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**Scott Verdun** is the assistant golf course superintendent at the Merit Club in Libertyville, Ill. He can be reached at or [scott1019@hotmail.com](mailto:scott1019@hotmail.com) or 847-899-1019.

## GOOD THINGS FOR THOSE WHO HELP

Interesting things happen when you give your time to your local superintendents association. During the past few years, I've been fortunate enough to experience the benefits firsthand. As a class C (assistant) representative of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, I'm fortunate to be involved with an organization that has a track record of being progressive and supportive of assistant superintendents.

First and foremost are the amazing networking opportunities afforded to me. Each month, I participate in the MAGCS board of directors meetings and sit with our superintendent board members, commercial representative and executive director, who are willing to give their time and share their experiences.

I'm sure good timing was a factor in my position as the association's class C representative, but I also believe people help create their own luck. I saw value in the class C committee's work, and when our former committee leader, John Ekstrom, asked me to participate, I was happy to help. During the time I was a committee member, I helped out with everything I could.

During the past 12 months, our group has been asked to help with the setup of a

research field day. We interviewed and wrote articles profiling the superintendents who hosted monthly meetings for On Course, the MAGCS publication. Every year we help moderate the educational sessions at the Illinois Professional Turf Conference – an opportunity many volunteers use to become more comfortable with public speaking.

Finally, and perhaps the most gratifying, was working with Habitat for Humanity where we laid sod during a snow storm last December and completed the landscaping this past spring. For a more detailed account of that experience, read Matt Breeden's column in the April issue of GCI on page 10.

While I believe each of these experiences has benefited me personally, that's not my only motivation. I see value in these efforts for different reasons. Some of these opportunities have a more personal gain than others, which certainly makes the decision to help easier. Interviewing and writing an article, for example, is something I jump at the opportunity to do. First of all, you get to tour a property you may not have otherwise had the chance to visit. Secondly, you get to meet new people – networking is one of the biggest benefits of volunteering.

I realize some may scoff that I enjoy set-

ting up tables for a field day or moderating a regional educational seminar, but those are the times when you find out who's in it for the right reasons. Are you volunteering to help out or because it's convenient and might get your name out in the market more?

