

BY PAT JONES

THE GRASS WHISPERER

COMMON SENSE SEEMS TO BE AN ONGOING
THEME IN THE LIFE AND CAREER OF A
RETIRED SUPERINTENDENT

As a teenager, Doug Petersan had the common sense to realize life on a farm in rural Nebraska was a helluva lot of work. He went off to school at the University of Nebraska – long before they had a turf program – to study business. After his freshman year in 1960, he came home and knew he wanted something different.

“I wasn’t going to go back to the farm and throw hay bales all summer,” Petersan says.

So, at his sister’s suggestion, he got a job at a local golf course that paid \$1 an hour. By the end of the summer, he was the assistant superintendent, earning the lordly sum of \$1.75 an hour. The farm was officially in his rear-view mirror.

Even though majored in business at Nebraska, he stuck with golf. Pioneer Golf Course, one of the municipal courses in the Lincoln area, had a terrible winter and hired him as the superintendent.

“They had no grass but did 60,000 rounds a year,” Petersan says. “This was before preemergents and overseeding equipment, so I took an old aerifier and a disc (cultivator) out on the fairways just to get some seed/soil contact. It was common sense to me, but by the end of the first day, they had the mayor and the city council out to see what this crazy kid was doing.”

The crazy kid’s plan worked, and he stayed at Pioneer for four years.

From there, he kept moving up the ladder with a stint at Wedgewood Golf Course in Plainfield, Ill. (where he learned much from legendary course builder Brent Wadsworth, who lived nearby). Then, it was back to Nebraska at Fremont Golf Club, where he spent seven years and shook things up once again.

“That was one of the most significant times of my career,” he says. “We started topdressing greens with sand in

maybe ’76. That was, at the time, pretty radical. I read about it somewhere and saw it done in California. I was always looking for a way to provide a smooth putting surface without doing crazy things.”

In 1980, Petersan moved to the fabled Prairie Dunes Golf Club in Hutchinson, Kan. The course, a Perry Maxwell classic design, rates high among the best kept secrets in American golf. It’s a gem featuring links-style gorse, sand and tight fairways laid across the stark western Kansas landscape.

“We had dunes full of sand, so we did a lot of topdressing,” he says. “It drove the members crazy, so they started calling me ‘Doug Peter-sand.’”

During his 12 years at Praire Dunes, Petersan hosted four USGA championships (two Women’s Amateurs, a Mid-Am and the Curtis Cup) and began to gain a national reputation for his minimalist, environmentally friendly practices. He also met and began to work a bit with architect Bill Coore and pro Ben Crenshaw.

In 1991, he took his skills to Baltimore Country Club, another classic where he worked with architect Brian Silva to restore the greens. But in 1999, he was lured to Texas by Coore and Crenshaw to build and manage the course at Austin Golf Club. He’s been ensconced happily there ever since. It’s also where he got his nickname.

“Our golf pro started calling me the ‘Grass Whisperer’ after I started here at Austin, so I used it as the name of my column in the club newsletter,” he says. “I kind of adapted it for the name of my consulting business as well.”

Now, after almost 50 years of bringing a common-sense vision to a succession of great golf courses, he has “retired” as a superintendent. He might be the Grass Whisperer, but he speaks loud and clear on his career,



Even though Doug Petersan isn't a superintendent any more, he still spends a lot of time on the golf course because of his and his wife's consulting company.

consulting, working with Coore and Crenshaw, and the challenges facing the industry in the future.

WHY DID YOU RETIRE?

I didn't retire so much, rather I changed my position in life. I'm no longer a superintendent, but my wife and I formed a company, and I have a consulting contract with Austin Golf Club. So, I'm still at the course a lot, but I'm essentially self-employed. We have a really good friend down here who's a financial planner, and he suggested we could do this, still keep active and defer some income to later in life.

I've also been doing some outside consulting

around Texas, including working with Nutramax Laboratories, a biostimulant company, and working with a few other courses throughout the country. I love to look at other courses, especially great golf courses.

ISN'T "CONSULTANT" A DIRTY WORD FOR SOME OF YOUR PEERS?

It can be. Consultants have brought some of that on themselves. I like to help people if I can. The last thing I want to be is one of those "job killer" consultants you hear about.

ARE YOU ENJOYING THE BENEFITS OF THE PRIVATE SIDE OR JUST WORKING HARDER

IN A DIFFERENT WAY?

I haven't changed my routine much. I try to go to church more often on Sunday now, but otherwise the schedule's about the same, and I'm at the course just about as much. I'm actually a member at Austin Golf Club, and we're building a house out here, so I enjoy being here, obviously. My wife also works at the golf course. She's been my administrative assistant for years. Her mission in life is to keep me out of the office. She handles all the details so I can spend more time on the course.

TYPICALLY, WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO HELP YOUR CLIENTS WITH?

I look at this business in a different light. The hardest part of being a superintendent is the blending of good agronomic practices and good playing conditions. Push either envelope too far either way, and it doesn't work well. If there's one mistake I see as I visit different courses is that people push the envelope too far to make a manager or a green committee happy. They water too much or double- or triple-cut. They overcompensate, and it becomes a big see-saw. It doesn't work well. I'm fortunate here at Austin Golf Club because the last thing we judge something by is what color it is.

