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Nathan Migal, Imagen Photography

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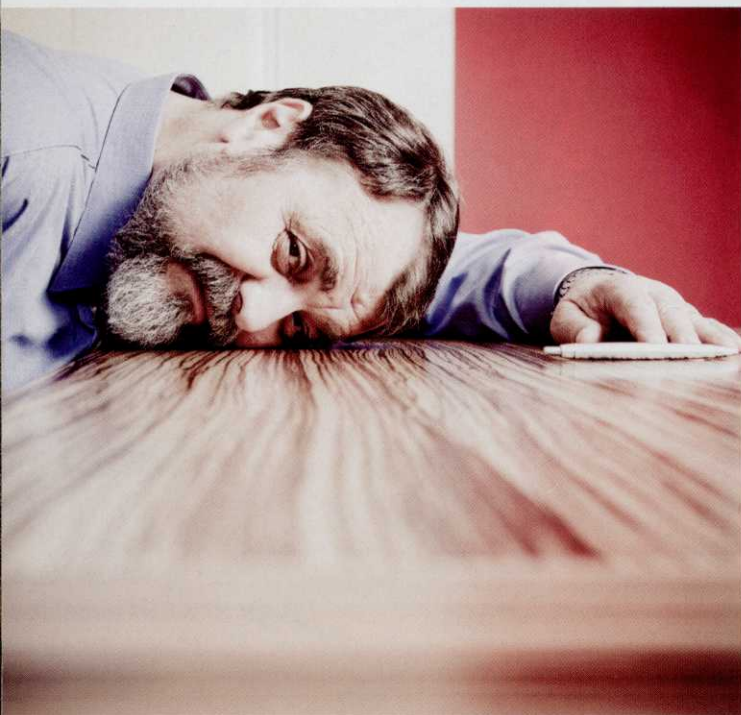
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Did You Know?

Typically, 1.7 times more area on a golf course is used for **natural habitats** than the combined area devoted to greens, tees and fairways.

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Winner of a national magazine award
for the fourth year in a row



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GROW-IN FOLLIES

In, "Grow-in: It's your ass not mine," Colton Smith provides a crew member's perspective of what superintendents go through during grow-ins.

PRO-SUPER RUNDOWN

An online extra from this month's cover story: We list the 29 members of the GCSAA who also hold PGA memberships. Visit golfcourseindustry.com/prosuper for the complete list.

AIR IT OUT

Voice your opinion about a topic or bring attention to something you believe deserves it. Visit our message board at www.golfcourseindustry.com/messageboard and speak your mind.

VIDEOS, PODCASTS AND MORE

Golf Course Industry TV is a Web site designed to enrich your business acumen and allow you to communicate with your peers through forums, blogs and polls. Videos, podcasts and an extensive photo gallery will provide you with an array of business and industry knowledge. Visit the interactive site – www.golfcourseindustry.tv – to create your profile and start networking.

GOLF COURSE.tv
INDUSTRY

EDITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT:

Golf Course Industry reports on and analyzes the business of maintaining golf courses, as well as the broader business of golf course management. This includes three main areas: agronomy, business management and career development as it relates to golf course superintendents and those professionals responsible for maintaining a golf course as an important asset.

When it comes to support,
we have the rubber
to meet the road.



A BAD NEWS CYCLE

It's not just the bad news that's the problem. It's the way we handle it. The way we react to it. The way we think about it. The way we feel about it. The way we act on it. The way we talk about it. The way we live with it. The way we die with it. The way we are remembered with it. The way we are forgotten with it. The way we are remembered without it. The way we are forgotten without it. The way we are remembered with it. The way we are forgotten with it. The way we are remembered without it. The way we are forgotten without it.

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John Walsh
Editor

A BAD NEWS CYCLE

Every time the economy slumps and people talk about a recession, the same question tends to arise: How bad will it get? I wish I could answer that question, and I'm sure many of you wish you could, too. During difficult economic times like these, many people also say, "It's gonna get worse before it gets better." Let's hope the fourth quarter of 2008 is the lowest part of this economic downturn. There's been enough bad news for the industry lately. Here are a few examples.

The U.S. economy and the stock market have taken a beating this year. It was a sad day for capitalism when the federal government approved a \$700-billion financial institution bailout package. Banks were granting bad loans to people who didn't deserve – or couldn't afford – them. Then taxpayers bailed them out. The banks shouldn't have been bailed out because they created the problem. The saying, "As you make your bed, so you must lie in it," comes to mind. The stock market decline is even making the wealthy cautious. Builders say many owners are halting renovation projects, waiting for the market to improve.

The declining economy and housing market will continue to suppress the golf course construction market, including renovations. U.S. golf course developers are on track to open the fewest number of courses in 20 years, according to the National Golf Foundation. At press time, 65 courses have opened so far this year, and, based on the number of courses currently under construction, NGF estimates another 10 to 20 will open by year's end. NGF has lowered its forecast twice this year because of poor market conditions.