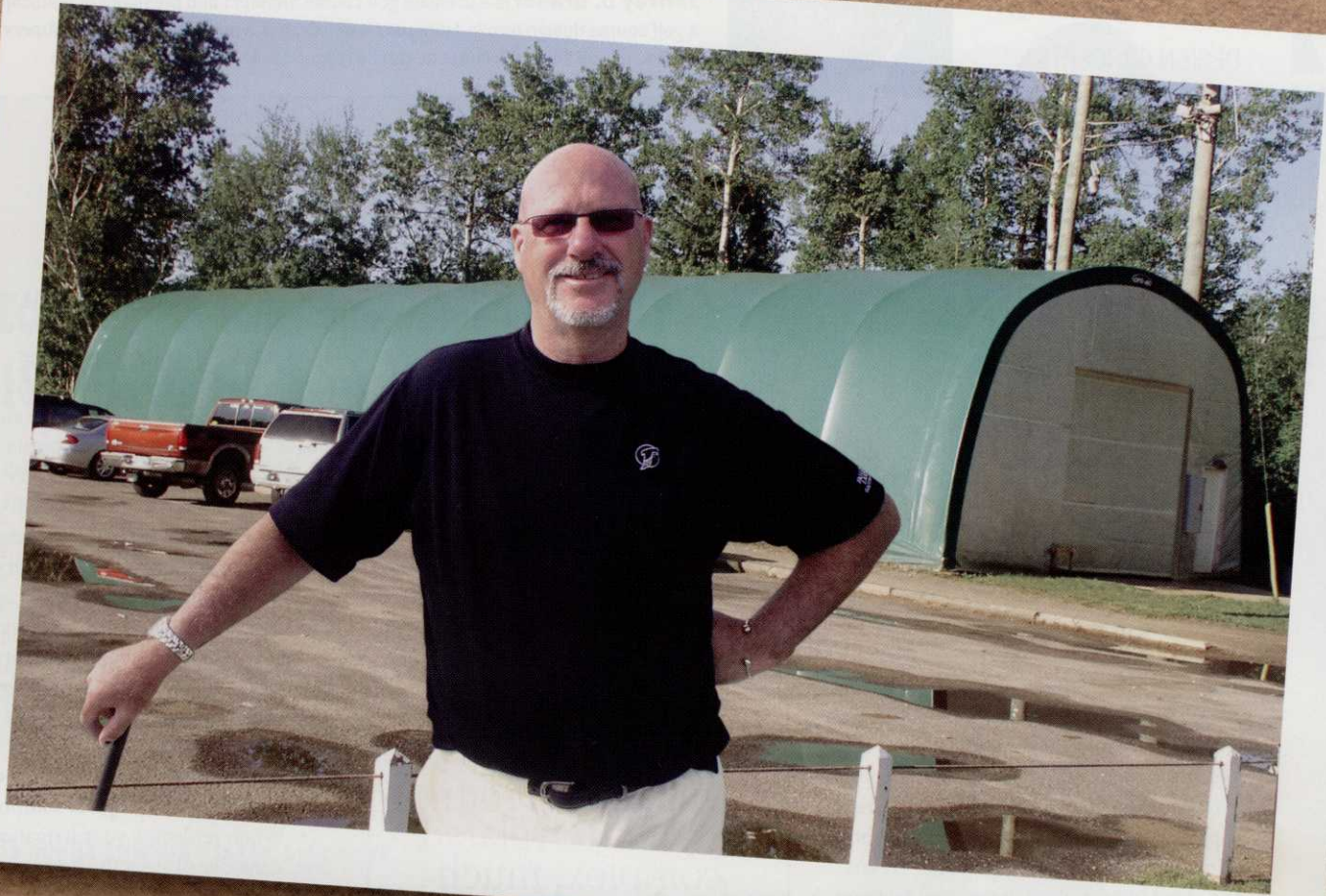
For me, the less glamorous opportunities are the times when you can best express your gratitude to your association and its leaders for all it does for you. How about the golf outings each month? I bet you've had fun at a few of those. What about the local educational opportunities? It's better than traveling a few hours for a seminar, isn't it? How about activity at the national level? If you ever question what the people at the GCSAA do for you, give them a call the next time you're stumped by just about anything related to our industry. There's a toll-free number. Ask, because someone will be willing to help you.

I'm not trying to make myself out to be a martyr of my association, nor am I trying to make the MAGCS or the GCSAA sound perfect, but think about it. Next time volunteering crosses your mind, do it. Chances are the benefits will be even greater than you thought they'd be.

For me, one of those surprises came this past September when, thanks to the generosity of the MAGCS board of directors, I attended a leadership academy at the GCSAA headquarters. This wasn't only an opportunity to visit the association and hear from great speakers, but another great networking opportunity. I thank those of you who were there with me as an attendee, staff member, sponsor or speaker for a terrific experience.

Volunteering is a gratifying experience. It's not always glamorous (think sod on a Saturday in December), but I bet you'll have fun. You'll enjoy the experience, and you'll be a better person for it. I understand that sometimes you may have to sacrifice time away from something else. You may need to skip a night at the gym or miss watching college football for a day, but that's how you know it's important – when you prioritize giving your time to an association that has already given to you. **GCI**





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**Jeffrey D. Brauer** is a licensed golf course architect and president of GolfScapes, a golf course design firm in Arlington, Texas. Brauer, a past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, can be reached at [jeff@jeffreymbrauer.com](mailto:jeff@jeffreymbrauer.com).