I developed my philosophy of working with people from my mother. She was a school teacher for 45 years, and she used to come home frustrated and say, "I don't care if I teach these kids anything if I can teach them how to think." That's what I try to do with my staff and even the courses I work with.

WHAT MISCONCEPTIONS DO SUPERINTENDENTS HAVE ABOUT SALESPeOPLE?

I'm working with Nutramax, but it's not as much in sales as trying to spread the word about the technical aspects of the product. I'm a resource for superintendents and distributors. I spend time with them and answer questions. Nutramax is one of the tools I've used for a long time, so I'm comfortable working with them.

My philosophy always has been not to use a lot of nitrogen fertilizer – less than two pounds per thousand square feet on bentgrass greens for a 12-month season at Austin – or irrigation. I always try to use soil tests to determine what is needed for nutrients. We're not trying to influence color, just turf quality and playability.

One of the things that helped me, starting at Baltimore County Club, is that products like Nutramax help you out by enhancing leaf tissue. That carried over here. We rarely double-cut – maybe three or four times per year – but we'll have healthy bentgrass greens that roll at 11 all summer long.

WHAT SHOULD PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT PRAIRIE DUNES THEY PROBABLY DON'T?

How great of a course it is. Perry Maxwell did the first nine. For years, it was known as the best nine-hole course in the country. They opened a second nine in the early '60s. It's a small-town club. Hutchinson's population is only about 40,000. It was a secret paradise for years.

YOU WERE IDENTIFIED EARLY ON AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL SUPERINTENDENT. DO YOU AGREE WITH THAT CHARACTERIZATION?

I've absolutely tried to be one. Tom Athy, who's now the superintendent at Omaha Country Club, was one of my assistants years ago. He called a while back and reminded me of what I always told him: If you don't know what it is, don't spray it, aerify it. I've always tried to do things culturally – anything I could do to make the plant healthier. Plus, I've been fortunate to be at clubs that allowed me to do it. It's easy to put band-aids on stuff, but you don't want to put a band-aid on a broken arm. It's common sense.

WHAT OTHER COMMON-SENSE ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR COLLEAGUES?

One thing I've done for a long time is maintain a nursery and experiment with different things. We were the first club in this part of Texas to go with zoysiagrass fairways and bentgrass greens. I had no preconceived notions. We had to sprig the zoysiagrass because there wasn't enough of that sod in the world. I was told repeatedly I couldn't do it. We did have some problems – it was a hundred degrees, after all. But, as far as I'm concerned, it's the finest playing surface you can get with the least maintenance and inputs. I always push the envelope a little further than most people do. Grass is pretty self-sufficient if you let it be. If you dump things on it, you'll kill it faster than letting be healthy. You have to keep watching it and try different things. If I've learned anything throughout the years, it's been patience.

WHAT DID YOU TRY TO TEACH THE YOUNG FOLKS WHO YOU'VE MENTORED WHO ARE NOW LEADERS IN THE BUSINESS?

One thing I've never done is try to push my ideas on young people. I try to give them the big picture and let them figure it out. If you send a guy out and tell them exactly what to do, he'll do it. But, if you tell them what you want done and let them figure it out, they'll learn more. Many people are good at doing a specific job but don't know what the mission is. They won't be as successful on their own unless you challenge them to solve problems themselves.

HOW DID YOU HOOK UP WITH CRENSHAW AND COORE?

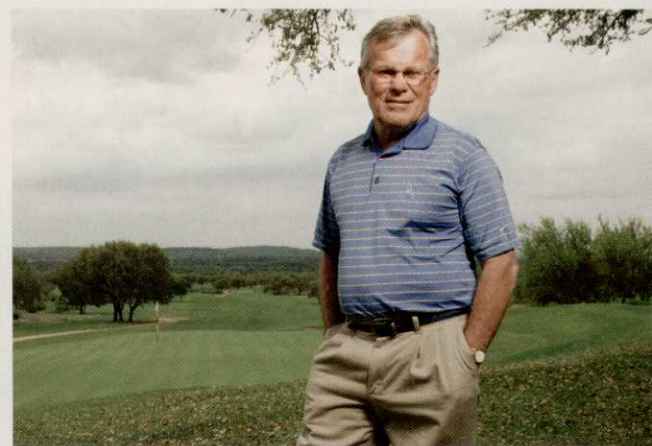
I'd used Bill Coore as a consulting architect at Prairie Dunes. I liked to run ideas by him because he has a great eye. He and Ben already were talking about getting together. In 1987, Bill helped me redo the first and second holes at Prairie Dunes to get surface water off greens. Ben visited when we did that job, and they started working together after that. Since then, I've been involved with many of their projects throughout the country. They appreciate how I try to do things, and I appreciate their philosophy about golf course architecture.

Later on, I was working with Dick Youngscap at Firethorn Golf Club in Lincoln, Neb. I spent one day a month with him. He wanted to do this project in the middle of nowhere in the Sand Hills of Nebraska. I told him, "Hell, Dick, there's no people out there!" But, he stuck with it, and it evolved. He asked me who I'd hire to do the (design) job, and I immediately said Crenshaw and Coore. That's how Sand Hills got going.

It really turned out to be a fantastic course. My assistant (Kyle Hegland) just left to go up there to be the superintendent. He'll do a great job up there for them. He's so passionate about this business it's incredible.

