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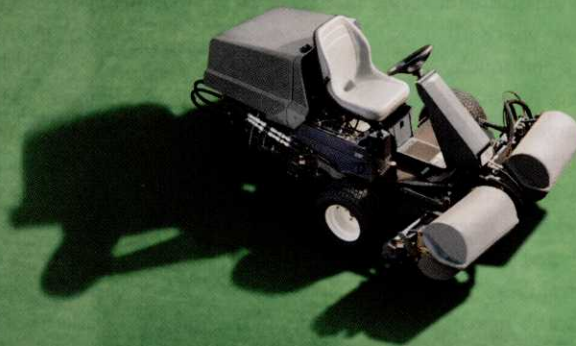
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DATA DUMP

I suspect that you, like many readers, may have heard me speak or attended a seminar I've done over the years. Since I know exactly bupkis about the science of turf management, I usually stick to non-agronomic topics like successful communications, using social media or, most commonly, "the state of the industry."

I've gotten to the point where I can do that speech in my sleep. Upon command, I could stand in front of a group of bored superintendents and recite it word-for-word with great authority. That is, until now. Here's my problem:

I have to blow the old speech up and write a brand new one.

In this issue of Golf Course Industry, you will find an explosion of new data about the golf market, how superintendents are managing budgets, how we're all using technology and much, much more. This is, to my knowledge, the largest benchmarking study of its kind ever conducted. I've seen other organizations and magazines report statistics based on 200 or 300 completed surveys but nothing close to the nearly 750 of y'all who took the time to fill out a pretty lengthy online survey form last month. It is definitely the most robust market study I've been involved with in 25 years.

The cover story and the myriad charts, graphs and tables with it will give you a sense of proportion about the size of your operation compared to others. It is a new benchmark for you to use to measure what you're doing and how you're doing it vs. colleagues around the nation. It is also, most importantly, something GCI can replicate in future to take the temperature of the market and track trends.

That said, I have to admit we don't have a crack staff of social scientists and statisticians who do this stuff for us. We do it ourselves because we're pretty decent at it, we have the right technological tools at our disposal and - most notably - we're cheap. We'd rather throw money at other stuff like the staff planning retreat in Cancun than paying a gee-whiz research company to do it for us.

So, before anyone bets the farm on this data, consider the following:

This is NOT a perfect, scientifically validated

study suitable for publishing in the Journal of Fancy-Schmancy Statistics. It is a poll. It reflects the answers of those who volunteered information to us. Right off the bat, you'll notice that about 40 percent of our responses came from private clubs even though truly private facilities only represent 25 percent of the market. Thus, I think the budget numbers reported are skewed high by some factor that we will try to determine in coming months.

Similarly, this was done online. We know for a fact that there are a group of you out there who are more digitally savvy and who tend to respond to surveys at a much higher rate than others. I suspect that folks out there struggling along trying to manage a 9-hole cornfield course do not have the same time or inclination to plug budget information into our survey software.



Pat Jones
Editorial director and publisher

We think we asked the questions the right way and we shared them in advance with some smart superintendents out there who gave us input, but there are a zillion different ways that facilities slice their budgets. We believe that the sheer volume of responses helps to suppress the impact that a few off-target answers could have but, again, be advised that not everyone defines their "overhead costs" or "capital expenditures" the same way.

Now that you've been warned about the warts, let me tell you the beautiful part of this. It is an outstanding new resource for the entire industry to use and I'm proud of the way Mike Zawacki, our editor, conducted it. He made this happen while also juggling production and doing a million other things. Attaboy, Mike.

I'm also proud of the incentive we used to drive that unprecedented response. Instead of offering a longshot chance to win an iPad or a gift card, we decided to donate cash to our friends at the Wee One Foundation to support their mission of helping superintendents and assistants in times of need. And, thanks to all of you who responded, we'll be handing them a check for \$2,500 soon.

In the long run, data and statistics are nice, but the amazing work that Wee One does in the memory of my old friend Wayne Otto is the best commentary on the state of our industry I can ever imagine. GCI

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Dispatches from the Great Lakes Trade Expo

by Brian DeVries

It may not be on the other side of the globe, but the Great Lakes Trade Exposition at DeVoss Place in Grand Rapids, Mich., brought together an elaborate trade show for turf lovers. Brian DeVries, assistant superintendent at Cascade Hills Country Club, sent us a few notes on his trip to the show.

Monday

I dubbed Monday “education day.” A great take-away item for me was listening to Dr. Bruce Branham’s presentation, “Stealth *Poa annua* Control.” One thing I really liked was the way Dr. Branham talked about golf course superintendents removing *Poa* very rapidly and the unsightly void left in the turf and described it with a great quote: “The operation was a success, but the patient died.” Additionally, he had some great information on the safety of the new products vs. the safety of the currently available products.

Tuesday

Tuesday contained what I believe to be the biggest change since the last time I had attended the event in 2007: the Assistant Superintendent Symposium. I thought this was a great addition to the show, giving assistants the opportunity to hear firsthand some career advice in a two-hour segment designed just for us. The symposium included presentations from Jason Zalensky, golf course superintendent at Lochmoor Club in Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich., and Greg Wojick of Playbooks for Golf. Jason and I actually met at the 2010 Green Start Academy, so it was great to see a familiar face talking about his very quick transition from assistant to superintendent in his presentation, “Thrown into the Fire.”

