

tions under Tim Nugent's eye, including the addition of a few more tees and bunkers over the last two decades. The course opened in 1995 and received accolades for being one of Golf Digest's Top 10 new courses that year. Over the years, GBCC has hosted many state events and is still considered one of the places on the 'must play' list in Wisconsin.

GBCC membership is typical of most private clubs with a broad spectrum of professionals who own small businesses, practice law, medicine, as well as corporate executives. While one would think there might be a vast number of Green Bay Packer players and executives at the club, they in fact only constitute a small portion of the membership. However, make no mistake that green and gold are the club's prominent colors.

On the days the Packers play the club has learned to work around the game. It is pretty typical to have a shotgun start on game day so members and their guests can then head out to Lambeau Field and tailgate or attend the many parties hosted in town. The clubhouse and golf course are pretty empty after kickoff.

**GREEN BAY TRAIL.** If you have never heard of the Green Bay Trail then you may not be from the Midwest. History books say woolly mammoths traveled this route 12,000 years ago during the Ice Age. In the 1600's French explorers Joliet and Marquette used it in their exploration of the Americas. The Potawatomi Indians used the trail to traverse the area from Chicago to Green Bay for hunting and trading until the early 20th Century.

The trail served as a mail route between Fort Dearborn in Chicago and Fort Howard in Green Bay. In 1832 the trail became an official post road by an Act of Congress. In 1836 the first stagecoach service was initiated



Under Tim Nugent, there have been just a few minor modifications to Green Bay Country Club, including more tees and bunkers.

between Chicago and Green Bay and the trail would eventually be named Green Bay Road.

Great things came along that road from Chicago to Green Bay during the last couple of centuries. So it is not surprising the person responsible for the construction and conditioning of Green Bay Country Club also made that symbolic trek.

**HEADED NORTH.** Marc Davison, CGCS, grew up in the Chicago suburb of Hillside. Like many people in the business he spent his early years working on a golf course. Hillside Golf Club was owned by his grandfather and Marc became a part of the family business. A few summers were also spent at his uncle's golf course on the west side of Milwaukee called Edgewood Golf Club. He spent a total of six summers in Milwaukee as he was inching his way up the Green Bay Trail.

Marc's next stop was to work as the assistant superintendent for Rod Johnson, CGCS, at Pine Hills Country Club in Sheboygan,

Wis. An opportunity opened for a superintendent position at Lomira Country Club, near Fond du Lac, and Marc calls it a true trial by fire in his first head superintendent job.

After that first year at Lomira CC opportunity knocked and Marc was drawn back to Sheboygan where he worked for Don Clemens during the construction at Blackwolf Run in Kohler, Wis. Don left after bringing Marc in and then Marc took the helm with building and maintaining the first 18 holes and then the third nine holes and fourth nine holes that would comprise the full 36 holes at Blackwolf Run. The stint in Kohler amounted to seven years of operations with five of those spent with some form of construction.

As Marc's skills grew in the construction and project management arena he became well known throughout Wisconsin's golf turf community. It was no surprise when he was asked to join the initiatives that would become Green Bay Country Club after several years of construction.

Just like the Green Bay Trail Marc Davison covered a lot of miles and a very logical and strategic path that brought him to Green Bay from Chicago. His many years of working in the family business along with a significant amount of construction experience made him the perfect candidate for the job. While most of the superintendents in Wisconsin don't come from Chicago and are not graduates of Iowa State University's turfgrass management program, can't think of a better fit than Marc who paid his dues as he worked his way north from the Windy City.

**MAKING IT GREAT.** When one tours the Green Bay Country Club the first thing you notice is the attention to detail throughout the property. The 18 holes of golf are spectacular, but there is much more to the club than that. Marc not only has the normal 18 holes that most superintendents manage but there is an 18-hole putting course with bentgrass turf, an aquatic center, and a clubhouse he oversees. The put-



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## COURSE PROFILE



When one tours the Green Bay Country Club the first thing you notice is the attention to detail throughout the property.

ting course is something in most superintendents' skill set but the aquatic center and building maintenance take some additional skills.

Always up for a challenge it was the trust of the facility's board of directors that placed those additional tasks into Marc's hands. Managing people, projects, and infrastructure all fit naturally into the scheme of things. Marc knew the more you manage at a facility, the more valuable you are to your employer.

