, the greens are too fast, they’re too slow, they’re too soft, they’re too firm.”

Carlone has learned the importance of not arguing with a member, and credits that for part of the reason he has been in the industry for so long.

“Never get into an argument. Never, never try to defend your position by saying you are right and their complaint is wrong,” Carlone says. “This is my opinion: If you get to the point where you want to argue and you want to get into an argument, it might be time to get out of the business.

“If they’re willing to listen, you can explain it to them. I think on too many occasions, superintendents can get too technical and start to talk about all our practices and what we do, and they really don’t want to hear that. They don’t care. I’ve learned that.”

As a superintendent, complaints are going to come. It’s up to you to handle the criticism as best as you see fit. If you encounter a case of the “toos,” take the advice of the experienced industry pros and handle the situation with care.

“Don’t let negative criticism be the driver in your life,” Barajas says, “because it’ll drive you nuts and drive you out of the industry.” 🏌️

Kelsie Horner is Golf Course Industry’s assistant editor.



SKILLS **FOR HANDLING** *THE SELLERS*

Do early order programs start too early? Do they end too late? Veteran superintendent **Ron Furlong** talks with his local reps to learn more about an always confusing process.

Is it possible it's that time of year again already? Early order program time? How on earth did that come up on us so quickly?

Late summer/early fall is the time many of us superintendents start allowing for a tiny bit of planning

for the following year to creep into our thoughts. I've always struggled with this a little. We are still ankles deep in a busy, stressful summer, and trying to even give a little thought to the following season has always been a challenge for me.

But alas, because of the timing of

many of these early order programs — we all know them as EOPs, of course — we are forced to cast an eye toward the future a tad earlier than perhaps we would care to. I will point out that the timing itself of many of these programs, particularly the ones that start super early in the fall, is very much open to debate. I know I'm not the only one to think the window of some of these EOPs is way too early.

I would love to plan my EOP purchases at the same time I'm doing my budget. Just seems logical to me. However — for me, at any rate — I don't sit down to work on the budget until late October at the earliest, although it's actually more like early November when I finally finish it. By the time I have the budget completed and I'm ready to submit my EOP purchases in November, I've already missed the boat on a fair amount of possible savings.

But I digress. I didn't want to talk about the timing of the programs as much as focusing on the importance of the relationships between the superintendent and the reps who assist us with the EOP programs.

Having a strong relationship with your reps is pivotal to the role they're able to play in assisting with your EOPs. Let's face it, these programs, without guidance from the reps, can be a bit daunting.

I am fortunate enough to have two great reps I work with here in western Washington. Of course this means working with them throughout the year, not just when EOPs roll around in the fall.

One of them is **Jacob Close**, a former superintendent in the region. He is the territory manager for Simplot here in western Washington and my rep at Simplot. Jacob and I have developed a strong relationship over the years, and I've come to rely on him for advice as much as anyone I talk with. Having that respect as well as having the ability to ask questions of him without fear of judgement is

crucial for me. I think this has become even more important for me, as I've been without an assistant for a full year now. Being able to springboard ideas or just pick someone else's brain has been essential for me to feel I have someone in my corner when things get a bit dicey.

As I talked with Jacob recently about EOPs, it was interesting to get his angle on the programs.

He said about 60 percent of the superintendents he works with across the region utilize the programs at some level. With those who take part, Jacob doesn't ever suggest full reliance on the programs.

"Generally, I recommend superintendents only order between 40 to 75 percent of items needed for the year through EOPs," he says. "It's good to leave some budget so that you can adjust for unexpected weather, or any special disease outbreaks. Once folks get a couple years of EOP ordering under their belts, it becomes pretty easy to plan purchases."

I usually order all my fungicides (at least planned fungicide use) in the EOP, as well as all plant growth regulators and wetting agents. Herbicides, fertilizers and seed I buy as needed. I've settled into this the last few years, and it's become pretty user-friendly from my end.

I also asked Jacob what he sees, from the seller side, as the benefits of these programs for superintendents.

"One of the biggest upsides to EOPs is that you always get the product at the lowest price," he says. "Sometimes items are backordered, but an EOP will always be filled. In addition, you are insulated from



I will point out that the timing itself of many of these programs, particularly the ones that start super early in the fall, is very much open to debate."

price increases after the first of the year."

Jacob listed other purchaser benefits that included rebates, delayed billing until May or June, availability of hard-to-get products, and the comfort of knowing everything you planned is in the shop for the year.

What has worked for me is also splitting up my EOPs between two different companies. Not putting all your eggs in one

basket, so to speak. Also, I like working with two reps as opposed to one — thus, spreading the wealth come EOP time seems logical to me.

In addition to Jacob at Simplot, I also work closely with **Greg Van Hollebeke**, who is a regional sales rep here in western Washington for Wilbur Ellis. In the last couple of years, I've given Greg all of my Syngenta (my largest order by far), BASF and Amguard EOPs, and the other half goes to Jacob at Simplot, who gets my orders for Nufarm, Corteva, Envu, generic products and Simplot.

I chatted with Greg about his thoughts on EOPs. I first asked him how he gets the EOP info from the manufacturers.

"We usually have a meeting in early September to hear about each manufacturer's EOP," he says. "They go over important dates, what the program covers, changes from last year, rebates and any other pertinent info."

I asked Greg about my personal dilemma with EOPs: How some of them start too early or end too early for superintendents to take full advantage of them.