WHAT SHOULD READERS KNOW ABOUT BEN CRENSHAW THEY MIGHT NOT BE AWARE OF?

He makes it a point to learn what we go through daily to maintain golf courses. He understands grass doesn't have to be green to be a good surface. He was out of town a couple of weeks one time we'd had some rain. He got back to the course and said, "Doug, it turned green on us! That's just awful!"



HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF THE BUSINESS AND PROFESSION CHANGING DURING THE NEXT 20 YEARS?

The energy crunch is big right now but, 20 years from now, water will be the issue. T. Boone Pickens made a zillion dollars in the oil business. Know what he's doing now? Buying up water rights.

You better learn to live with less water. We've never used more than 50 million gallons on 75 acres. That's about 24 inches of irrigation for the season. Our annual rainfall is only 30 inches, which usually comes in a few big falls. We keep it dry and typically water greens once a week. And they're pretty healthy. They have a good root system.

We need to teach people that green isn't always good. I'm so fortunate because Ben is my leader down here, and he completely agrees with that concept.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST THING YOU'VE LEARNED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS?

The main lesson I would pass along is enjoy what you do. If you don't, do something else. If you enjoy this business, it's absolutely the best line of work in the world. There's nothing like being out there on the course by yourself in the morning. It's the closest thing you can get to heaven on earth.

DO YOU REALLY TALK TO THE GRASS?

No, but sometimes if you listen real close, it'll talk to you. GCI

Doug Petersan can be reached at 512-264-9366 or dwpeter@gmail.com.





the grub guide

If Grubs are your problem,
Bayer has a Solution.



Bayer Environmental Science



Grub

Grubs are the larvae of a group of beetles called scarabs (*Scarabaeidae*). Creamy white in color, they have a dark hind end, brown head and six well-developed legs. Depending on their age and species, grubs range in length from 1/4 to 2 inches.

The Damage

Grubs feed on and destroy the root systems of grasses and other plants. If left untreated, you'll face not only an aesthetically unpleasing course, but a problem that can get a lot worse. Each year, grub damage requires golf course superintendents to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in seed or sod replacement.

The damage above-ground...

Look for irregular sections of brown or grey-green drought-like turf that don't appear better after watering or rainfall. Grub-infested turf may also feel spongy underfoot and damaged areas will peel away easily, like rolling up a carpet.

... But the real damage is found below-ground

In the past, sampling was the best way to assess grub damage and it is easy to do. First, map out the course and take samples from a depth of 4-6 inches in various locations. Remove a sample of soil and grass and determine the number of grubs per square foot from this sample. A square-foot population of 5 or more means you have a problem.

When the damage typically occurs

Grubs thrive in moist soil, so damage may not be noticeable in the wet spring and fall months, when turf grasses grow quickly and their roots can recover quickly from grub attacks. But in drier summer months, root systems are easily compromised by lack of water, and increasing stress on the turf. This makes grub damage easy to recognize.



Where grubs go, these other pests follow

Skunks, opossums, raccoons, moles and birds find grubs particularly appetizing. The digging they do to reach the grubs may cause additional damage to a golf course, creating more serious problems – and expense.

The Bayer Solution to Grubs

As a golf course superintendent, you're the first line of defense against grubs. Only Bayer gives you a complete set of options – Merit® insecticide, Allectus® insecticide and Dylox® insecticide – that helps you provide the most effective grub control available today, for all types of grubs in every stage of their development. These are the standards against which all other grub control products are measured. Bayer invented the total grub solution and it has revolutionized the golf care industry.

No matter the severity of your grub problems, the season or even the region of the country you're in, relax. Bayer – and only Bayer – has the products you need to keep your course beautiful and green. Ensuring a grub-free, playable course that will keep your players happy.

The Industry's Most Effective Grub Control Products

Merit® – Revolutionizing grub control as the most effective, longest-lasting broad-spectrum grub control product available. Period.

Allectus® – The best broad-spectrum residual insecticide used to control virtually every turf pest both above and below the ground.

Dylox® – The #1 curative grub control product offering reliable and consistent control of large grubs, *fast*. Great for early season and late season clean-up.

Grubs





MERIT[®]

The Science of Merit[®] Insecticide

Merit insecticide interferes with nerve impulses and disrupts insect behavior. They stop feeding, stop reproducing and eventually die.

Why It's Better Than The Competition

- Premium prevention for targeting and controlling 1st and 2nd instar grubs
- 12 years of real world, proven performance
- Usage rates up to 96% lower than many registered soil insecticides
- Greater than 97% efficacy on major grub species

The Grubs That Hate Us

- White grubs, including these larvae: Japanese beetle, black turfgrass ateniens, Northern masked chafer, Southern masked chafer, European chafer, Oriental beetle, May and June beetles, billbug larvae

Pick Your Formulation & Pack Size

- Wettable powder (Merit 75 WP, 8 x 2oz. bottles)
- Flowable (Merit 2F, 12 x 240ml. bottles); also available in 4 x 1 gallon
- Water Soluble Packs (Merit 75 WSP, 4 x 4 x 1.6oz.); also available in 88 x 1.6oz mini drum
- Granular (Merit 0.5 G, 30lb. bags)
- Merit + Fertilizer: Rates and formulations vary