Then there's the whole "green" or environmental issue. Golf courses are getting hammered because they're perceived to be water wasters and polluters because of pesticide and fertilizer use. Various segments in the industry are working diligently to change that inaccurate perception. There's been plenty written about the "green" issue this year, including in this space and the pages of this magazine.

And don't forget growing the game, which has been difficult. Various industry associations have been doing their part to change that. Still, the number of golfers playing the game – about 25 million – has been stagnant for years, and an increase probably won't be seen for some time. Rounds also have been stagnant at about 500 million.

On top of all that, there's the potential for even more bad news. You could be reading this column at a time in which Barack Obama has been elected president. No one knows for sure what an Obama administration will mean for golf, but many people in the industry are dreading obstructive environmental-related regulations.

Despite all this bad news, there's a bit of positive news, too. While course openings continue to decline, so do course closings, which reflects a correction in an oversaturated market. So far this year, there have been only 74 course closings, according to NGF, which forecasts the number of closings to be less than 100 by year's end. There were 146 closings in 2006 and 122 in 2007. It appears 2008 will be the third year in a row with zero to slightly negative net supply growth.

Also in the construction arena, Bob Pinson and his company, Course Crafters, are having the best year ever. (Read the article on page 24). I'm sure there are more bright spots that contrast the gloom and doom; this just happens to be one we covered in this issue.

In the past, the golf business has weathered many poor market cycles and obstructive governmental policies, and it will continue to do so. But at what cost? Who will survive this downturn? Who won't? It'll be interesting to see who emerges and how. Some will be bruised and battered; others will be unscathed.

Well, enough talk about the bad news. I'll keep observing the market, and hopefully, I'll be able to write more about good news next month. Hang in there. **GCI**

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at www.golfcourseindustry.com/messageboard.



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Serving the Business of Golf Course Management

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Feeling appreciated

I thank Margaret Hepp for the well-written article, "Reel sharp," in the September issue on page 58. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. I have to admit it's pretty cool seeing my name in print. She has given me something to feel good about in a job in which I sometimes feel less than appreciated. It feels good to be recognized, and I thank her for that.

Jim Swartzel
Equipment manager
The Hasentree Club
Wake Forest, N.C.

Association participation

I thank Pat Jones for writing about an interesting topic that needs to be discussed frequently: how to promote more quality participation within the turfgrass association arena ("Chapter and verse," golfcourseindustry.com/news/news.asp?ID=4145). Our association, the Northern Great Lakes GCSA struggles with this issue. Even within the ranks of volunteers, participation varies from completely involved to just holding a seat on the board.

As president of the association, I've become dismayed at the lack of interest and effort on the part of many of our members. Sometimes it seems the popular attitude is "What are you doing for me lately?" If members don't like what's on the agenda, they don't attend. At many of our gatherings – about five a year – almost half of those attending are vendors.

Michigan just had four or five regional chapters merge into one. This was an attractive option to some groups who were battling apathy. I'm trying to resist this trend because it seems impersonal and less autonomous.

Glen Rochester
President
Northern Great Lakes GCSA
Marquette, Mich.

Correction

Distributor sales of Bayer's nematicide, Nematicur, will cease after Nov. 30. We published the previous deadline in September issue's cover story, "A heavy head," on page 31.

CALENDAR

Dec. 1 - 3
WASHINGTON TURF & LANDSCAPE SHOW

Meydenbauer
Convention Center
Bellevue, Wash.
Visit www.wwgcsa.org/wtfs,
or call 360-705-3049.

Dec. 8 - 11
OHIO TURFGRASS CONFERENCE & SHOW

Greater Columbus
Convention Center
Visit www.ohioturfgrass.org,
or call 888-863-3445.

Dec. 9 - 11
NEW JERSEY GREEN EXPO

Taj Mahal Resort
Atlantic City, N.J.
Visit www.njturfgrass.org,
or call 973-812-6467.

Jan. 6 - 9, 2009
EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA TURF CONFERENCE AND SHOW

Valley Forge Convention Plaza
King of Prussia, Pa.
Visit www.paturf.org,
or call 877-326-5996.

Jan. 7 - 9
EMPIRE STATE GREEN INDUSTRY SHOW

Rochester (N.Y.) Riverside
Convention Center
Visit www.nysta.org,
or call 800-873-8873.

Jan. 7 - 9
MINNESOTA GREEN EXPO

Minneapolis
Convention Center
Visit www.minnesotagreenexpo.com,
or call 651-633-4987.

Feb. 2 - 7, 2009
GCSAA EDUCATION CONFERENCE

New Orleans Morial
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Feb. 3 - 7, 2009
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Feb. 5 - 10, 2009
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