"Yes, this can be a little tricky," he says. "I know some superintendents do not have their budget done yet for the upcoming year, but they would still like to take advantage of the largest savings they can. With that said, most of them find a way to get their order in before October 31, which is often a first deadline for many of the manufacturers. And while not the majority, there are still quite a few who get in an EOP order prior to the end of the EOP season, which is usually late November or early December."

Greg also notices that EOPs benefit him as well as the superintendent. "I find they help me as many superintendents use the EOPs to actually build their fungicide program," he says. "This is a wonderful

opportunity for me to hear from them what they think worked and what didn't work the past year. And, having everything well-organized on spreadsheets allows me to be a good and responsive resource for the superintendent."

One other thing I wanted to mention: Some manufacturers might be heading in a direction that will help superintendents with creative payment plans during other times of year rather than just at EOP time in the fall. Jacob, for example, recently informed me about Syngenta's SummerPay program, which operates similarly to a traditional EOP.

"With the SummerPay program from Syngenta, you can order some products between August 1 and September 30 this year, and payment

can be deferred until June of 2025," he says. "This is on certain products only, like snow mold protection that many have to deal with in the fall and may not have the budget to handle a sudden outbreak."

Finding creative ways like this for superintendents to make plant protectant purchases work within the framework of a tight budget will be essential going forward. And you can be sure those hard-working reps will be out there doing the leg work for us by keeping us informed and saving us money. Where would we be without them? 🌱

Ron Furlong is the superintendent at Avalon Golf Club in Burlington, Washington, and a frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.

Slay Leaf Cleanups with Billy Goat's High Productivity Duo

Special Goatoberfest Financing to build your Goat Herd*

VISIT BILLY GOAT AT THE BRIGGS & STRATTON BOOTH DURING EQUIP EXPO. BOOTH #5018 INDOOR AND 6400B OUTDOOR

Leaf Dragon™ Leaf Loader

- True curbside set up offers 45 sq. ft. of cleanup coverage, 2x that of other units on the market
- No-tool 2-pin door closure accesses impeller and liner for quick inspection
- 12" wide, 10-gauge soft angle steel discharge chute better spreads the load and offers reduced wear
- 37 gross HP* Vanguard® EFI for easy automotive-type cold weather starting and fuel savings up to 25%*
- 6900 CFM and 16" diameter intake for high productivity
- Belt driven with longer belt for increased life
- Road-ready DOT trailer is integral

Double down on leaf and debris cleanup with the Hurricane® P2000 compact stand-on blower at 3500 CFM!

HURRICANE

*Financing subject to credit approval
 *All power levels are stated gross horsepower at 3600 RPM per SAE J1940 as rated by Briggs & Stratton.
 **Closed-loop EFI system fuel savings may vary based on debris loading conditions and other factors.

Call 800-776-7690 or visit billygoat.com

DIVE A LITTLE DEEPER!

GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

beyond the page

A conversation that expands the scope of a story from the most recent issue of Golf Course Industry, including a chat with one of our columnists on their latest work.

AVAILABLE ON:

Spotify

GET IT ON Google Play

Listen on Apple Podcasts

SUPERINTENDENT RADIO NETWORK

RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY

A LOCAL DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
COMPLICATED THE JOB FOR LONG ISLAND SUPERINTENDENT
ADAM THOMAS

By **Matt LaWell**

Large holes littered the Lawrence Yacht and Country Club for much of 2022 and early 2023, the result of a village drainage improvement plan that stretched five years and cost around \$9 million. The project slowed play, but it was necessary: Located on the western edge of Long Island, Lawrence was hammered by Hurricanes Irene and Sandy in consecutive years and endured flooding after heavy rain throughout the next decade.

It started at the worst time for superintendent **Adam Thomas** and his team as they had completed an irrigation installation the year before.

Many of those new pipes were dug up, pulled out and set aside. After 5-foot drainage pipes were installed, Thomas worked with Winterberry Irrigation to plant the system again, and with McDonald Golf to restore the sixth green and seventh fairway to their 1924 original **Devereux Emmet** design.

"Things throughout 2022 were so hectic for me I barely had any opportunity to think," Thomas says.

"I had to get Winterberry in here to get everything removed, I had to work with general manager (**Cory Menking**) and certain members. It was tough. It was stressful. It was a lot of hours. We didn't have any control over it so we just had to make sure members were kept up to speed as much as possible so there were no surprises.

"I'm glad it's over. It wasn't terrible, but I wouldn't wish it on any golf course superintendent."

Caring for the turf as it grew back in provided another challenge — though a much smaller and more manageable challenge. Tees and greens at Lawrence are predominantly bentgrass, while fairways are "still a hodgepodge of bent, rye and *Poa*," Thomas says, adding that he would like most fairways to be at least 50 percent bentgrass by next year and eventually check in around 90 percent. "I'm optimistic that in the next five years, if we keep up with our program, we'll be spraying all our fairways like they're bentgrass. It's been slow, but we're progressing."

To help with that progress, Thomas has started to dial back nitrogen applications and apply more SePRO Legacy to regulate plant growth while utilizing SePRO Musketeer to suppress and convert *Poa annua*.

"We're spreading more and more bent on the fairways and that's making things easier and easier," Thomas says. "Every year in July or early August, we get some *Poa* thinning out on fairways, so as we push more bent that becomes less of a problem." Musketeer, he adds, "has really been a big help." If other Long Island superintendents, don't already use it, "I would highly recommend it. We started out conservative with it on tees and greens and have gotten a little more progressive with time."

Thomas is doing all this with a 15-person team, 11 of them full-timers — less than most Long Island private courses. Assistant superintendent **Joe Beddel**, mechanic **Jimmy Arias** — who has filled the role since the sudden death of former mechanic **John Hutter** — and spray technician **Jesus Castillo** have all played big parts. "We have a really good team,"

Thomas says, "and we make the golf course a little bit better every year."