Wednesday

Wednesday was “show day.” The morning started off with what I believe to be the most fun and exciting event of the GLTE: the Turf Grass Talk Show, hosted by Dr. Thom Nikolai. The set-up for this event was reminiscent of that of *The Tonight Show*, complete with a desk, a sofa for the guests and, yes, even music. USGA Senior Agronomist Bob Vavrek stole the show with his presentation packed with top-notch information and intermittent humor.

With the talk show over, the afternoon afforded me an opportunity to walk through the expansive trade show. Inside, I walked through aisle after aisle and saw seemingly countless vendors from the turfgrass, landscape and irrigation industries. It was a certainly a unique event that presented some vast opportunities to see some products from more than just the golf course industry, and demonstrated just how similar all of our trades really are.



Though DeVries was there to pick up the latest in local info on golf turf, the show gathered turf enthusiasts from many different industries.



#gcitweetup2012

GCI is what's trending at the GIS in Las Vegas this year. We're inviting our Tweeps and other online friends to be a part of our golf/turf social media Tweetup.

The event will be from 5 to 7 p.m., Feb. 28, near the show itself, and will be a great opportunity to get together with others who know the importance of social media in the industry, as well as meet with several GCI staffers and columnists.

The winners of our first-ever Golf Course Industry Super Social Media Awards will also be announced at the Tweetup. The deadline for nominations was Feb. 10. Winners will be recognized in the following categories:

- Outstanding Social Media Leadership
- Best of the Blogs
- Innovative Use of Twitter
- Video & Multimedia Excellence

Want to be a part of the trend? Follow us on Twitter @GCI Magazine or on Facebook. Set aside the time for the gathering of the top social media minds at GIS, and watch for the details to show up in our feed before the show!

UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE

Quantico's Medal of Honor Golf course is dealing with an underground movement. But though they may upset the turf, they're not a huge threat to national security – maybe more to an unaware golfer who might step in a hole.

The course has been dealing with an onslaught of groundhogs for several years, peaking back in 2006. Superintendent Mike Morgan has trapped more than 400 of them since then, he says.

"We've always had them," he says, "but they just got really bad in 2004, 2005. With all the wildlife we have on the golf course, they create a problem with all the walkers."

Morgan contacted the game warden and got some live traps to work with, putting in time researching the habits of the common groundhog. He and his crew discovered they had what they needed to tempt the nuisances all along: bananas.

"They love bananas, they love chrysanthemums," says Morgan.

Once caught, the groundhogs aren't interrogated – they're simply taken across the bridge to the west side of the base.

"Quantico's separated by [Interstate] 95," says Morgan. "It's really the right thing to do. They can eat just as well on the other side of 95 as they can on this side, and you don't see many of them trying to cross the bridge to get back."

Morgan has tried to take as many as he could across the bridge in the past fall, even though he knows that more will show up next season.

"For the most part, we try to flag the worst stuff, and the golfers have pretty much learned where the habitats are," he says. "We've pretty much learned to live with them."



A PRIVATE ROUND

Some guys will do anything to be able to spend a quiet day on the course. At the Shoop Park Golf Course in Wind Point, Wis., a couple golfers were taking advantage of the mild weather and tranquility of nature. The reason it was so quiet, however, was that the course was closed.

Police spotted the two men taking shots along the 7th hole, despite the many "Closed for the season" signs posted throughout the course. Not only did the party have a private round in play, they had caused about 30 divots around the tee box.

The two men were cited with trespassing at the course – and they fixed their divots.



Sustainability standard

The Lodestone Golf Course project turned a scar in the landscape into a standard for new course development in Maryland. Its designers discuss the project with GCI.

by Chris Wilczynski, ASGCA

The word “sustainability” gets used frequently in our new “green” world.

Given that there has only been a handful of new golf courses built within the U.S. during the last few years, it has been challenging to find much to talk about in this sector of our industry.

I recently learned about the Lodestone Golf Course facility in McHenry, Md., that fits sustainability to a perfect “T.” Prior to Lodestone’s 2010 opening, the property had been completely cleared by timber-harvesting operations. What was left was a site that was void of any significant vegetation, had damaged and poorly functioning wetlands and streams and an overall fractured environmental ecosystem.

It was a mess and a scar in the landscape.

In taking on the project, the architectural team at Design Workshop was charged with creating a tournament-caliber facility while holding to strict ecological criteria set forth by the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE). Through strategic hold placement, the designers incorporated the pre-existing environment – streams, vegetation and rocks – into the overall vision.

From a sustainability perspective -- as well as an environmental, social and economic perspective -- Lodestone Golf Course has turned many heads. As a result, the course received the designation of being the sixth-best new golf course in the world by Golfweek magazine, and it received a merit award for design from the American Society of Landscape Architects Colorado.

The course, built out of an area cleared by a timber-harvesting operation, has been so beneficial it set standards for course ecological impact in the state.