Application Rate Guidelines

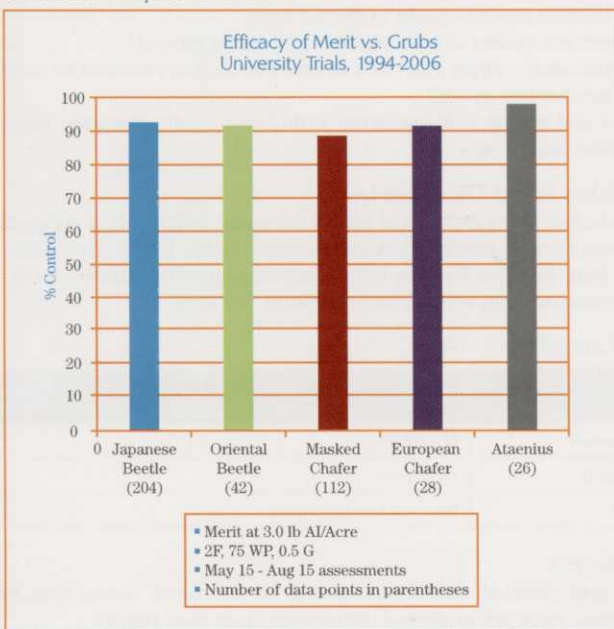
Formulation	Use Rate
Merit 0.5G	60 – 80 lbs. per acre or 1.4 – 1.8 lbs. per 1000 ft ²
Merit 2F	1.25 – 1.6 pints per acre or 0.46 – 0.6 fl. oz (14 – 17 mL) per 1000 ft ²
Merit 75 WSP/WP	6.4 – 8.6 oz per acre or 3 – 4 level teaspoons per 1000 ft ²
Merit 0.2 Fertilizer	Typically applied at 150 lbs. per acre



When to Apply Merit

As adult beetle emergence occurs (followed by mating and egg laying), you should apply Merit from late May through early August, just before or after egg lay and through the presence of early instar. For more information about recommended application times in your region, please review the Merit product label.

The Research Speaks for Itself



Merit®





allectus®

The Science of Allectus® Insecticide

Allectus insecticide combines the two most powerful insecticides in the turf and ornamental markets. Together, their modes of action provide unprecedented levels of control over damaging turf pests.

Why It's Better Than The Competition

- Premium prevention for targeting and controlling early instar grubs
- Wide treatment window and rate range to choose from
- The broadest-spectrum control of insects above and below ground
- Flexibility in application – apply just once or add a second application to control late season surface feeders as well
- Superior control and widest pest spectrum with fewer applications per season, which means lower labor costs

The Grubs (and Other Pests) That Hate Us

- White grubs, including these larvae and adults: Japanese beetle, black turfgrass ataenius, Northern masked chafer, Southern masked chafer, European chafer, Oriental beetle, May and June beetles, billbug larvae, annual bluegrass weevil, chinch bugs, cutworms, armyworms, mole crickets, fire ants

Application Rate Guidelines

Formulation	Use Rate (per acre)
Allectus GC G (granular)	50 – 250 lbs.
Allectus GC SC (liquid)	1.8 – 9 pints
Allectus + fertilizer	Rates and fomulations vary.

When to Apply Allectus

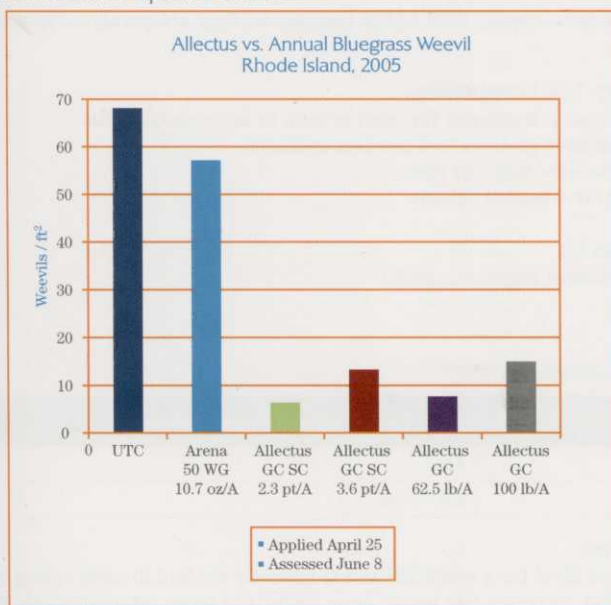
For outstanding grub control, one application is all you need. Sometimes, two applications at lower rates are preferred, depending upon your region:

- In the Northeast and Midwest: One application in May and a second application in June
- In the Southeast and Southcentral: One application in April and a second application in July
- In the West: One application in May and a second application in July

For more information about the recommended application times in your specific region, please review the Allectus product labels.



The Research Speaks for Itself



Allectus®





Dylox[®]

The Science of Dylox[®] Insecticide

When grubs come into contact with Dylox insecticide, they are paralyzed quickly and killed fast.