With the irrigation installed — and re-installed — and the drainage pipes rerouting much of the rain well away from the course and key village roads, play is booming. Lawrence will handle about 30,000 rounds this year — more than any year in the club's 100-year history, Thomas says, save for perhaps 2021 and 2022.

It's a special time at a special place.

"I've lived here 13 years now," Thomas says. "And one of the reasons I love my job so much, I live a block from the ocean. I can go home after work and I can walk on the beach for an hour or so, read a book, maybe take a dip in the ocean, and I feel good as new. I love being by the water." He is surrounded by members both at the club and in his neighborhood and has gotten to know them as more than just golfers.

"It does have kind of a family atmosphere," he says. "It's just a very nice quality of life here." ■

BEST USE OF ARAMAX INTRINSIC BRAND FUNGICIDE

Aramax® Intrinsic® brand fungicide from BASF became available to golf course superintendents in June.

As anticipation surrounding the incorporation of a new disease control tool into spray programs builds, questions surrounding how to effectively use the fungicide quickly expand. Successful superintendents, after all, are uber-curious professionals.

To satisfy initial curiosity, let's explore the fundamentals associated with Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide with BASF Senior Technical Specialist Dr. Emma Lookabaugh.

What is Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide?

Superintendents are likely familiar with most of the science behind Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide. The new solution features an active ingredient combination of pyraclostrobin (QoI, group 11) + triticonazole (group 3 DMI fungicide). The solo products featuring these active ingredients include Insignia SC® Intrinsic® brand fungicide and Trinity® fungicide. Aramax Intrinsic is the sixth solution in the Intrinsic brand fungicide lineup, which debuted in 2006 with the launch of Insignia SC Intrinsic brand fungicide.

What does Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide do?

Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide provides broad-spectrum control of 26 diseases on cool- and warm-season turf, including large patch, brown patch, snow mold and dollar spot.

Where on a golf course should Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide be used?

The largest swaths of short-cut turf — fairways.



"Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide is a go-to fairway fungicide brand that delivers expanded spectrum of control, longer lasting protection and better resistance management over solo-active products," Lookabaugh says.

When is the best time to apply Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide on cool-season turf? BASF recommends using Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide as foundational fall and spring applications to protect fairways against brown patch, dollar spot, leaf spots and other diseases. As winter approaches, the cool-season disease control focus shifts to snow mold.

"Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide can also hold its own in snow mold country and offers buildable protection to fit your region, length of snow cover and varying disease pressure," Lookabaugh says. "Apply preventively for maximum disease control."

When is the best time to apply Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide on warm-season turf?

For large patch, Lookabaugh recommends using Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide as a foundational control

solution fall through spring. Applications to control other diseases on warm-season turf such as dollar spot, leaf spots, take-all root rot and Microdochium patch should occur on an "as-needed" basis, she adds.

Lookabaugh says early spring Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide applications can also "jumpstart" fairy ring protection while providing added plant health benefits for maximum turf quality.

What rate ensures Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide works as intended?

This is a simple one. The label rate of one fluid ounce per 1,000 square feet (the equivalent of 43.6 fluid ounces per acre) controls all 26 diseases on the label. Applications can provide up to 28 days of control.

Does Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide need to be watered in post-application? If so, how much irrigation should be applied for it to work as effectively as possible?

BASF recommends applying Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide in two to four gallons of water per 1,000 square feet. A customized post-application approach should be used on a few diseases. Lookabaugh recommends light irrigation following applications targeting large patch and watering in applications targeting fairy ring and root diseases like take-all root rot or summer patch with at least a quarter inch of irrigation to help drive the fungicide to the root zone.

What factors should superintendents consider if using Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide curatively?

Lookabaugh calls curative fungicide applications "tricky" regardless of the product being applied, because of the visual disconnect between the amount of disease damage noticeable and the amount of disease that actually exists.

When making curative or clean-up applications, Lookabaugh recommends one application to stop disease progression, followed by a second application much earlier than planned to help compensate for increased disease.

"This means tightening up your spray intervals," she says. "When conditions are favorable for disease and pressure is high, don't stretch your sprays. Aramax has performed well in curative applications and Intrinsic plant health benefits on board to help stimulate healing and faster recovery."

What else should superintendents know to get the most out of their Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide applications?

The fungicide "easily fits" into existing programs using SDHI fungicides such as Encartis® fungicide and Xzempar® fungicide. BASF now includes Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide applications in its popular and practical Intrinsic Holiday Spray Program.

"To maximize disease control with Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide and take advantage of Intrinsic Plant health benefits, we recommend following our Intrinsic Holiday Spray Program for fairways," Lookabaugh says. "This program helps you build a foundation of plant health to protect turf from disease, and increase resilience to heat, drought and winter stress." ■



We create chemistry

MAXIMUM

FAIRWAY DISEASE CONTROL

Aramax[™]
Intrinsic[®] Brand Fungicide

**DUAL ACTIVE | BROAD SPECTRUM
DEFENDS AGAINST 26 DISEASES**

Introducing a new fungicide powerhouse that is ready to take your fairway spray program to the next level. Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide is a dual-active, broad-spectrum solution designed to defend against 26 of the toughest turf diseases like snow mold, large patch, brown patch, and dollar spot while delivering the powerful plant health benefits of Intrinsic brand fungicides. Add it to your rotation and prepare your course to be **The G.O.A.T. - The Greatest of All Turf.**

betterturf.basf.us/Aramax

Always read and follow label directions.