## WET APPROACH AREAS

Recently, I had the pleasure of golfing with Ron Whitten, golf architecture editor for *Golf Digest*, and Jim Moore, director of construction education for the USGA. *Golf Digest* is now emphasizing firm, fast conditions in its Top 100 rankings. This change comes just as Jim and I have noticed more courses experiencing overly wet green approaches.

Better players are revisiting the joys of bump-and-run golf, but average golfers have always used/needed the run-up approach to reach the green. When approach areas are wet and approach shots plug, average players can't reach a green in regulation. Green approaches should be considered high-priority maintenance areas – equal to greens and more important than tees and fairways – if golf courses are going to play the way they're designed. Superintendents should view the green and surrounds as an interrelated complex, much like the golf course architect did during the design phase.

I've addressed design aspects of wet approaches by contouring more greens to move more drainage away from the front of the green toward the sides, especially on larger greens with greater drainage volumes. I also contour most green approaches with 4 percent minimum slope – versus 3 percent in other areas – while being mindful that too steep an approach slope will kill an approach shot as surely as a wet one.

I recommend building sand-capped approaches and fairway chipping areas on new courses. Existing courses can create sand-based approaches slowly via aggressive core aeration and removal, together with heavy topdressing. While it's more expensive, reconstructing approaches with a 4-to-8-inch sand cap and a herringbone pattern of 4-inch tile or slit drains may be the ultimate solution.

Predictable bounces are important in the approach, so any drain pipes in that area require good compaction to prevent settling that will affect play. While catch basins in the approach area might affect play, they

help drainage greatly by avoiding long surface drainage runs that always become soggy.

However, there may be a less expensive solution to improve wet approaches on existing courses quickly. Jim is conducting research on wet approaches and sees evidence overwatered approaches often stem from the golf course/irrigation design



practice of using part-to-part sprinklers to achieve more precise watering of green and surrounds.

The concept of part-to-part sprinklers to water greens and surrounds is great in principle. But, two old sayings, "The devil is in the details" and "There are always unintended consequences," seem in play here. Why? Because problems occur when irrigation designers place green irrigation heads at eight o'clock and four o'clock – rather than at six o'clock or the center line of play – to reduce their affect on play. Problems

also arise when superintendents set those sprinklers at about 90 degrees to cover just the greens or just the approaches.

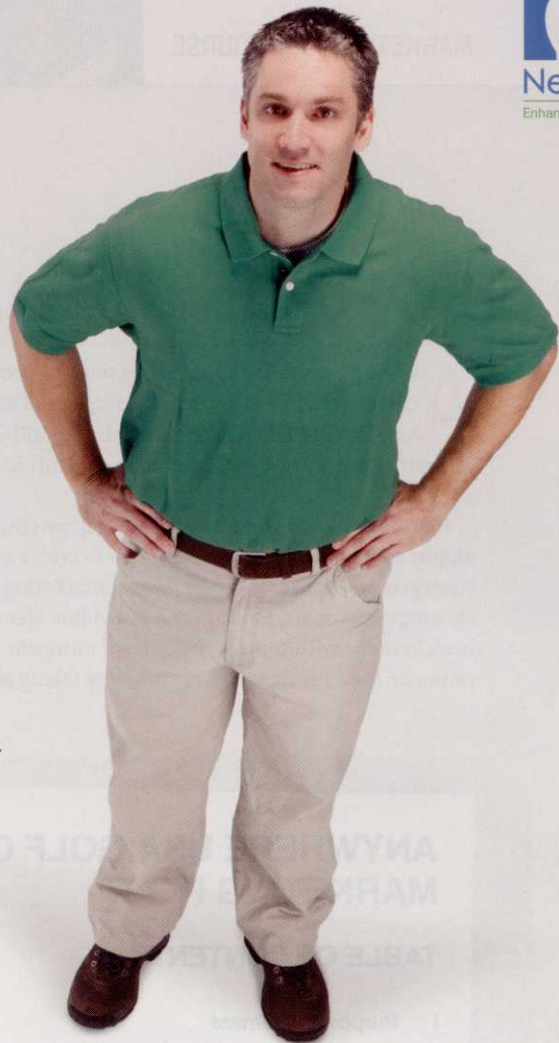
This combination of conditions results in four heads – six counting the approach heads – watering the front approach, rather than two or three that cover every other area of the golf course. And when considering that the dwell time – those few seconds part-circle heads stop before reversing direction – also occurs right in the approach, the approach inadvertently receives at least twice the irrigation of any other area on the golf course. Add the traffic and compaction factors typical for approaches, and it's no wonder they remain wet.