**WINTER UP NORTH.** Most northern golf course superintendents wish they had a dollar for every time they have been asked the question of "so what do you do in the winter?" Davison shared that the winter is not as long as you think in Green Bay. The course opens with greens mowing starting around March 15th through April 1st and usually the last mowing takes place around Nov. 1. That would mean about a week later to open and a week earlier to close than in his native Chicago. People love their golf in Green Bay and know their season is short so they get in a lot of golf during that green grass growing period. The club wisely has a golf simulator it uses during the winter months along with the normal food and beverage activity.

**THE TEAM.** Staffing is seasonal for the most part. Marc is very proud of his crew and has many people that have been with him for many years. He is fortunate to have two assistants, a great equipment technician and a facilities manager that work cohesively as a team. He does add some college students during the summer to his normal April 15th to Oct. 15th seasonal staff.

A large part of the success Marc has had at Green Bay Country Club is the support of the facility's board of directors. There is a high level of mutual respect and the membership considers the golf course to be their No. 1 asset and fund it accordingly.

**CHALLENGES.** No golf course is without its challenges. The greens were originally planted to Penn Links 20 years ago. Over the years there has been some segregation of the turf and also the standard onset of *Poa annua*.

Marc manages for the bentgrass to be dominant, but that fight continues to be a challenge as his *Poa annua* populations were definitely in check.

Bower Creek runs through the property and impacts several holes. Almost every winter there is some erosion of the creek banks. This requires attention in the off season with the use of stone boulders to

(continued on page 47)

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## POLITICS AND GOLF DESIGN

In this election year, much as been made of how to blend socialism into capitalism for the betterment of all, who to tax, who to assist, and where to spend money. The free market vs. socialism debate has many parallels in golf course architecture theory. Many want to tax the (talent/length) rich golfers by limiting their equipment, because they simply have “too much” (length/wealth). If taking away their length redistributes length to other golfers, including me, I support it 110 percent.

That attitude puts me with the other 99 percent, who myopically evaluate architecture based on their own game. Just as a recession is when your neighbor loses his job, but a depression is when I lose my job, the difference between “Fair” and “Unfair” hinges on whether it’s you or your competitor who is penalized by hazards. When a golfer argues that fairway bunkers should be 260 yards off the tee, I know their tee shots travel 250 yards. When they favor grass bunkers, I know they are terrible out of sand. In fact, most complaints about a hole/feature tell me it costs them strokes.

It’s similar to citizens who favor policy that favors them at the expense of others. Just as businesses say, “What’s good for (our) business is good for America”, golfers often praise an architectural features as “good for all golfers” when in reality, it’s good for their golf game.

While you would think average players would argue most in favor of architecture that helps their game, good players (the 1 percent) actually demand more architectural assistance from their courses.

In 1892, top amateur Charles Blair McDonald designed Chicago Golf Club with Out of Bounds on the left side of nearly every hole, which nicely

accommodated his slice. It continued when Tour Pros entered architecture. Jack Nicklaus reportedly designed his early courses to favor his own high fade. He has also said that architecture should never hurt the player, and should help them shape and contain shots. Other Tour Pros with perfect putting strokes suggest flat greens are best, whereas some pros with below average putting skills argue that

In many ways, golf architecture has followed society – it’s still a “may the best competitor win” game, but with **increasing doses of assistance** from architects to make the game enjoyable for all.

greens should have ample contour – because if they aren’t making putts, the architect has an obligation to make others miss just as often.

Nearly all top players demand that hazards offer no more recovery challenge than a shot from the middle of the fairway, believing (somehow) that this is more “fair” golf. It has led to massive bunker expense (both maintenance and construction) to assure “fairness” and may be the cause of many clubs’ budget deficits.

The Pros input has been a big change from the philosophies of the Robert Trent Jones and Dick Wilsons (the premier 1950’s architects) who spoke of architecture in military terms like “attack and defending par” and whose courses seemingly presumed the enemy was at the gate. Some softening in the name of justice was due, and long before the financial crisis of 2007, architects provided “bail outs” for the tough and penal shots often offered up by those architects.