Aramax is a trademark of BASF and Intrinsic is a registered trademark of BASF.

May not be registered for sale or use in all states. Please check with your state or local Extension Services.

©2024 BASF Corporation



SMALL MARGIN OF ERROR

Golf, as we know, is a game of inches. A putt that hangs on the lip. A fairway lie that avoids a divot. Landing above or below the edge of a pond.

Much of that derives from the nature of the golf swing: an athletic move generating an elliptical curve whereby the clubhead, traveling 18 to 23 feet, approaches the ball at a speed of anywhere from 70 to 120 miles per hour. The slightest torque along the way will twist the clubface two or three degrees along any one of three dimensions, creating the difference between a golf ball path that forms an elegant parabolic arch or embarrassing ground skitter.

The same holds for the presentation of a golf course. From entry drive to departure from the clubhouse, there are touch points, moments of revelation and crucial zones of perception and aesthetic impact that make all the difference in how a golfer experiences a day on the grounds. Whether it's personnel management, landscape design, building architecture or turfgrass maintenance, creating and managing a welcoming perception helps shape the success — or failure — of a golf facility.

Sometimes it's as simple as making sure that employees park at the far end of the clubhouse lot rather than toward the front of the building. Or cultivating a workplace culture in which employees are encouraged and rewarded for taking pride in their appearance rather than adopting slovenly disregard.

Little things can convey a lot. Like the golf course where, upon arrival, you face a long line of golf carts parked out front and the all-too-eager attendants immediately mount your golf bag on a vehicle rather than asking if you are walking or riding. Or the cart itself that doesn't have divot mix containers available at hand.

Equally revealing, in this case of overkill, is the club that spells out the name of the facility in a vast array of annual flowers arranged in a circular bed.

What a difference it makes for the early golfer on a course to spot maintenance workers in bunkers, on fairways or greens who actually look up and see if golfers are approaching — and momentarily step away from their task to let players proceed. Of course, it would help a lot to create a welcoming environment all around if those same golfers went out of their way to thank the crew for their efforts as they proceeded.

Out on the golf course, some things communicate a lot. I'm always made uneasy by the presence on tees of a standard vertical package of intrusions: ball washers, benches, towel stands, litter baskets and cemetery-style hole markers, replete with advertising from your local bowling alley or laundromat. Nothing says "cheesy" like this array of aesthetic incompetence.

The same goes for broken-down bunker faces, with the sand leaking all over, due to the constant grind of Sand Pros eating their way into the ground upon entry and egress. It's a sure sign of labor shortage, budgetary decline and indifference on the part of management.

How much more expressive of stewardship and ecological regard are large stands of wildflowers, pollinator gardens and avian-protective habitat — including bird boxes — in out-of-play areas? Yes, those areas

take a lot of work to establish. But they add so much to the feel of a golf course and provide much-welcome evidence of the game's larger salutary identity.

For those of us professionally invested in the game, a look behind the scenes at a golf operation can provide loads of information about the maintenance culture. I've always thought that the ideal setup of any shop area would be one that was "interview ready" — in other words, something you'd be willing to show off to your next prospective employer as evidence of your care and professionalism. Even within the limits of an old steel Butler building and inadequate storage areas, it's possible to let people know you care. Like having the garage floor in clean order, and a break room where the staff can relax, eat and not worry about mold, mildew or chemical traces.

By contrast, I recall my disappointment at courses where there were girlie pin-up magazines in the staff bathroom, or the wash shower stall was filled with storage equipment rather than available for use in an emergency. Nothing conveys contempt for your own personnel more than atavistic practices like that.

Like a secret shopper every time I play golf or visit a facility, I'm always on the lookout for these telltale signs. In an industry of small margins, they mark the difference between a facility that's limping along and one that's sprinting into the future sustainably. 🌱



BRADLEY S. KLEIN, PH.D. (political science), former PGA Tour caddie, is a veteran golf journalist, book author (*"Discovering Donald Ross,"* among others) and golf course consultant. Follow him on Twitter (@BradleySKlein).

**Somewhere on this page is
the secret to perfect greens.
Can you find it?**



It's not a secret. Floxcor™ fungicide, which contains the active ingredient fluoxastrobin, has exceptional efficacy, control of a variety of turf diseases and long residual activity, plus quicker plant intake that keeps your turf pristine.



Get perfect greens

Floxcor™

FUNGICIDE



™/® Trademarks of Corteva Agriscience and its affiliated companies. Floxcor™ is not for sale or use in Nassau and Suffolk counties, New York. Other state restrictions on the sale and use of Floxcor apply. Consult the label before purchase or use for full details. Always read and follow label directions.
© 2023 Corteva. CT38-246-020 (11/23) BR CATO3TURF066



Delightful shots amid thick woods

How the creators of **Oakwood Country Club's** par-3 course brought something unconventional to the Midwest private golf scene.

By **Guy Cipriano**

Editor's note: This is the second part of a two-part "Short Course Stories" series about the process of adding a par-3 course at Oakwood Country Club in Kansas City, Missouri. The first part appeared in the July issue.

Up, down and through the dense woods, atop boulders and ridges, less than 15 miles from downtown Kansas City, a golf course architect and studious writer found nine par 3s inspired by fun, testy shots played elsewhere.

The process of routing, building and now maintaining the par-3 course at Oakwood Country Club represents a melding of a celebrated design era with the playing practicality of the modern short-course movement. Architect **Todd Clark** and golf architecture writer emeritus/design dabbler **Ron Whitten** were both around the industry

when golf financiers frequently commissioned architects and contractors to construct courses on wooded sites.

