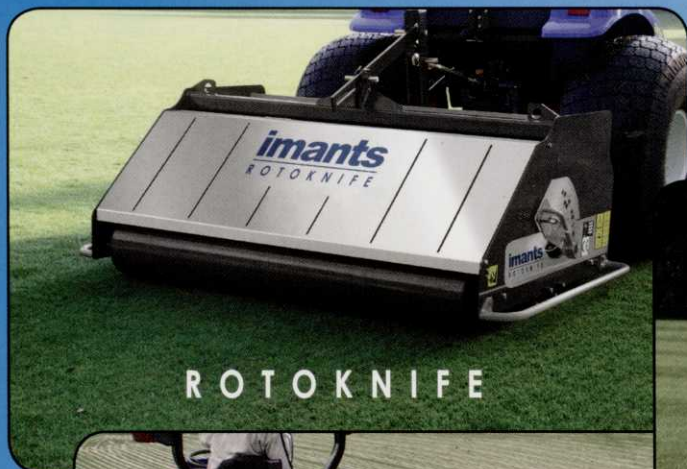


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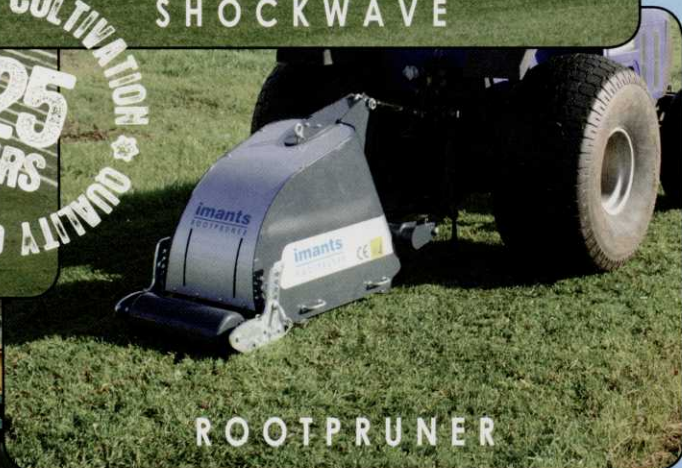
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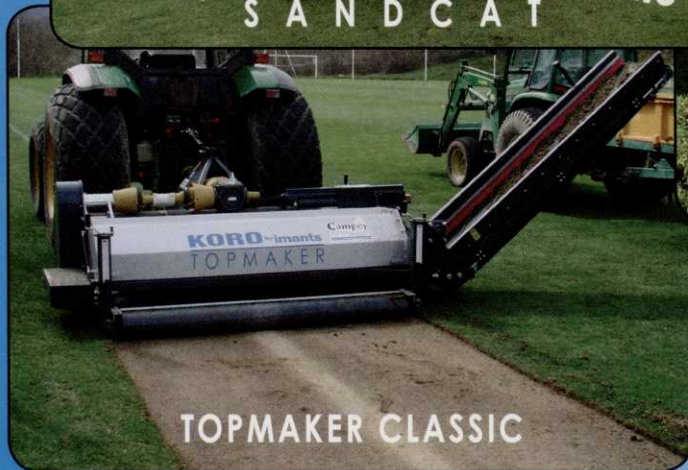
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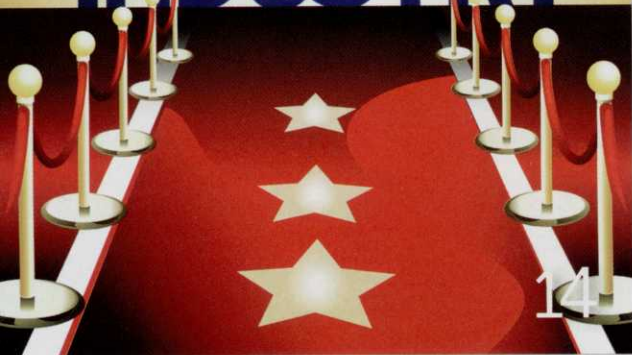
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IN THIS ISSUE

RATING THE INDUSTRY



DEPARTMENTS

- 6 Teeing off
Survey says
- 8 Letters
- 10 The Whiteboard
- 47 Travels with Terry
Equipment ideas
- 48 Classifieds
- 49 Ad index



COLUMNS

- 12 Sage advice
Dennis Lyon:
Golf 2.0: Strategic plan or prayer?
- 18 Outside the ropes
Tim Moraghan:
Don't overlook these lessons
- 23 Design concepts
Jeffrey D. Brauer:
Glad tidings... and good news
- 31 Game plan
Henry DeLozier:
Forecast for 2012
- 42 Irrigation issues
Brian Vinchesi:
Smart controllers
- 50 Parting shots
Pat Jones:
Mayor McTurf



COVER STORY

14 RATING THE INDUSTRY

Who's tops in quality products, communication and brand strength? And who would you like to work for?