As golf became diverse and more public, owners wanted courses that met everyone’s needs, meaning cours-

es that made golf easier, more attractive and faster to play. You might call it “socialist” to challenge every golfer to his or her ability, or “democratic” in opening golf up to all comers.

It became standard architectural policy to “tax” the (talent) rich more than average players, while providing some assistance to average golfers. We narrow fairways and place hazards to challenge the best players, with fewer

hazards and wider fairways in the landing zones of average players. Less skilled golfers also get architectural assistance from multiple tees, to reduce length, provide easier angles and to reduce forced carries and difficult angles around doglegs and hazard, in an effort to “give everyone a fair shot.” In general, hazards are increasingly benign, in deference to senior, female and junior golfers.

While most agree with this notion, one pro argues fairways should be 50 percent wider at 300 yards than 200 yards, because a 5-degree miss strays further as tee shots get longer, and he believes this punishes all players equally. He must favor a “flat tax” over a graduated tax, regardless of the ability to pay – or play.

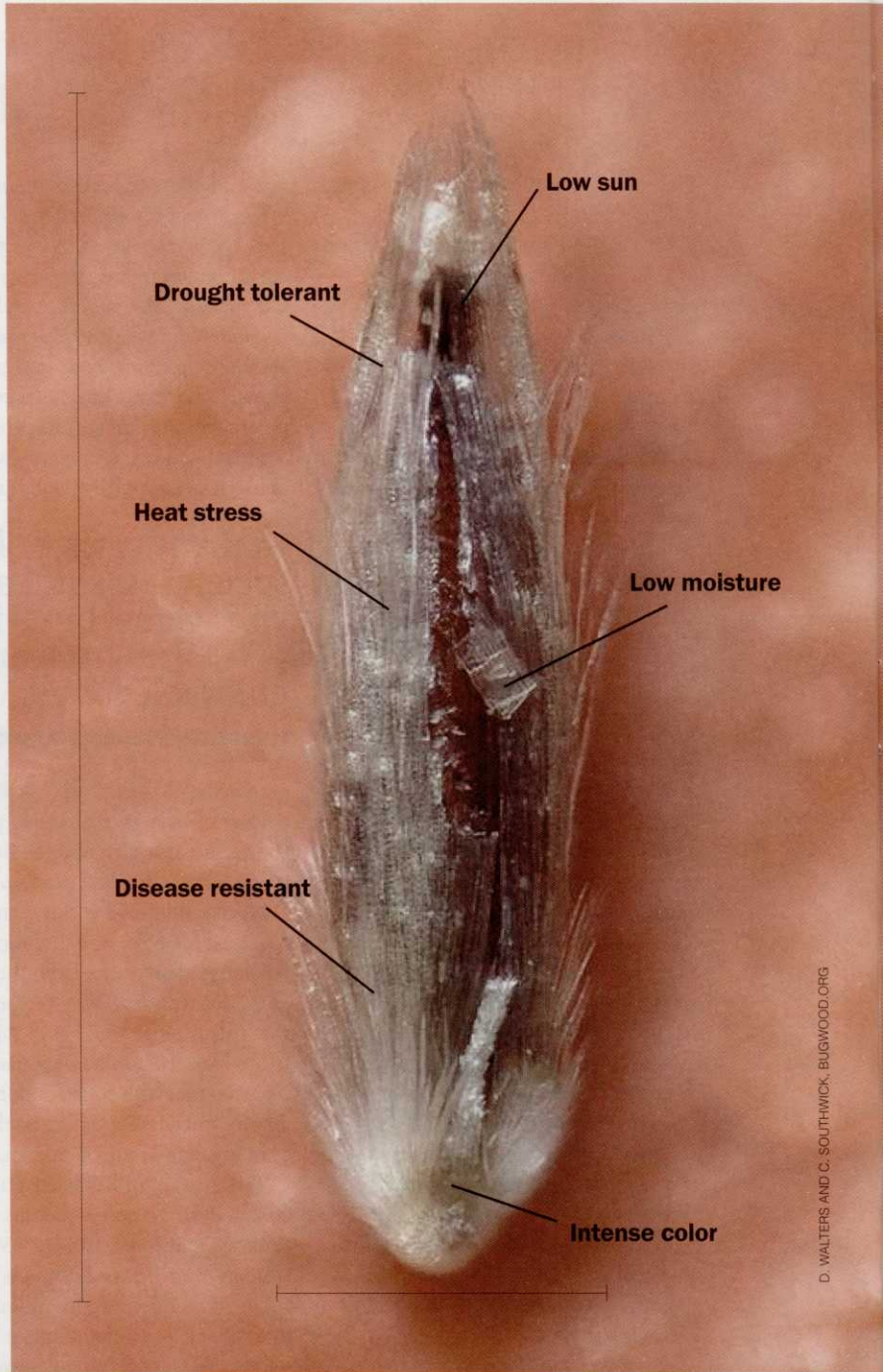
In many ways, golf architecture has followed society. It’s still a may-the-best-competitor-win” game, but with increasing doses of assistance from architects to make the game enjoyable for all. While we may argue the last 5 percent of what makes the perfect blend, in general, we are on the right path. **GCI**