Based on the preliminary study results, Moore suggests a few quick solutions:

- When replacing your irrigation system, consider placing the first head at the six o'clock position, accepting the small risk of shots hitting the sprinkler.
- Use a combination of full-circle and part-circle heads around greens rather than part-to-part sprinklers. Only during summer heat and fall overseeding do the irrigation needs vary enough to warrant using double heads.
- For the outside part sprinklers, adjust the spray pattern to reverse in a less-critical area in the rough rather than automatically setting them to 90 degrees, which adds unnecessary irrigation to the approach. Setting them to almost full circle should move the dwell time area out in the rough, but also consider existing trees, heavy cart traffic areas, etc., and set them on a site-specific basis.

- Make sure to monitor constantly, and periodically adjust sprinklers because they come out of adjustment often.

It's ironic part-to-part sprinklers, which were adopted to address the problems of different water needs around the greens, have actually added to the problem. With golfers continuing to demand better playing conditions in critical areas of the course, a new emphasis on firm and fast, and budgets being squeezed, you might try this laser-surgery approach to adjusting your sprinklers. **GCI**



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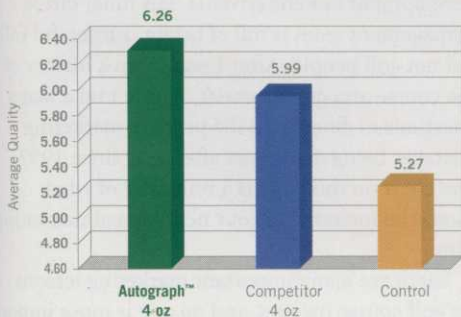
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## POA ANNUA SUMMER STRESS SYNDROME

Michigan State University 2006



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**Jack Brennan** founded Paladin Golf Marketing in Plant City, Fla., to assist golf course owners and managers with successful marketing. He can be reached at jackbrennan@tampabay.rr.com.

## EVALUATE YOUR BUSINESS

**A**s I begin my farewell after five years of penning a marketing column for this magazine, it's fitting I'm standing in my garage, having taken everything off the walls, from the shelves and out of every nook and cranny where stuff has accumulated for 18 years.

I didn't realize it when I began my garage cleanup, but this is almost the same process I go through to create clients' marketing strategies and tactics for their annual marketing plans. I tear the existing plans apart, look at each individual element and put them back in order with some semblance of rationale – a marketing rationale for increasing net revenues by taking advantage of oppor-

tunities not recognized or ignored in the past.

Creating your annual golf course marketing plan is a process of objectively recognizing everything you do to promote business and determining what's working and what's not generating profitable revenue at your course. More often than not, it also requires creating new strategies and tactics to reach all of your target segments of opportunity play. Like my garage cleanup, be prepared to throw out things that have no useful or foreseeable benefit to your course in the form of driving new, repeat or referral business.

All too often, golf course owners have other business interests, and they fail to get their hands dirty by reflecting on the promotion of their golf course annually. By not doing so, and not questioning the promotional tactics of the club, they're passively encouraging the club staff to continue as is, mistakes and all. How do you recognize marketing errors when you and your staff are doing the same things you've always done? If you don't know the right questions to ask, find someone who does. They can potentially save you a lot of time and money.