Why It's Better Than The Competition

- Fast control – a rescue treatment for early season or late-season grubs
- Most effective curative grub control product available
- Effective on surface-feeding turf pests
- Controls pests then degrades quickly

The Pests That Hate Us

- White grubs (including sugarcane grub)
- Cutworms
- Chinch bugs

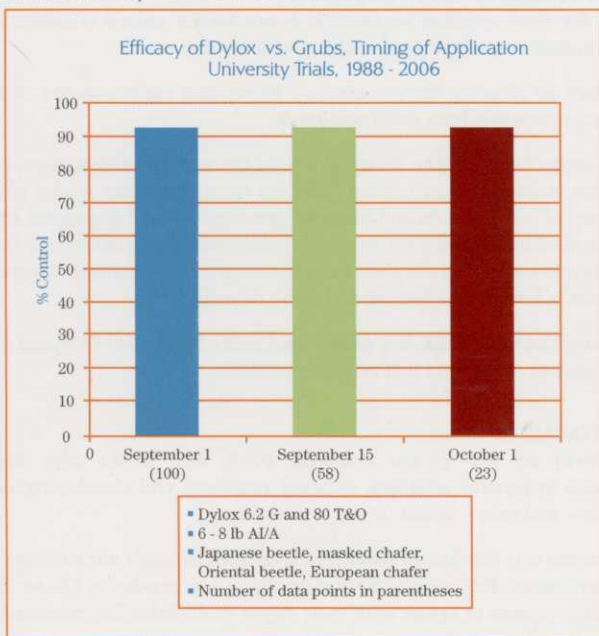
Application Rate Guidelines

Formulation	Use Rate (per 1000 ft ²)
Dylox 6.2 GR	3 lbs.
Dylox 80 T&O	2.25 – 3.5 oz

When to Apply Dylox

Fast-acting Dylox is ideal for a quick kill and is typically applied in early spring or late summer and fall, targeting late instar, large grubs. For more information about the recommended application times in your specific region, please review the Dylox product labels.

The Research Speaks for Itself



Dylox[®]





The Science of Healthy Environments

Just as important as the total solution we provide is our totally unique commitment to improving environments anywhere people live, work or play.

We call it the "Science of Healthy Environments". Improving environments everywhere is our goal. And science is how we'll achieve it.

Science, in fact, has always driven Bayer. Today, as one of the world's leaders in product development, we have state-of-the-art testing facilities throughout the world. Here, we evaluate the efficacy of our products and formulations in real-world situations. Only after we measure our products' impact on those environments do we determine their ultimate end use. This allows us to go beyond merely eliminating pests and disease to helping create turf that is better functioning and more beautiful.

The Science of Healthy Environments. It's what helps make Bayer the #1 brand golf course superintendents use to protect turf and ornamentals.

Other Bayer Products

Science and the world we live in are changing every day. That's why Bayer Environmental Science is forever adapting existing products and developing new ones that will keep us – and you – ahead of the competition.

We invite you to examine our full line of products, available through our network of Bayer authorized distributors. For more information about our products, please visit us at www.BackedbyBayer.com or speak with your Bayer Field Sales Representative.



Bayer Authorized Distributors:

Agra Turf
Agro Servicios
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BEI Hawaii
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Charles Hart Seed Co.
Chicagoland Turf
Corbin Turf
D&K Products
EH Griffith
Estes
Fisher & Son
Grass Roots
Harrells
Hawaii Grower Products
Helena Chemical Co.

Herod Seeds
Horizon
Howard Fertilizer & Chemical Company
LESCO
Metro Turf Specialists
Nassau Suffolk Turf Services
Ochoa Fertilizer Co., Inc.
Pocono Turf Supply Co.
Precision Turf
ProSource One/Agriliance
RF Morse
Reed & Perrine
Regal Chemical Co.
Reinders
Simplot Partners
Sierra Pacific Turf Supply

Southern Ag
Southern States
Superior-Angran
Supreme Turf Products
Target Specialty Products
The Greenkeeper Company
The Terre Company
Tom Irwin
Turf Specialties
Turfgrass
Univar
Van Diest
UAP Professional Products
Western Farm Service
Wilbur-Ellis Company



Our Mission for
Healthy Environments



BACKED
by **BAYER.**

Merit®, Allectus® and Dylox® insecticides carry more than just product guarantees. Each carries a greater commitment to you that's reflected in three words no other manufacturer can use: Backed by Bayer.™ Backed by Bayer is our contract with you, the promise that your trust in Bayer can be complete, your confidence in us total. Backed by Bayer is your assurance that not only are our products superior in every way but that we also provide the best training, support and education network in the industry. We make it easier for you to develop newer and better ways to build your players' satisfaction because you're Backed by Bayer.

The Industry's Best Products

No other manufacturer invests as much in product development as Bayer. Development is driven by the industry's leading scientists and experts at several state-of-the-art facilities in the US and abroad. Our dominance in chemistry and formulation technologies ensures that only the most effective products are available to you.

Unprecedented Support

We offer interactive training opportunities throughout the year, either at our Technical Center or at your facility. The more knowledgeable you are about the science behind our products and the latest golf course industry developments, the easier it will be for you to develop newer and better ways to satisfy your players.

You'll also find that our dedication to your success extends beyond our products. Say there's a golf course problem you're having trouble identifying. Call us and we'll work with you to help diagnose the problem. We may ask you to send us some samples; in some cases we'll travel to your course to investigate further. Our commitment to improving the health of golf courses is total.