# Anatomy OF Seed Choice

With diverse distinctions between turf seed varieties, it's in your best interests to do your due diligence before making the final choice.

by Rob Thomas



D. WALTERS AND C. SOUTHWICK, BUGWOOD.ORG

## TOP TRAITS

So what are the top traits turf managers are seeking for their

Drought tolerant // Disease resistant // Traffic resistant // Quality



George Washington was quoted as saying, "Bad seed is a robbery of the worst kind: for your pocket-book not only suffers by it, but your preparations are lost and a season passes away unimproved."

Sure, he wasn't thinking ahead to today's golf course turfgrass, but the words still ring true.

While nobody wants to lose time and money buying "bad" seed, what superintendents and builders are looking for in a seed has certainly changed over the years. With advancements being made all the time, the possibilities seem endless.

Golf course superintendents and builders are looking for seed varieties that are drought tolerant, disease resistant and exhibit stellar ability to handle traffic, says Murray Wingate of Lebanon Seed.

"Some older bentgrass varieties that do not have as good disease resistance have fallen out of favor," Wingate says.

Lewis Sharp, agronomist and golf course consultant with Tee-2-Green, echoed Wingate's sentiment on disease, drought and traffic, and added several other items on a seed wish list, including but not limited to overall seed quality, color and a tolerance to extreme heat and cold.

And Sharp has spotted a new development in seed usage. "Depending on the location, I am seeing the use of tall fescue / blue blends in the rough now," he says. "I have seen this pushing farther and farther north over the

past three years or so. With above normal heat and drought over the last couple of summers, the ability to handle the cart traffic [also] seems to be a new trend."

Earlier this year, Tee 2 Green introduced a new bentgrass – Pure Distinction – that will hit full release in the fall of 2013. According to Sharp, it has a bright green color, is disease resistant and allows for an ultra-smooth putting surface. It is high in density, upright, aggressive in growth and produces less thatch than other bentgrasses.

"Pure Distinction likes drier conditions, so it requires less water and fewer inputs than other varieties," he adds. "It will really save superintendents time and money."

Bill Rose, president of Tee 2 Green, says PennCross – which debuted in 1955 – is still the company's best seller, but they are now testing all varieties in salt baths as the potable water available to superintendents continues to diminish.

"We're getting rapid progress in salt tolerance," he says.

Sharp took a stab at what

the future may bring, but acknowledges that there are so many variables, tomorrow is a moving target.

"I wish I had a magic ball to look into from time to time," Sharp says. "With water shortage, I would say drought tolerance and salt tolerance will be a way of the future, along with even stronger disease resistance. The use of affluent water will also play a big role in grass selections."

Dr. Leah Brilman of Seed Research of Oregon notes one new trend she is observing is trying to balance varieties with a lot of drought resistance and heat tolerance, which are closely linked in many cases, as dry conditions and heat often go hand in hand.

For Seed Research of Oregon, Tye and 007 have become very popular for greens and fairways. A blend of it was used at the Olympic Club in San Francisco for the U.S. Open, while a blend of 007 and SR 1119 was used at Chicagoland's Medinah Country Club for the Ryder Cup.

She is seeing more requests for Dollar Spot resistance in Bentgrasses and says the new bents can really tolerate heat significantly better than their predecessors. And their higher density can take shorter heights of cut and fight off *Poa annua*.