FEATURES

Turf maintenance

20 MANAGING BENTGRASS DISEASES

Various control methods can help keep your bentgrass looking its best.

Turf maintenance

24 THE DIRT ON SOIL

An understanding of the basic tenets of proper soil testing gives turf a solid base to grow.



28 Personal development DON'T WORRY... BE HAPPY

More work, more responsibilities... less time. GCI's Bruce Williams offers some keys to develop a plan that balances the scales in your life.

32 Pest control BUGG'N OUT

Sure-fire ways to stomp out nematodes, mole crickets and other subsurface critters attacking your course's turf.

35 Career development BEYOND THE TURF

Don't want to go the way of the dinosaurs? Superintendents explain the diverse skill sets key to career longevity.



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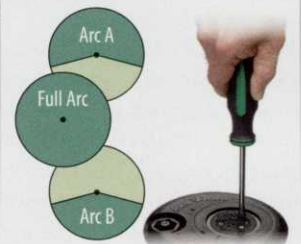
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SURVEY SAYS...

The powers that be in the golf industry will throw some astounding numbers at you. They will tell you that golf has a \$76 billion annual economic impact in the U.S. – bigger than the furniture or motion picture businesses. They will further say course maintenance alone accounts for \$9 billion in spending and payroll. That suggests the average maintenance budget at the average American course is about \$500,000. Take labor and overhead out of that equation and it means that the “typical” course spends about a quarter of a million dollars a year on stuff.

That’s a big number for some of you and a pittance for others, but that’s the average. The real question – no matter what budget you have – is what kind of stuff do you buy and from whom do you buy it?

By my estimate, there are about 300 companies that actively sell products to golf course superintendents. Beyond the actual performance of the product, the bottom line when superintendents choose products nearly always comes down to reputation and relationships. You buy from people you trust who represent companies you respect.

So, we asked you which companies you admire and trust the most, and the results of this first-of-its-kind study are presented in this month’s cover story. Our goal is to benchmark your opinion of the reputations of the companies that serve you.

We sent out 4,000 online survey links to superintendents randomly selected from our circulation and received about 350 valid responses. We asked folks to choose the 10 companies they admired or trusted most from a list of about 100 companies we identified. (By the way, we randomized the multiple choice lists to prevent people from just checking off the biggest companies, the same companies or the first 10 on the list.) From there, we compiled the data and sat on it. We didn’t share the data with anyone – including our own sales team. We decided against using it to go sell self-congratulatory ads to the companies that

did well in the ratings. We could have, but it seemed tacky. We hate tacky.

In some ways, the results weren’t surprising. The big brands that dominate the consciousness of the market generally performed well. But, there were surprisingly small companies that exceeded my expectations and some huge ones that didn’t do as well as I might have expected. So, what’s the takeaway? You get to see how your opinions compare to those of your colleagues around the nation and ponder how your views impact your purchasing decisions.

If this study is a measure of corporate brand reputation, here’s what it is not: It is not a measure of market share or total sales. Yes, companies with better reputations sell more stuff, but just because Company X ranks higher than Company Y in our study doesn’t

mean that Company Y isn’t kicking Company’s X’s butt in total sales because they have better distribution, different pricing or more “must-have” products.

It’s not necessarily a measure of how much each company spends on marketing. There’s definitely a correlation between advertising/marketing and overall reputation but, again, there were smaller manufacturers that ranked

high compared to their ad budgets.

It’s definitely not a measure of how much advertising each company buys in GCI. We compiled a list of the industry’s most visible companies based on multiple sources (ads in all magazines, trade show booths, sponsorships), and we allowed for write-in responses. Many companies that don’t advertise with us were included and a few of them did quite well.

All that said, publishing this scares the crap out of me. We’ve never been afraid to be candid but this feels like risky business for a magazine that relies on the kindness of the very companies we’ve rated. But, given our reputation for telling it like it is, it’s riskier business to ignore the fact that brands are meaningful in this market and your perception of those brands is a big part of their success as companies. Comments are welcome. You know where to find us! GCI



Pat Jones

Editorial director and publisher

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We'd like to hear from you.

E-mail us at gci@gje.net with your thoughts and opinions.

FEEDBACK

Sincere thanks

Thanks, Pat, for your interesting and amusing take/writing that always entertains me while further educating me. Even when I have a bad day and/or are going through tough times in this increasingly difficult industry – which it really shouldn't be, aside from the crappy economy – reading your essays always gives me laughter and hope for better times.

Also, enjoyed the "Trick or Treat" essay ("Spooky," October 2011). Continue the great work you are doing.