Superior Customer Service

If you have any questions or concerns about any of our products, please don't hesitate to contact us. Talk to our sales representatives, the most knowledgeable and experienced in the business. They will help you access every product benefit you expect – and even some you don't.

Our easy-to-reach customer service center will answer product questions, troubleshoot, and help you understand how to use our products. You can be confident in knowing that you never have to be alone when you're using our products and that we're dedicated to working with you until you get the maximum results.

Backed by the Best

It's science. It's support. It's our commitment to you. It's Backed by Bayer. And it's the best you can get.

BackedbyBayer.com

We're the #1 brand that professionals use to protect turf. We guarantee your satisfaction, 100% of the time. For any questions about our products and services, visit BackedbyBayer.com or call 1-800-331-2867.



Bayer Environmental Science

Solutions that fit any grub problem.

When it comes to grubs and the serious problems they can dish out, Bayer has the solution—products that will prevent or control every no-good grub you may come across, quickly and effectively. Therefore, keeping your course beautiful and green and your reputation golden. And all our products are **Backed by Bayer™** and all the support and science that come with it. For more information ask your Bayer Field Sales Representative or visit us at BackedbyBayer.com.

MERIT®

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BACKED
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FLYING above the rest

HOW SOME GOLF FACILITIES PERFORM BETTER THAN MARKET AVERAGES

Rounds at Wildcat Golf Club have increased from less than 50,000 in 2002 to 60,661 in 2006. Photo: Wildcat Golf Club

With rounds growth flat the past few years, many golf facilities are struggling to increase rounds and boost the bottom line. With all of the well-documented challenges facing the industry, it's not easy. However, implementing creative, aggressive marketing; undertaking smart course renovations; and generating new dues revenue can help operators improve their businesses. Those strategies have worked well for three facilities trying to rise above the stagnant growth.

THE CONDITION YOU'RE IN

The National Golf Foundation defines this stagnant growth more clearly. Rounds played nationally were 502.4 million in 2002, 495 million in 2003, 499.7 million in 2004, 499.6 million in 2005 and 501.3 million in 2006.

BY JOHN WALSH

But despite the flat market nationally, the Wildcat Golf Club in Houston is one facility that's experienced significant growth recently. Elmer Stephens manages the 36-hole, public facility, and Lou Gonda, from Beverly Hills, Calif., owns the club, as he has from day one. The club, which was built on an old BFI landfill that was capped 30 years ago, opened in December 2000. Stephens is principal of ES Partners, which has been managing the property since 2002. Wildcat is the only golf property ES Partners manages.

Last year, the Houston Chronicle ranked Wildcat as one of the top five best daily-fee courses in the Houston area. Green fees, which have increased steadily, are \$57 during the week and \$70 during the weekend.

And competition is stiff in Houston. There are about 80 daily-fee courses in the greater Houston market, Stephens says.

"It's one of the most competitive markets in the U.S.," he says. "The market as a whole is struggling. There are courses that had green fees in the \$65 to \$100 range that are now down to \$29 including lunch during the week. Many courses have been taken over by large management companies, and the larger operators are hurting other courses in the area."

Fixed costs, such as insurance, fuel, fertilizer and PVC pipe, keep rising every year, Stephens says, making it more difficult to increase the bottom line.

"I only know of a handful of operators making money in this city with a daily-fee course," he says. "It's hard for owners/operators to meet debt service."

In Venice, Fla., competition is stiff, too. January through March is the busy season in Venice, a small town in Sarasota County, which has about 65 golf courses.

"There are lots of different golf courses to choose from," says Rob McCoy, director of club operations at the 18-hole, semiprivate Capri Isles Golf Club. "In the immediate market, there are eight golf courses to choose from for public play in addition to the two other courses we own in the area."

The club generated between 46,000 and 47,000 rounds in 2002. In 2003, the course was closed for 8.5 months for a renovation. It generated 49,800 rounds in 2004, 52,000 in 2005 and 58,000 in 2006. This year, the club also hopes to generate 58,000 rounds but was down 500 rounds during the first two months of the year mainly because of poor weather during February.