Recently, I visited a new client for the first time. He owns an upscale signature course and development in Pennsylvania. His inner circle management team is full of bright, successful folks but not golf people. After I was given a history of the course and development, it didn't take many questions to determine the primary marketing mistakes being made year after year since 1997. The chart on this page is a reminder of what should be included in your next annual marketing plan.

There are many important marketing lessons for golf course owners, and no one is more important than another. During the past five years, I've enjoyed sharing those lessons with you.

During the past 25 years, we've seen our industry change dramatically. Throughout the 1990s, the market became oversupplied with courses, and the problem wasn't recognized until about 1997. Golfer participation rates decreased in the midst of the decade's growth and only made it back to 1991 levels in the early 2000s. Today, they're flat at best. Fuel prices are eating into our profit margins like never before. And now, with the threat of recession, our credit market has dried up.

If you want to thwart these and other problem areas that will befall us inevitably, remember above all this one marketing tip: Talk to your customers. Survey them consistently because they're your lifeblood, and they'll always steer your course in the right direction.

Farewell and sláinte. **GCI**

### ANYWHERE USA GOLF COURSE MARKETING PLAN

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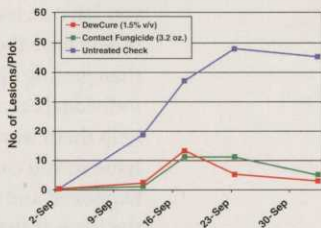
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## Dollar Spot Putting Green Study – Fall 2008

Boehm, et. al. — Ohio State University



• DewCure was significantly different from untreated check on all dates.  
• All applications made at 14 d intervals beginning September 2.



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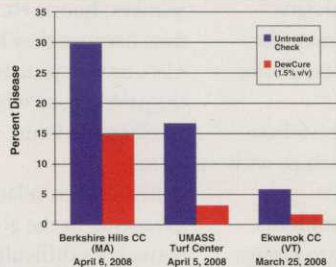
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## 2008 Snow Mold Trials (Gray and Pink)

Jung, et. al. — University of Massachusetts



From the makers of **TriCure™** Soil Surfactants



**Stephen Tucker** is the equipment manager at the Ritz-Carlton Members Golf Club in Bradenton, Fla., and the president of the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association. He can be reached at 941-309-2913 or [stephen.tucker@ritzcarlton.com](mailto:stephen.tucker@ritzcarlton.com).

## MANUFACTURER RELATIONSHIPS

**R**elationships are the driving force of personal success in the golf business. Having the right contacts is crucial to advancement and, in many cases, simply getting things done. Luckily, the golf business consists of a close-knit group of individuals who share information about how we can improve business and be more successful every day.

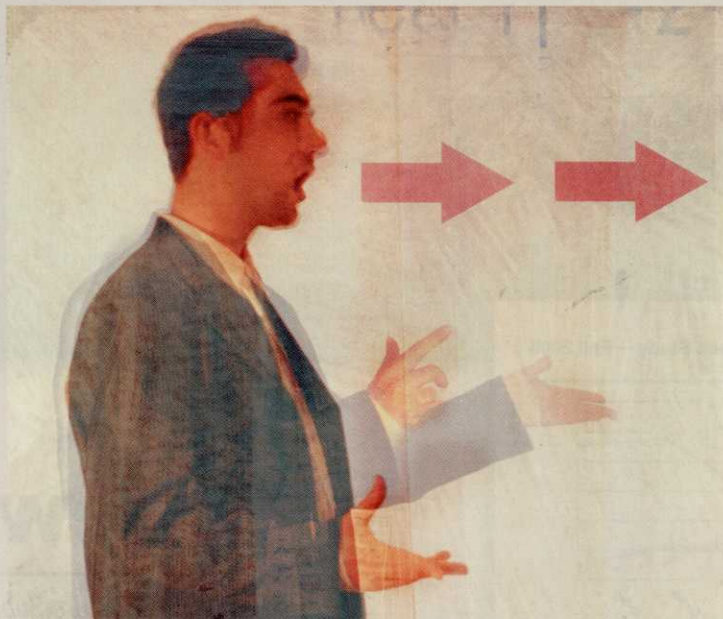
In what other industry do businesses open up their doors and offer tours to their peers to explain the secrets of their success? Our businesses are built that way. Many times, we depend on our peers for the answers to the struggles we face.