What's hot at Lebanon

Seed? According to Wingate, Declaration Creeping Bentgrass has been their most popular seed variety for golf courses because it exhibits top-rated Dollar Spot resistance and excellent turf quality in National Turfgrass Evaluation Program trials.

**SUPPLY VS. DEMAND.** Revisiting our founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin once says, "You may delay, but time will not." Considering the state of turfgrass seed today, procrastinating on an order is something best put off until tomorrow.

In sales terms: Don't delay... order today.

Why the sense of urgency? In a word: Shortage. The supply is not meeting the demand.

Seed Research of Oregon's Brilman says the lack of available seed has been several years in the making. When the economy took a tumble, many companies had extra seed that was highly priced, but took a loss. They bought higher than people were willing to pay.

A year ago the market started coming back and the industry saw a lot of exports to Europe, because of the overseas drought. Last fall, the excess pile had essentially evaporated.

Now growers are dedicating their acres to food crops that are paying very well, such as corn,

golf courses? The seed pros weigh in with the following traits.

// Fast establishment // Heat and cold tolerance // Genetic color // Shade tolerance // Salt tolerance



With water shortage, I would say drought tolerance and salt tolerance will be a way of the future, along with even stronger disease resistance. The use of affluent water will also play a big role in grass selections.”

—Lewis Sharp, Tee-2-Green

soy and wheat.

“It’s a difficult time,” Brilman says. “Corn influences wheat, which influences us. Companies are reluctant to follow wheat in price because they’ve been burned.”

In addition to difficulty placing acres on reliable industry standards, newer varieties are even harder to place because there is no history, so growers don’t know what to expect from a yield.

The immediate future does not look promising, either, according to Brilman.

“It’s been tough and it’s not going to get easier for one-and-a-half to two years,” she says. “Hopefully we’ll be back to a normal supply and demand after two years.”

Wingate agrees, adding the industry faces potential supply problems. “Some species and top rated varieties will be in short supply,” he says of 2013. “This is particularly bentgrass and top rated Kentucky bluegrasses.”

As for the cost, the newer top-rated varieties don’t cost a lot more than older varieties, so the investment is worth it, according to Wingate, but the determining

factor remains those rival crops. “Prices will be firm to rising for most species due to the competition from cereal grains for seed production acres,” he says.

So seed is in short demand and price is high and only going higher. Are there ways to save?

There are money-saving options – like buying lesser-quality seed or using less seed – but protecting the seedlings and being as careful as possible with what you use are better than those alternatives. With lesser quality there’s potential for weed seeds and less germination, Brilman says, adding there’s always a market for lesser quality.

Sharp warns: “Yes, there will be some cheap seed on the market, but you get what you pay for – always.”

Rose, though, took the long view and added that lower-priced seed may seem budget conscience in the short term, but over time turf-related problems can culminate in compounded costs. “Some seed prices are cheap, but more expensive in the long run if it doesn’t last,” he says.

Tee-2-Green’s Sharp warns superintendents to take

protective measures when selecting seed types – anything from consulting with cultivars to surveying their regional colleagues about their choices. Doing your due diligence can prove to be a long-term cost-saving measure, he adds.

Wingate and Brilman both suggest timing – as in sooner, rather than later – is a major factor in ensuring you have the right seed when you need it.

“They really need to plan ahead for their needs to get the best varieties,” Wingate says of superintendents’ long-term planning practices. “They may not be able to save money this way, but they should shop early to get the varieties they want before supplies run low.”

“Get lined up well in advance with your distributor. People need to think ahead – anticipate their needs,” Brilman says, noting that delaying the purchase until April 1 would be a serious mistake if seed is needed next spring.

**OUTLOOK.** New seed varieties are on the horizon that will impact golf’s turf managers.

“New, improved varieties

come on the market every year,” Wingate says. “Superintendents should choose the newest, most cutting edge varieties available.”

From a cost standpoint, though, the forecast for 2013 and beyond doesn’t look great. “More new varieties will be introduced,” Wingate adds. “And continued tightening of supplies due to the competition for production acres from cereal grains – such corn, wheat, soybeans – that are high priced now.”

Brilman pointed out that cost and quality are important from the buyer’s point of view, but something else plays a huge role in whether a seed proves to thrive in the market.