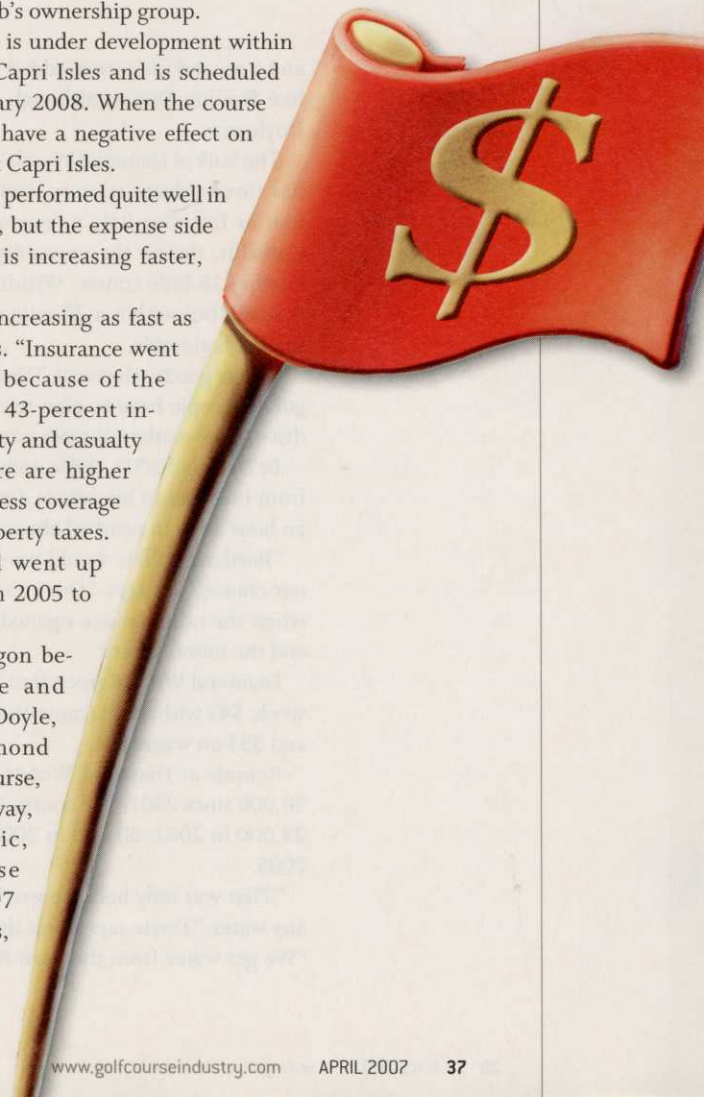
"There were a couple of golf courses that closed, and that had something to do with the increase of rounds over the past three years," says McCoy, who is part of the club's ownership group.

A new course is under development within 20 minutes of Capri Isles and is scheduled to open in January 2008. When the course opens, it might have a negative effect on rounds played at Capri Isles.

Capri Isles has performed quite well in terms of rounds, but the expense side of the business is increasing faster, McCoy says.

"Profit isn't increasing as fast as rounds," he says. "Insurance went off the charts because of the hurricanes – a 43-percent increase of property and casualty insurance. There are higher premiums and less coverage and higher property taxes. The utility bill went up 28 percent from 2005 to 2006."

In rural Oregon between Eugene and Corvallis, Jeff Doyle, owner of Diamond Woods Golf Course, is making headway, too. The public, 18-hole course opened in 1997 with nine holes,





and a second nine were added in 1998. The course isn't upscale like Bandon Dunes, although it's a championship golf course, Doyle says.

The bulk of Diamond Woods' golfers come from Eugene, which has three private courses, two 18-hole regulation courses and four or five nine-hole or executive-type courses, Doyle says. In Corvallis, there's the university course, a nine-hole course and another 18-hole course. Within a 10-minute radius, the market is small, but within a 20-mile radius – a 30 minute drive – the market is sizeable.

"We're good with events," Doyle says. "We won't get the impulse golfer. People have to plan to come to our course because it's a drive. The weather dictates our tee sheet."

In 2002 and 2003, Doyle noticed the number of golfers traveling from Portland to his course declined once a new course opened an hour away in nearby Lebanon.

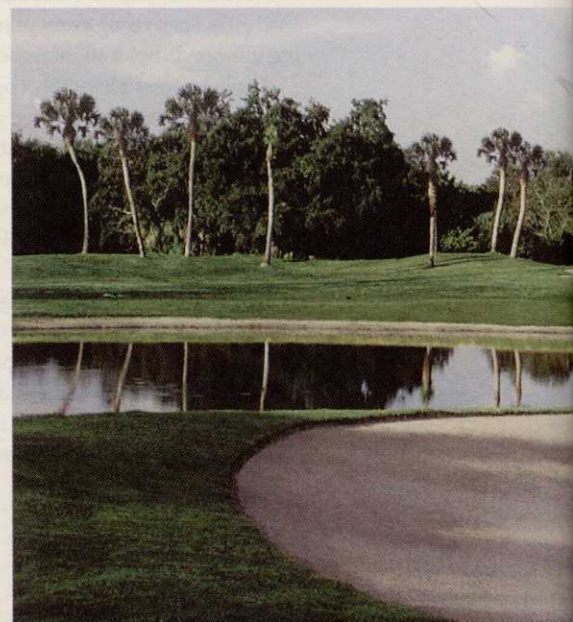
"Portland golfers would have to drive by that course to get to our course," he says. "Our rounds were increasing nicely, then, when the other course opened, I noticed a decline that month and the month after."

Diamond Woods' green fees are \$39 without a cart during the week, \$47 with a cart (more than half of golfers there take a cart) and \$53 on weekends.

Rounds at Diamond Woods have remained steady – around 30,000 since 2001. The course generated 29,900 rounds in 2001, 29,600 in 2002, 30,600 in 2003, 32,400 in 2004 and 28,800 in 2005.

"That was only because we thought we weren't going to have any water," Doyle says about the low number of rounds in 2005. "We get water from the Fern Ridge Dam. The government was

In addition to spending \$3 million on a renovation in 2003, management of Capri Isles hired a full-time marketing director to promote the club. Both have contributed to the club's success. Photo: Capri Isles Golf Club





Management of Wildcat Golf Club spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to improve turf conditions, native areas and the driving range, which has helped increase rounds at the club. Photo: Wildcat Golf Club

working on it, and they told us we wouldn't have any water for a while. So, we didn't market the course because we didn't know if we would be green."