There's an opportunity to create this type of give-and-take relationship with equipment manufacturers. During the past few years, manufacturers have turned more of their attention to technicians. Many times technicians help make a facility's purchasing decision for turf equipment, and the manufacturers are noticing. Look at how much easier equipment is to maintain. Instead of building a machine and then adding an engine and hydraulics, manufacturers are looking at how difficult a machine will be to service. Even the marketing guys are starting to realize the importance of including the technician's point of view when advertising equipment.

A strong manufacturer/end-user relationship benefits equipment technicians, too. They need to talk about issues they may be having with a distributor, a piece of equipment or changes they'd like to see. Equipment only gets better if technicians can tell manufacturers what they want. Manufacturers are starting to key into this with focus groups to discuss prototype

equipment, parts programs and new equipment for the future. They're seeing that close relationships with their customers are a win-win situation. The customer talks about the equipment they want, and the manufacturer builds the equipment the way the customer wants it.

Technicians can build manufacturer relationships by attending trade shows or demonstration days held by local distribu-



tors. During these events, technicians have the opportunity to discuss the product and what improvements they'd like to see. This relationship is important for technicians. The better the relationship technicians build with their distributors and manufacturers, the easier it will be to get assistance when they need it.

Technicians should consider the following points when building relationships with these companies:

- **If you're going to report problems, try to devise a solution.** It's easy to always go to someone when you have concerns, but after a few times, people start to realize the only time you want to talk to them is when you have problems. However, if you

can tell them about the problem and suggest a solution, it changes the tone of the relationship.

- **Call with legitimate concerns.**

With all the equipment manufacturers are producing throughout the world, you can imagine how many calls they receive about different topics. When you call, make sure you've exhausted your resources and tried to solve the problem before contacting them. It's just like being the technician at your home course. If you're working on something and five people call you with small issues, it's easy to get frustrated.

- **Be courteous.** When you continue to have problems with equipment, it's easy to be frustrated and wonder why a new piece of equipment has a problem already or an old piece of equipment has the same thing happening time after time. The manufacturers are just as interested in fixing and diagnosing a problem as you are. When you have an issue, it could mean others have the same. So, rather than getting upset with the individuals about your problem, help them work through the issue so you can learn why it happened and they can address the issue at the factory.

- **Think through issues.** When you've decided you're going to make the call to the manufacturer, try to have all of your information readily available (model, serial number, hours, etc.). This will save some time because they'll ask for these details. Also, review your issue and understand the problem, so when you're asked about an electrical issue, you understand how it works.

Remember, relationships are the key to advancing in the golf industry. Without them, it's a difficult uphill battle, so always treat everyone you meet with dignity and respect because you never know when you'll need a favor, advice or maybe even a job. **GCI**

> Presented in partnership with Bernhard & Co.