So, when developer **Ken Block**, the mastermind behind Oakwood Country Club's transformation, asked Clark and Whitten to create a unique, compact golf journey inside a dense 28.8-acre parcel, neither flinched. Clark was trained by Chicago-based architect **Dick Nugent**, an overlooked modern designer known for bringing golf to varied Midwest sites.

Oftentimes architects aren't gifted dozens of potential holes on dreamy land; they must trudge through deep woods and identify tactics to create enjoyable playing experiences. Clark and Whitten muddled their boots throughout parts of three years—and battled insects and stifling Transition Zone weather—to produce a course

DISCOVER THE ULTIMATE AND LATEST TURF STRESS PREVENTION SOLUTION



*New cutting-edge
formulation for conditioning
high-performance turf to
withstand extreme plant
stress*



Blocks Stress



Prepares Turf



University Proven



Contact our team today to learn more about this latest product!



✉ info@target-specialty.com
🌐 target-specialty.com/bpn
🌐 turf-fuel.com
f [TargetSpecialty](https://www.facebook.com/TargetSpecialty)

✕ [TargetSpecProd](#)
in [Target Specialty Products](#)
📺 [targetspecialtyproducts](#)



▲ Todd Clark (left) and Ron Whitten spent plenty of time walking through the woods to route Oakwood Country Club's par-3 course.

that debuted over this past Memorial Day weekend. Oakwood Country Club is one of a handful of Midwest private clubs boasting a par-3 course. And it's likely the only Midwest club with nine consecutive par-3 holes tucked among thick stands of trees.

"It's an amazing journey over that piece of property," Block says. "Looking at the holes now, you can't possibly understand how they were sitting in that piece of property. But here they were, waiting to be uncovered."

Shortly after the club purchased the land for the course, Clark walked the site for the first time "just to see if we could get nine holes in there." He then developed a routing concept using a draw and ridge on the property as a prominent design feature. "Once we got that initial routing, it didn't really change," Clark says. "And then the fun started with Ron."

Whitten, the longtime *Golf Digest* architecture writer, scoured his extensive files and worked in collaboration with Clark and the well-traveled Block to identify holes inspired by heralded courses and architects that would fit onto the site.

The holes are more tribute than template. The second hole, for example, honors the tantalizing and terrifying 12th hole at Augusta National. Pine Valley, Royal Wimbledon Golf Club,

Whistling Straits and The Olympic Club are among the other courses with par 3s that guided Oakwood's finished product.

"Ron and I tried to take a lot of the elements that we have seen and put them into this one golf course and make something that has some continuity," Clark says. "But each hole also has its own individual character. It fits with the overall theme of Oakwood. That was the bottom line—we wanted it to feel like it was part of Oakwood and that it wasn't something separate."

The seventh provides the most dramatic shot on the course. The 152-yard hole dips more than 60 feet and plays over a pond doubling as a storm retention necessity. The hole honors one of the West Coast's most famous par 3s: the seventh at **Robert Trent Jones Sr.**-designed Spyglass Hill Golf Course.

"It's a demanding shot all over water," Clark says. "When you're clearing it, you go, 'This looks like it's going to be a 220-yard par 3 just because of the terrain. That's when you started to see the course come together.'"

The course has two sets of tees, with the back markers playing 1,100 yards. The longest hole from the tips is 157 yards; the shortest is 92. But most golfers will experience as many stressful swings as soothing swipes. "No doubt it will be a challenging par-3 course," Clark says.

Through all the staking, surveying, discovering and adapting, Clark and Whitten needed to leave something behind that wouldn't overly perplex Oakwood Country Club director of agronomy **Brent Racer's** team. Oakwood's rapid expansion since Block organized a group of members to purchase the course in 2020 has involved renovating the championship course, constructing a massive practice facility and giving the grounds a private golf resort vibe. The more amenities the club adds, the more responsibility Racer's team shoulders.

Technology will mitigate agronomic and labor demands encountered on the par-3 course.

Instead of trying to maintain vibrant bentgrass or zoysiagrass beneath

tree chutes while fretting over divot recovery, the club opted to install synthetic tees. Each hole has a pair of synthetic tees built atop 4 inches of concrete with 1 percent slope for drainage purposes. Fescue rough borders the surfaces. In addition to easing the maintenance burden, synthetic tees should make the course more playable for developing golfers, because "when you hit a fat shot, you'll slide through" the ball, Clark says.

As he learns the proper staffing levels required to present an elite par-3 course, Racer has resorted to using three robotic mowers to mow five acres of fescue rough and zoysiagrass approaches. Clark designed a continuous cart path around the site to ensure vehicles can navigate the steep terrain. Greens are covered with 007 Creeping Bentgrass and mechanical fans help protect the surfaces from minimal natural air movement.

Grassing didn't commence until late fall 2023, so the remainder of 2024 will help Racer fully understand how to balance the needs and staffing of the par-3 course with the rest of his operation. Earlier this year, he hired **Andrew Putnam** to oversee the course's daily maintenance.

"I know there are places where sometimes their par-3 courses are secondary thoughts throughout the whole process," Racer says. "This is going to be a focal point for people to play. A guest is going to want to play this and see it. We want to have the best product we can for them."

Racer's role offered him a ridgeline spot to observe holes in various pre-, during- and post-construction phases. From a tribute to Augusta National's 12th hole in the Kansas City woods to the serene view from the seventh tee, unveiling the par-3 course might be Oakwood's boldest move yet.