Despite flat rounds, Diamond Woods' revenue has been increasing 5 percent each year since it opened except for 2005. 2004 was the odd year in which everyone did well because the weather was great, Doyle says. Revenue-wise, 2006 was almost identical to 2004, and so far this year Doyle says he's ahead of last year. Spring is the wild card, however, because the weather is unpredictable then, unlike during the summer.

A GOOD INVESTMENT

In competitive markets, some facilities increase rounds or revenue by getting a makeover. Capri Isles in Florida is one of those. The club opened in 1972 and by 2002 needed to be upgraded and modernized. In 2003, the club spent \$3 million to completely renovate the whole physical plant.

"We were losing members and public play before the renovations," McCoy says. "We heard the chatter locally that we were on a downward trend."

Renovations also played a significant role at Wildcat Golf Club in Houston. However, its road to success hasn't been easy.

"When I took over from the other management company in 2002, the course was losing about \$1.4 million a year," Stephens says. "But last year, we had a positive (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization)."

Course management has stepped up and spent money to make needed improvements and renovations since the course opened, which has helped increase rounds steadily. In 2002, the course generated less than

50,000 rounds. But since, it generated 52,208 rounds in 2003, 57,934 in 2004, 60,740 in 2005 and 60,661 in 2006. In 2007, Stephens is projecting the course to generate 63,000 rounds.

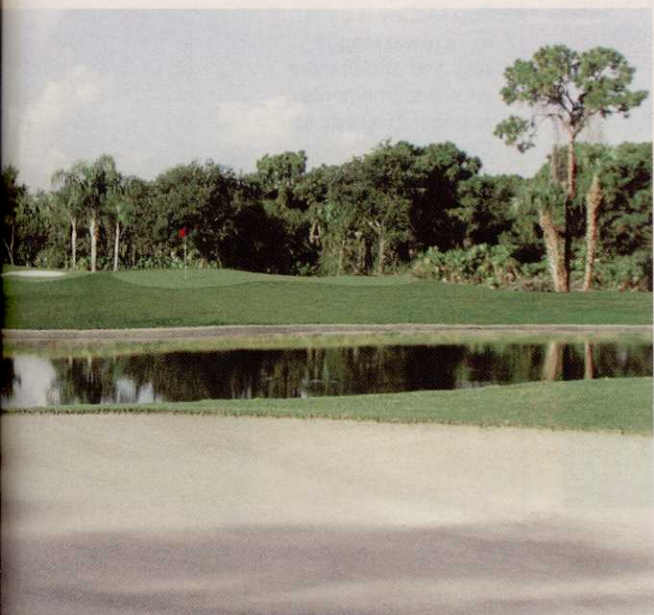
"We had the best February and March since 2002," Stephens says. "If the weather holds up, we'll exceed our EBITDA target."

The ownership group is committed to quality, and that contributes to success, Stephens says.

"We improved the course conditions," he says. "We had to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on turf conditions, native areas and the driving range. The course has 60- to 80-foot elevations, and on some holes, you have a panoramic view of downtown and can hear the roar of the crowd at Reliant Stadium.

"We also spent money to improve the clubhouse, increase the size of the event room and expand the bar and grill," he adds. "We have sports memorabilia golfers can buy. We have a fun atmosphere in which golfers can watch sports after golf."

Renovations are part of the recipe for success at Diamonds Woods as well. The course opened on a shoestring budget, so Doyle has been making improvements since. Doyle's brother, who is in the golf business, talked him into building a course after playing professional baseball for 10 years. So, Doyle convinced his family and friends to help.



"It's nice to open with a course exactly the way you want it," he says. "But ours wasn't. But we did spend money in the right places. We have the best irrigation system, and the layout was nice, but the course conditions were rough. The clubhouse was

small when we opened, but as we succeeded, we improved the facility. We cleared areas off the fairways, paved the parking lot, added on to the clubhouse (it was 750 square feet, now it's 4,000 square feet), and improved the area in between

the range and the clubhouse. Golfers didn't give up on us."

Doyle also invested \$175,000 into GPS on carts in 2003, covered the range and landscaped it, added tees to serve more female golfers and paved the cart paths.

"This is my first run in the golf business," he says. "We're keeping it fresh, making changes and improvements."

SELL YOURSELF

Even though 2005 to 2006 was flat for Wildcat, revenue increased because on-site management has done a tremendous job of branding the property, Stephens says. The course is close to downtown Houston so the club tapped into partnerships with hotels, restaurants, taxi cab companies, the convention center, the corporate market and dining-only clubs. And Stephens increased the number of tournaments Wildcat hosts annually.

"For April and May of this year, we are booked every day during the week," he says. "Last year, the course generated 16,200 tournament rounds."

Wildcat is close to major stadiums so the club struck deals with the city's professional sports teams in which Wildcat became the home course to all the teams.

"We have exclusive arrangements with each team," Stephens says. "It has paid major dividends."

The sports-theme concept established in 2003 has grown considerably. The Wildcat clubhouse features memorabilia from all sports teams and

Rob McCoy is trying to increase league play and attract more charity tournaments to better business at Capri Isles. He says the key to success is figuring out how to get golfers to return to the course. Photo: Capri Isles Golf Club



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