“Also [we have to] look at seed yield,” she says. “It can be the best seed in the world, but won’t stay around with bad yield.”

Unfortunately, difficulty placing crops hasn’t been the only issue. Brilman says weather conditions haven’t been favorable for growing the crops that have been planted. Many fields aren’t irrigated, instead relying on Mother Nature’s usual abundance of rain in the Pacific Northwest to naturally move along the cycle. Drought conditions this past year didn’t help.

“A cascade is what’s going on,” Brilman says. “There’s not any scenario where I don’t see prices going up.” **GCI**

*Rob Thomas is a Cleveland-based freelance writer and frequent GCI contributor.*

## TOP TIPS

Tee-2-Green agronomist and golf course consultant Lewis Sharp offers superintendents and builders some key tips to make sure they’re getting the most for their money.

- Select a cultivar that is right for the location
- Do on-site trials
- Check with superintendents in the area to see what works for them
- When trying something new choose a company with a trusted history

“If you do one or more of the above you will save time and money in the long run,” Sharp adds.



fortify those creek banks. Moving large stones and boulders to remote areas bordering the rough and fairways is a delicate project that takes place late fall into early winter.

**THE DAVISONS.** Every trip is a lot more fun if you have someone to share it with. Marc did not make the trip alone. He married his high school sweetheart from Hillside, Ill., 30 years ago and Laurie has been at his side as he moved his way up the Green Bay Trail to his final destination at GBCC.

They have five children between the ages of 16 and 26. While the golf course takes up a fair amount of Marc's time he is happy to live nearby and able to

participate in all the family and school events in the area. The Davisons are a big hockey family and several of the kids are playing at the collegiate level. In addition to hockey the family enjoys soccer basketball and golf.

**THE FUTURE.** With a mere 20 years under his belt at GBCC I can see that Marc has found a great home for himself and his family. He really enjoys the projects on the course, in the clubhouse and any other challenges that come his way.

Most improvements are done in house with the club staff and that is very rewarding for Marc and his team. His long career is midway and he looks forward

to many more years at the club. He comes to work excited and invigorated every day. His spirit is contagious and he has become a mentor to many. I believe that Marc is as lucky to have Green Bay Country Club as they are to have him.

We have all heard about the frozen tundra of Lambeau Field. That term comes from a comment made by NFL Films founder, the late Steve Sabol, about the Ice Bowl (played on Dec. 31, 1967) in which temperatures reached 15 below zero on game day.

Yes the ground was frozen and that game was memorable. But when you stand on the 14th tee at Green Bay Country Club and see Lambeau Field in the background

your only thoughts will be on the outstanding playing conditions that you are enjoying.

Green Bay is Titledown USA. Green Bay is an outstanding city and GBCC is a phenomenal club with a magnificent golf course. Who knows, in another 15-20 years Marc Davison just might get those Packer tickets he has been on the waiting list for 25 years.

It would only be deserving and the ultimate stop on the Green Bay Trail. **GCI**

*Bruce R. Williams, CGCS, is principal for both Bruce Williams Golf Consulting and Executive Golf Search. He is a frequent GCI contributor.*