"It's not a normal par-3 course," Racer says. "They'll be some shot-making required to enjoy the course. That's what's going to make it special. It's not just a bunch of greens in the middle of a field. It's a golf course, and it's going to feel like a golf course." 🌱

Teeing ground space

The first and 10th tees, or anywhere that can become a congestion point (snack bar, clubhouse, photo ops, betting and wagers) needs to be large enough to handle a traffic jam. You know the patterns and can predict where the bottlenecks and wear will occur.

When defining these areas, also ensure there is ample space for riding mowers, and wide enough to make turns. Not every course can afford to hand-mow tees daily. Check the tees' proximity to slopes as well.

Bunkers

If golfers think they hate bunkers, they should talk with us. Because what do bunkers mean to maintenance crews? Hand work. With the labor issues facing our industry, it behooves you to speak up *before* bunker-ing gets out of control.

There have to be some bunkers, of course, but you want

the architect to avoid steep slopes. Maintenance should trump optics, and safety (of golfers and your crew) should prevail over all other considerations. Don't let the "artist's ego" top common sense.

The turf around bunkers needs to fit the region, temperatures and soils. I don't understand this obsession with fine fescue around bunker edges as it wreaks havoc with maintenance and most golfers.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Cart paths

Make them wide enough — especially on bridges and at tight turns — to handle heavy maintenance equipment. The paths should put golfers near teeing grounds and around the putting greens.

Practice facilities

A renovation is a good opportunity to update the practice range. If available, add more tee

space and plan for a row of artificial mats. Upgrade the short game practice area but avoid building fancy target greens with sand bunkering that must be maintained: Before you know it, instead of 18 holes, you'll be caring for 24 or 27.

Tree removal

If you are closing the entire course, take the opportunity to cull the tree population, especially those that are not protected or essential to the design. Pinpoint those that have intruding roots, cast shade on putting surfaces or pose a safety hazard to golfers and staff.

Infrastructure updates

Again, use this as a chance to examine the lifespans of your vital operating items, from irrigation system to pump house, overall drainage, and fairway mowers to chemical storage. The Golf Course Builders Association of America has excellent

resources for this purpose.

Agronomy

While the course is closed, fix agronomic problems, especially if they're not already addressed in the renovation. You know where and what they are. Don't let the designer add to them.

Post-construction labor and equipment

Once a project is done don't think you'll be able to maintain it with the same budget or equipment. A "new" course requires more inputs (fertilizer and chemicals) and possibly new or more equipment and crew.

Egos and turf (literally and figuratively) aside, transforming your golf course may be one of the most exciting projects you undertake. Just make sure it's a win for you.

And remember this simple rule: If you see something, say something! 🏌️

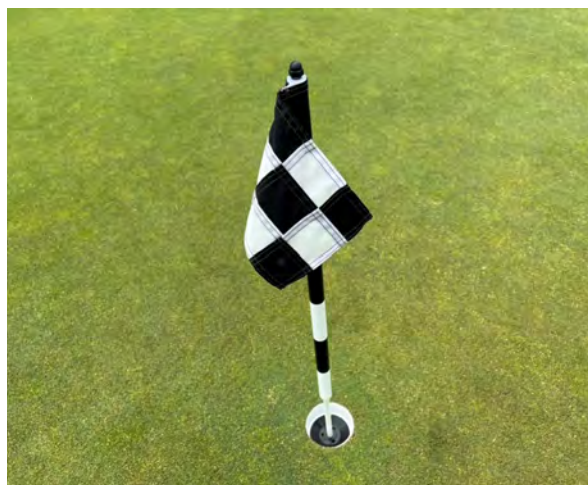


For customer-focused
case studies, smart
superintendents
choose
Golf Course Industry.

You always have a choice.
Choose
GOLF COURSE
INDUSTRY

TRAVELS WITH TERRY

Globetrotting consulting agronomist **Terry Buchen** visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He shares 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.



REDUCED CUP CHANGING

The nine hole locations on the practice putting green at Aspen Golf Club are now only changed once a week, as opposed to two to three times a week. The club annually hosts approximately 30,000 rounds of golf on the 7,908-foot-elevation mountain course. The cups are placed slightly

below the turf level so the edge lasts much longer. The cups are plastic, but the plans are to replace them with the new-style zinc practice green cups so the sound of the ball going into the cup replicates the metal regulation cups out on the course. Superintendent **Dominic Lanese III** and general manager **Jim**

Pratt, PGA, are a great team working closely together. **Jim Sivess**, former superintendent at the Snowmass Club, is the president of the Aspen Golf Club advisory board. **Frank Hummel** was the original architect and **Dick Phelps** and **Rick Phelps** have been the remodeling architects over the years.

RECYCLED FLOWER BOXES

During COVID-19, the City of Aspen, Colorado, Parks & Open Space Department built and placed decorative flower boxes outside restaurants in the downtown area so diners could safely enjoy the great outdoors. Two-by-6-inch boards measuring 12 inches by 4 feet placed five high were glued and screwed together with two 4- by 4-inch boards used as feet to keep them raised off the ground. Solar-powered night lights were also installed on one side. The flower boxes have been recycled and are now used at the Aspen Golf Club to provide added beauty and aid in the control and direction at the golf cart staging area and along cart paths adjacent to the practice putting green and clubhouse. The planter boxes are filled approximately one-quarter with potting soil placed over a false bottom with holes drilled in them for drainage. The parks department plants the flowers and golf maintenance waters them. **Dominic Lanese III**, superintendent, and **Jim Pratt**, PGA general manager, came up with this great idea. **Jim Sivess**, former superintendent at Snowmass Club, is the president of the Aspen Golf Club Advisory Board. **Frank Hummel** was the original architect and **Dick Phelps** and **Rick Phelps** have been the remodeling architects over the years.