Dennis P. Petruzzelli, CGCS
Danbury, Conn.

To read "Spooky," enter <http://tinyurl.com/chqq77y> into your Web browser.

Time to deal

Read Pat Jones' column, ("Bone Dry," October) and thanks for the shout out. We are right back in it with a drought here in Georgia. They are beginning to dust off the old rules and look for new ideas.

The golf industry was alerted to the activity of the Department of Natural Resources by the Environmental Group – Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeepers – and the friends we have made in the water supply industry. Very cool when environmental groups come to the aid of golf and visa versa. But the main point is still the "main point" – we all are going to have to deal with this sooner than later. I also had a friend from the Lower Colorado River Authority ask me to help the Dallas/Fort Worth folks with a workshop with golf stakeholders. I remember when Mark Clark from Arizona told me (15 years ago) that water was the next big thing and I didn't believe him. Not in Georgia. Not with 56 inches of annual rainfall. I was an idiot.

Mark Esoda, CGCS
Atlanta Country Club
Marietta, Ga.

To read "Bone Dry," enter <http://tinyurl.com/77gqryc> into your Web browser.

Spot-on

Just read Dennis Lyon's article "A Collision of Cohorts" and found it to be the most spot-on portrayal I've read in this magazine in a long time. Lyon identified the stratification of the typical golf course workforce and how to manage it quite accurately. Nice work.

Steve Carr
Superintendent
Pocasset Golf Club
Pocasset, Mass.

To read "A Collision of Cohorts," enter <http://tinyurl.com/75zkgyt> into your Web browser.

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LUCKY 13

Things weren't looking great for the Meadow Springs Country Club in Jefferson, Wisc. in 2008. The city-owned course was being closed down because while they wanted to keep local golf alive, they couldn't justify spending money on the course. The course's fate seemed sealed when five holes were purchased for development and then abandoned, leaving the remaining 13 floating free and growing wild for a year.

St. Coletta of Wisconsin, a program for those with developmental disabilities, acquired the course fragment with a non-profit organization, but couldn't do much with it. But Mike Kerig and a few other golf pros had the course's number.

"They kind of got stuck with this property that was no longer being maintained as a golf course," says the superintendent now of the Jefferson Golf Club. "We went to them and said, 'If you want this open, we can get it there for you.'"

Working together, they started pulling the course back into shape in spring 2010, using a little trailer for a clubhouse while negotiations were going on with the old owners.

"We didn't really have our deal done until the middle of May," says Kerig. "We didn't have a building, no irrigation, didn't have any space for mowers or any mowers

themselves. Once the deal was signed, we really got going."

Within a year of hard labor, the course came back strong, with bentgrass fairways growing in faster than Kerig anticipated. But working alongside Links Across America developed the idea of the short course as a viable way to keep golf in the community.

"The 13 holes is a novel idea," says Kerig. "The smaller golf course was right up their alley. People were kind of skeptical at first, but after they play it, they say, 'Hey, 13's a lot of fun!'"

Besides bringing in a shorter standard round of golf, the smaller course opens up a variety of routings for a nine-hole round. And any diehard who wants their 18 holes can reroute through a five-hole loop to complete it.

"It's a really nice routing because it doesn't take six hours," says Kerig. "We can get them in and out in four. It's certainly kept the price of golf down here, too. We can offer a four-hole rate, and the shorter time means parents can bring kids around to get them interested in the game."

The course is still young, but Kerig says it has a bright outlook because of the novelty of the short course and the guidance of Links Across America in getting things



Before and after of the first fairway at Jefferson, showing the change from April to August over the summer of 2010.

running again.

"Their organization is committed to keeping golf in communities," says Kerig. "I don't know if we could've kept going without them. But it proves you don't have to be a 18-hole, huge course. If you can get people out there, they'll have fun."

FACIAL HAIR FOR CHANGE

We clean up pretty nicely here at the GCI Intergalactic HQ – as long as you don't look at any of our desks. But we don't mind relaxing our rules a bit, especially if it's for a good cause. The GCI staff eschewed the razor to take part in Movember, the month-long movement to raise awareness for cancers affecting men by growing and grooming our facial hair.

Though we didn't directly raise any money for research and support for the Prostate Cancer Foundation and Livestrong, we've been able to use our mo's to get guys talking about men's health issues that many of us generally wait to hear about from our doctors. Check out associate editor Kyle Brown's Movember page at <http://mobro.co/kyleb>.

Some of our moustaches ended up being much grander than the others', however. Here's Kyle's before and after photos:

If you took part in Movember as well, e-mail us at gci@gie.net and show off your moustache!



No, it's there. Just look more closely.

ABOVE: MIKE KERIG