United States Postal Service		(Requester Publications Only)	
Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation			
Required by 39 USC 3685			
1. Publication Title:	GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY		
2. Publication Number:	1054-0644		
3. Filing Date:	10-1-2012		
4. Issue of Frequency:	Monthly		
5. Number of Issues Published Annually:	12		
6. Annual Subscription Price:	Free to Qualified		
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not Printer):	GIE Media, Inc., 4020 Kinross Lakes Parkway #201 Richfield, OH 44286	Contact Person:	Melody Berendt
		Telephone:	800-456-0707
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not Printer):	GIE Media, Inc. 4020 Kinross Lakes Parkway #201 Richfield, OH 44286		
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor - Publisher:	Pat Jones, GIE Media, Inc., 4020 Kinross Lakes Parkway, #201, Richfield, OH 44286; Editor: Mike Zawacki, GIE Media, Inc., 4020 Kinross Lakes Parkway, #201, Richfield, OH 44286; Managing Editor: n/a, GIE Media, Inc., 4020 Kinross Lakes Parkway, #201, Richfield, OH 44286		
10. Owner - Full name:	Richard J. W. Foster, Owner, 4020 Kinross Lakes Parkway #201, Richfield, OH 44286		
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities:	None		
13. Publication Title:	GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY		
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data:	September 2012		
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date	
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	25,510	25,314	
b. Legitimate Paid and/or Requested Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)			
(1) Individual Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions Stated On PS Form 3541. (Include direct written request from recipient, telemarketing and Internet requests from recipient, paid subscriptions including nominal rate subscriptions, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	24,341	24,364	
(2) Copies Requested by Employers for Distribution to Employees by Name or Position Stated on PS Form 3541	0	0	
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid or Requested Distribution Outside USPS	100	108	
(4) Requested Copies Distributed by Other Mail Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)	0	0	
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))	24,441	24,472	
d. Nonrequested Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)			
(1) Nonrequested Copies Stated on PS Form 3541 (include Sample copies, Requests Over 3 years old, Requests induced by a Premium, Bulk Sales and Requests including Association Requests, Names obtained from Business Directories, Lists, and other sources)	650	693	
(2) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Through the USPS by Other Classes of Mail (e.g. First-Class Mail, Nonrequester Copies mailed in excess of 10% Limit mail at Standard Mail or Package Services Rates)	0	0	
(3) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Outside the Mail (Include Pickup Stands, Trade Shows, Showrooms and Other Sources)	202	0	
e. Total Nonrequested Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3))	852	693	
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)	25,293	25,165	
g. Copies not Distributed	218	149	
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)	25,510	25,314	
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c divided by 15f times 100)	96.63%	97.25%	
16. Publication of Statement of Ownership for a Requester Publication is required and will be printed in the issue of this publication.			November 2012
17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner			Date
	Melody Berendt, Director Circulation		10/1/2012
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“The most discouraging trend is the elimination or reduction of many sources of grant funds for turfgrass research,” Harmon says. “It’s difficult to compete against food and energy crops at the national level. In my opinion, without research, the industry is dead in the water. There are some real challenges coming down the pipeline with

regard to water resources and concerns over environmental impacts that will require continued investment in research to overcome.”

Looking ahead to 2013, Foy pointed out that it’s difficult to put a timetable on when to start protecting against certain diseases as it depends on when the weather starts warming up in the spring. Some overseed as early as

March and as late as May, as an example.

“You can’t write a cookbook recipe and say you started a program in February this year and you’ll do the same next year,” Foy says.

Harmon uses a “Yogiism” to describe the uncertainty: It’s tough to make predictions, especially about the future.

“If the climatologists are correct, a slight El Nino year may mean a slightly warmer and wetter winter season,” he says. “That would encourage leaf spot and melting out, pythium root rot and blight, and winter foliar diseases of warm-season turfgrass that can contribute to a tough transition when overseeding. It would also probably move the southern limit of where we see spring dead spot damage a little further north of the typical Florida-Georgia state line.”

Foy pointed out that infection of many diseases often occurs from late spring to midsummer, but symptoms become apparent in late September. By then it’s difficult to get recovery going.

Superintendents should be on the lookout for slowing growth, reductions in vigor or clipping production, and the first sign of disease symptoms, Harmon says.

“Utilizing a plant disease diagnostic service early in any disease problem scenario can really help provide better and more efficient options for disease management,” he says. “Early curative and preventative applications guided by plant disease sample results can reduce the rates and numbers of applications needed to manage turfgrass disease and is the key to doing it without blanket preventative applications of fungicide.”

Harmon suggests utilizing a lab that plates samples out and doesn’t rely solely on microscopy for their diagnosis. Most university labs and some of the better private labs offer this kind of service. Ask your sales reps to foot the bill; several companies will do that and view it as a good way to steward their products, according to Harmon.

As for timing, Harmon advises superintendents to be on the lookout for disease and beware of making assumptions when diagnosing problems.

“When it’s obvious enough to ‘eyeball-it,’ you’re probably pigeon-holed into more expensive curative rates and schedules,” he says. **GCI**

Rob Thomas is a Cleveland-based freelance writer and frequent GCI contributor.

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(MORGAHAN continued from page 18)

who ride their bikes to and from work. Some jog their courses early in the morning, which has the added benefit of giving them a hole-by-hole view of what's going on out there. It's a good start.