Terry Buchen, CGCS Retired, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 56-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at 757-561-7777 or terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

ADVERTISER	WEBSITE	PAGE
AMGUARD Environmental Technologies	amvac.com	39
AQUA-AID Solutions	aquaaidolutions.com	59
Aquatrols	aquatrols.com	2
BASF Corporation	basf.com	48,49
Billy Goat Industries	billygoat.com	46
Buffalo Turbine LLC	buffaloturbine.com	10
Corteva Agrosiences	corteva.com	*51
Covia	coviacorp.com/products/golf	13
Earthworks	earthworksturf.com	35
Envu	us.envu.com	60
Heritage Landscape Supply Group	heritagelandscapesupplygroup.com	37
Lastec, Inc	lastec.com	8
Nufarm	nufarm.com/usturf	11
Quali-Pro	controlsolutionsinc.com/quali-pro	15
SePro Corporation	sepro.com/golf	47
Standard Golf Company	standardgolf.com	41
Syngenta	syngenta.com	belly tip, 24,30
Target Specialty Products	target-specialty.com	53
Turfco MFG, Inc.	turfco.com	10
Uline	uline.com	9

FOR SALE

Discount Small Engines & Parts

Small engines & parts from Briggs & Stratton, Kohler, Tecumseh, Robin and more.
www.smallenginesuppliers.com

Also, look up your own parts and buy online at
www.smallenginepartssuppliers.com

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

MILLER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES

GOLF COURSE BROKERAGE
COURSES FOR SALE
www.southeastgolfproperties.com
brett@mmagolf.com
828-775-7765

SEEDS

NATIVE SEEDS

Largest producer of native seeds in the Eastern U.S. Hundreds of species of grass and wildflower seeds for upland to wetland sites. Bioengineering material for riparian areas and erosion control. Contact **ERNST SEEDS** today.
www.ernstseed.com - 800/873-3321



Non-retouched client photo: GreenJacket System coming off in the spring!

PROVEN BY 20+ YEARS OF SUPERINTENDENT SUCCESS.

- Patented **IMPERMEABLE Reinforced Winter Cover Turf Protection System.**
- **PERMEABLE Reinforced Grow-in Covers** increase healthier turf growth.

Find out how the GreenJacket System can make a difference for your turf.

Call **888-786-2683** or email **info@greenjacket.com**
See Research at **GreenJacket.com**

NAMES INDEX

Andy Apple Jimmy Arias Carlos Arraya Todd Baker Rafael Barajas Anthony Baur Joe Beddel Ken Block Dr. Leah Brilman John Carlone Dale Carnegie Jesus Castillo Todd Clark Jacob Close Jonas Conlan Bill Coore Geoffrey Cornish Ben Crenshaw Quinnton Croker Brendon de Jonge Wenyi Ding Jacob Emerson Scott Emerson Shawn Emerson Harris English Nick Faldo Ryan Farrow Troy Flanagan Amanda Fontaine Michael Galvin Pete Garvey Zac Gavlak Lanto Griffin Tim Hiers Carey Hofner Frank Hummel Jacob Hurley John Hurley Dr. R.H. Hurley John Hutter Jeff Jensen Mark Johnson Bobby Jones Robert Trent Jones Andy Jorgensen Steven Kay Craig Kessler Dominic Lanese III Justin Leonard Stacy Lewis Dr. Emma Lookabaugh Richard Mandell Andi Meadows Cory Menking Greg Morgan Old Tom Morris Michael Nelson Robert Nielsen Dick Nugent Bill O'Brien Hunter O'Neal John O'Neal Damian Pascuzzo Steve Pate Matt Perry Dick Phelps Rick Phelps Anthony Phillips Randy Pinckney Jim Pratt Matt Puckett Andrew Putnam Brent Racer Donald Ross Scot Sherman Lance Simpson Webb Simpson Jim Sivess Noah Spencer Kyle Stanley David Swift Adam Thomas Thad Thompson Alex Tolbert Tyler Truman Greg Van Hollebeke Paul Watkins PJ Watkins Matthew Wharton Ron Whitten Roy Williams Dick Wilson Rick Woelfel



Once... Twice... Three Times Your Industry News

For news and stories we just couldn't fit into the pages of our monthly magazine, sign up for *Golf Course Industry's* newsletter, now delivered three times per week.

GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY



CONTENT IN EVERY DIRECTION.





UT PROSIM

Ut Prosim is the motto of my alma mater, Virginia Tech University. Translated, it means “That I may serve” and the university adopted it as its motto in 1896 as it represents a philosophy of service, contributing to the greater good and leaving a positive impact on society.

Admittedly, I didn’t know this about my school during my days there — and I attended twice! But as I have continued to progress through my career, I look back and realize maybe it was meant to be. **Old Tom Morris**, after all, was a humble servant. I have tried to the best of my ability to follow his example as I have spent the past 22 years as a golf course superintendent serving three different clubs and memberships.

Remaining humble, I believe, is a key to withstanding the criticism that comes with the territory. Former college basketball coach **Roy Williams** once said, “The two easiest jobs in the world are being a basketball coach and a golf course superintendent, because everyone else knows how to do your job better than you do.”

The video clip went viral a few years ago and the Carolinas GCSA honored Williams with a plaque to show their appreciation for his support. What Williams really meant by that remark is we can receive a lot of questions and/or criticism from folks who don’t know what they don’t know.