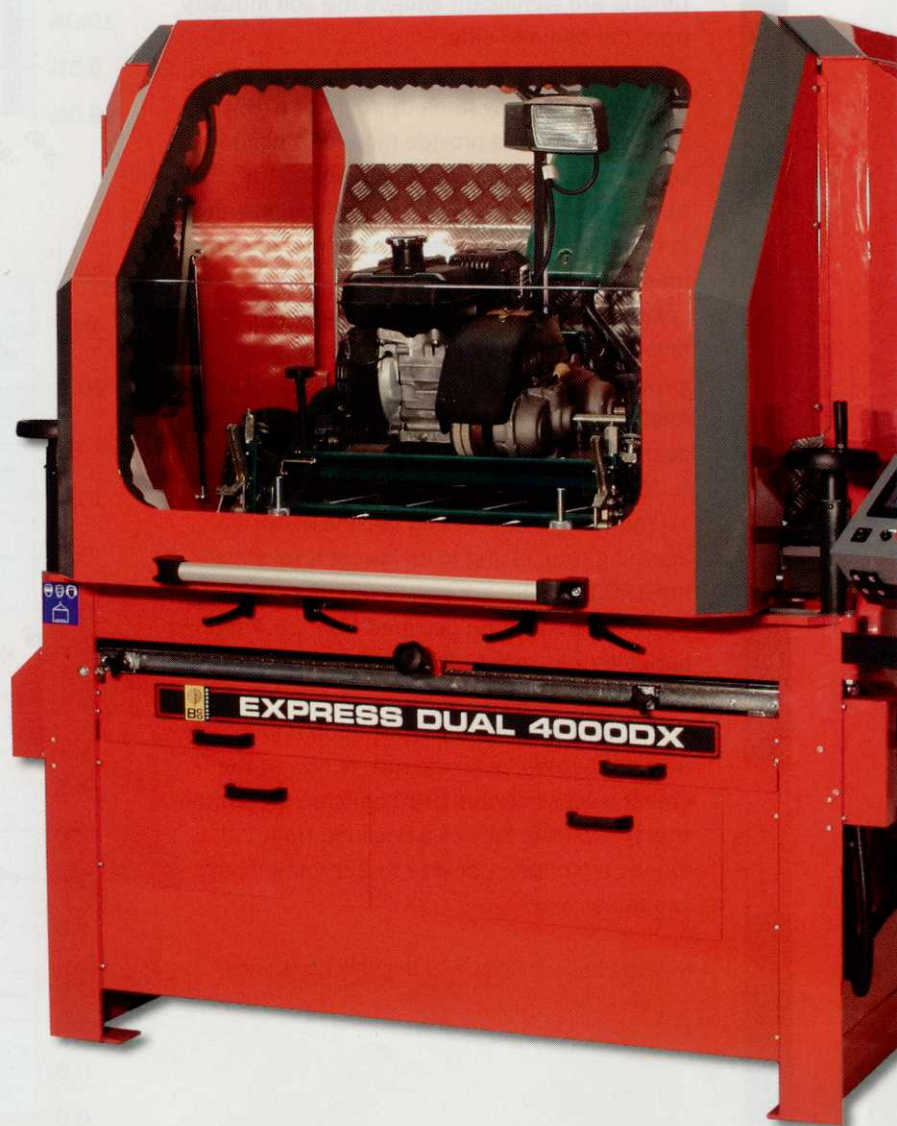
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**AMERICA'S FAVORITE GRINDER**

[www.golfcourseindustry.com/readerservice](http://www.golfcourseindustry.com/readerservice) - #17

This is a glimpse of how golfers' behavior impacts the business of facility maintenance and management. Golf course operators can analyze the trends so they can adjust their businesses to the changing market.

## Trending downward

Every month, people digest reports about rounds played throughout the country. National, state and regional numbers in the reports are significant gauges the golf industry from the demand side.

The charts on this page depict participation, frequency and play rates throughout a 16-year period. The charts provide more of a historical view from a macro perspective. Rates are trending down right now, but with various efforts in the golf industry to grow the game, hopefully these rates trend upward soon.