And that's another reason I'm looking forward to the national meeting in San Diego—running. I'm sure I'll see, and maybe join up with, groups of joggers taking advantage of that city's great climate and miles of running paths. I encourage the powers that be in our business to start moving, too, coming up with initiatives and other ways to get all of us, regardless of age, better educated and more dedicated to taking care of ourselves.

We lost too many good friends and fellows in 2012. Let's see if we can keep not only our golf courses but ourselves healthy in the future. **GCI**





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## THE FARM REPORT

When Joe Purchase asked me during the RISE meeting to come down to FarmLinks and be his playing partner in the inaugural Agrium Advanced Technologies Open at FarmLinks, I tried to be cool and pretend like the thought of four days of golf, fishing and schmoozing in sunny Alabama wasn't exactly what my weary bones needed as Cleveland turned cold and wet.

So I hesitated for at least six seconds before I said "Hell yes."

Agrium put together the event for their big customers and business partners as an old-school networking opportunity: a few days of bonding, pretty much off the grid with no presentations or overt sales push. We played golf, caught a bunch of bass, told each other lies and pretty much everyone but me enjoyed FarmLinks' new attitude about spirit consumption on the premises. (Yes, FarmLinks now has a liquor license.)

The evolution of the world's only research and demonstration golf course continues on many fronts. As you may have read on our website recently, BASF is moving their customer education and interaction activities to Pinehurst to be closer to their Raleigh HQ. I also learned a few weeks ago that Agrium will be "downsizing" their involvement in the program and multiple sources have told me Toro is examining their commitment, as well.

In short, the original partnership concept may have run its course and, although FarmLinks will remain committed to research, information and education for superintendents, David Pursell and his team are now focused on building the facility's reputation as an awesome destination for all types of company outings and events. If you know David, you can't doubt he'll

make it work. He is a man of vision, energy and not insignificant resources. Industry partners or not, FarmLinks will always be a special place for turf-heads to visit and enjoy.

Which brings me back to Joe and his invitation to come to Agrium's big event. Joe is in charge of national sales for AAT and I think the primary reason I was invited was that someone told Joe...get ready for this...that I was a good stick and I could help his team. (I'll pause for a second and wait for you to stop laughing.) He soon learned the truth about my game (or lack thereof) and we wisely turned our attention to talking about the market, the changes in the fertilizer business

**The bottom line is get over the sticker shock of a higher price per bag, and look at the whole economic picture.**

going on right now and how Agrium is positioning itself for the future.

The first and foremost thing I learned from Joe and his colleague Jeff Novak, Agrium's VP of marketing, is that it's all about the price of corn. Ethanol drives corn prices, corn prices drive more acreage, more acreage demands more fertilizer, and high demand in ag means higher prices and shorter supplies for weird little markets like ours. Prices for traditional urea-based products have also spiked with the cost of natural gas, which is critical to the production process. The bottom line is that it's like pump prices for gas: a million variables impact the price, it's complex, and there's almost nothing a consumer can do to avoid it.

Almost nothing. AAT is changing the way it does business to bring some sanity to the process in the golf, lawn care and nursery markets. Notably, they've established new supply partnerships to solidify their material sources. But, the bigger challenge is to educate superintendents and other T&O professionals about the ROI of newer, more expensive slow-release technologies like Polyon and Duration. To do so, they have to convince customers to do math.

"It's a business decision for our customers that forces a lot of them to change the way they've approached fertilization," says Purchase. "We're trying to help superintendents and LCOs justify one or two more-expensive rounds versus five or six less-expensive rounds. We're helping them document application costs, manpower costs, fuel costs and other factors like overwintering. It's a big change that gives them a way to improve their economics and profitability."

The company has launched a slick website ([spreaditandforgetit.com](http://spreaditandforgetit.com)) with a calculator function for those who are math-challenged. The bottom line is get over the sticker shock of a higher price per bag and look at the whole economic picture. "We have to give customers a way to smooth out the peaks and valleys of urea pricing," Novak says. We need to bring some predictability to what has been a crazy ride for turf managers."

The Agrium folks realize they aren't the only ones selling coated technologies and they're perfectly willing to help be a rising tide to lift all boats. "In the long run, between environmental restrictions, labor and fuel costs, the benefits will become clear," says Purchase. "We're bullish about the green industry because of that." GCI