So, how do you handle it?

First, you must remain calm at all times. You can never allow yourself to outwardly show how tumultuous you may feel on the inside when someone voices their displeasure with the golf course. You then must make yourself available, or simply be visible. When folks are unhappy with something, you cannot hide and duck their questions. Be willing to listen and hear what they have to say. You may not know the answer right away but let them know you hear their concern and will get back to them

with an answer.

Personally, I have dealt with more criticism than you can possibly imagine. And I have tried my very best to be transparent and honest about the challenges we face on the golf course and why. We are the experts, and sometimes a simple reminder is all it takes. And sometimes we need backup, a specialist who can assist with a difficult diagnosis or a problem with underlying issues. It’s important to never be afraid to ask for help; it is not a sign of weakness but rather a sign of knowing your strong suits and being willing to improve your knowledge in other areas.

Recently at my new club, I encountered a complaint that came through our monthly online polling of the membership. I phoned the member and left a message stating I had received their comment, I understood their concerns and would like to speak with them at their convenience.

I didn’t hear back from the member until six days later, and our chat probably only lasted six minutes, but afterward he had a better understanding of the challenges I’m currently dealing with and my plan for how we will be addressing them.

A couple days later, I saw him on the course and took the opportunity to approach and shake his hand, thanking him for taking the time to return my call. I later learned from our fitness director that she overheard him bragging to a few fellow members about

how I took the time to listen and speak with him when he reached out.

Communication is critical to success. I write a blog, as well as supply information that appears in the club’s weekly email bulletins and monthly newsletters. And despite the volume of information I make available for the membership, sometimes not everyone reads everything.

I recently attempted to put out a small fire with my submission to the August newsletter. Even the general manager texted to tell me it was a great message. Three days later, I received a text from a friend who said it looks like folks didn’t get the message and the echo chamber had gotten noisy over the weekend. I updated my blog and included the original message along with some specifics to help calm the waters.

Now, all this talk about handling criticism is one thing. Don’t get me wrong, criticism hurts. The words can sting, and it is easy to allow it to affect your mood, and even make your dinner taste cold. Learning how to handle that aspect of the job is a different topic for another time. And sometimes, on the days you hear some of the harshest criticism, you return home to find a hand-written note in the mail thanking you and singing your praises for a job well done. Funny how the universe lets us know the loudness we hear is probably only coming from a small percentage of folks. So don’t let them spoil your dinner. 🌱



MATTHEW WHARTON, CGCS, MG, is the superintendent at Idle Hour Country Club in Lexington, Kentucky, and past president of the Carolinas GCSA. Follow him on X at @IHCCGreenkeeper.

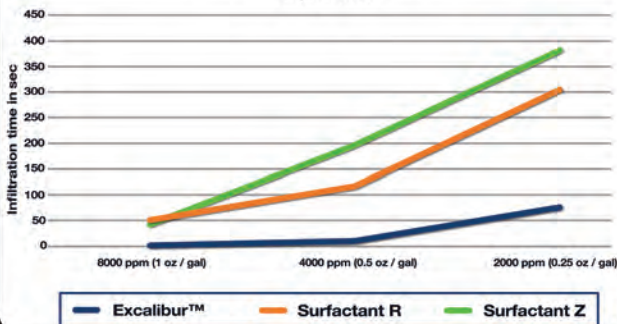


Rapid Infiltration

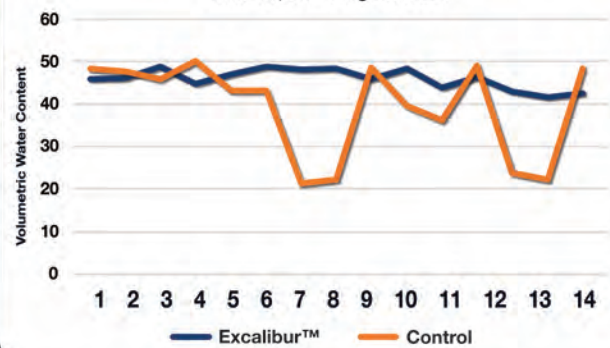


Consistent Uniformity

Infiltration times - Excalibur™ vs competitive products
Severely water repellent sand
wdpt > 3600s



Volumetric water content across transect
Stafford, NY - August 2022



Introduces a **NEW** surfactant chemistry standard that delivers **rapid infiltration** and **consistent** dry-down.

Helps achieve **consistent hydration** as well as **superior rehydration**.

Proven to **increase activity** in the rhizosphere, creating a more active and dense root system, leading to a **healthier turfgrass system**.



Solutions4Turf

Aqua Aid Solutions


Solutions4Turf




Fortify your turf from all sides

Save money and strengthen your course today.

The stronger and healthier your turf is, the better it stands up to challenges you might face throughout the year – from extreme weather to an influx of traffic. That's why for this year's NOW Solutions program, our agronomic experts have put together solution-based pairings that will strengthen your course and your savings.

 **STRESSGARD**

 **RESILIA**

 **CASTLON**



Scan to see how to save in 2024, including new options to boost your turf's overall health.

ORDER
NOW AND
SAVE



envu Golf

ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW LABEL INSTRUCTIONS. Environmental Science U.S. LLC, 5000 CentreGreen Way, Suite 400, Cary, NC 27513. For additional product information, call toll-free 1-800-331-2867. www.envu.com. Not all products are registered in all states. Castlon™, Envu, the Envu logo, Resilia™ and Stressgard® are trademarks owned by Environmental Science U.S. LLC or one of its affiliates. ©2024 Environmental Science U.S. LLC.