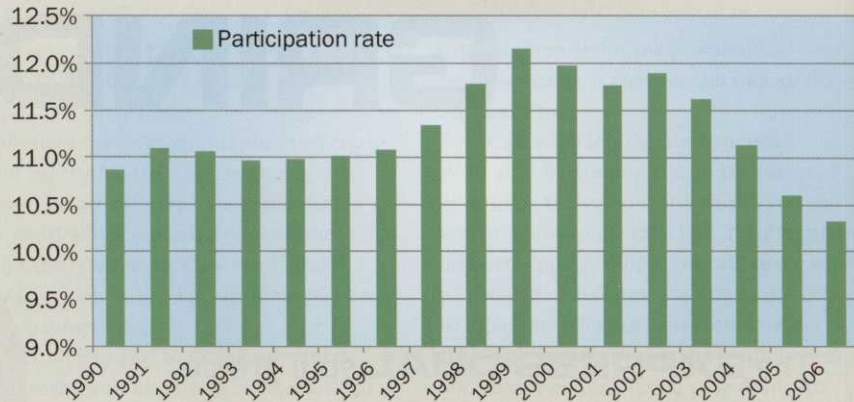
Although the golfer base is stabilizing, it's failing to keep up with the U.S. population growth of 1 percent; hence, participation rate, or relevancy, is declining (top chart). In 2006, the decline slowed slightly, falling from 10.6 percent to 10.3 percent.

Frequency continues its decline at an alarming rate, falling to its lowest level since the 1990 benchmark period (middle chart). The 2006 frequency rate declined from 23.4 rounds per golfer per year to 21.5 rounds per golfer per year versus 2005.

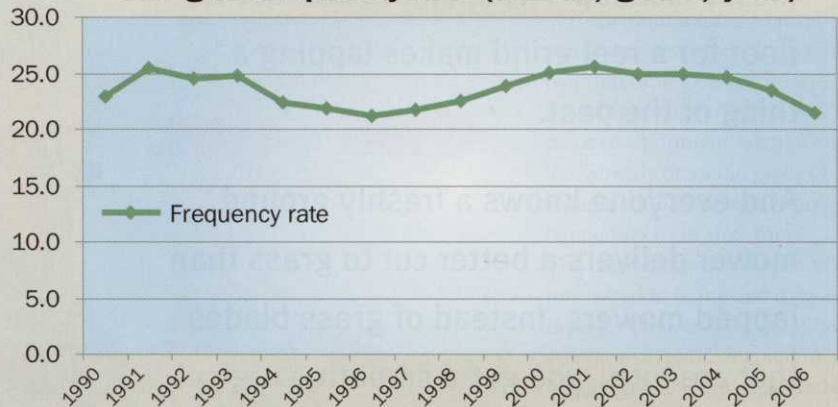
Following decline in participation and frequency rates, play rate also is now at the lowest level since the 1990 benchmark (bottom chart). In 2006, play rate declined from 2.5 rounds per capita per year to 2.2 rounds per capita per year.

Source: Pellucid Corp. and Edgehill Consulting

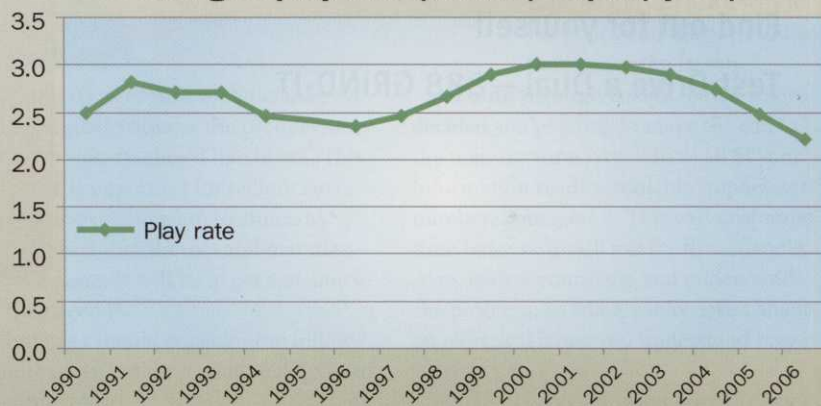
### U.S. participation rate



### U.S. golf frequency rate (rounds/golfer/year)



### U.S. golf play rate (rounds/capita/year)



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