



MYTH #2

Microbes need to be added to improve soil.

VERDICT: False.

“The microbial community in turfgrass soils is plentiful and diverse,” Pat Gross, USGA Green Section Southwest Region director, says. “Additions do not improve soil conditions in any significant way. The microbial community is mostly influenced by moisture, air porosity, temperature and nitrogen content.”

MYTH #3

Golf courses play better when green.

VERDICT: False.

From a golfer’s perspective, they believe courses are better when they’re green. Larry W. Gilhuly, USGA Green Section Northwest Region director, defiantly says, “No, they are not.”

“They’re not as healthy and don’t play as good from a pure playing standpoint. Green courses don’t play nearly as good as courses with a little more firmness to them. And that would be the North America vs. Great Britain or Scotland approach.”

The result, says Gilhuly, is that superintendents are caught in the crosshairs. “The vast majority of superintendents would back off if allowed, but golfers dictate in North America.”

MYTH #4

Vertical mowing makes greens faster.

VERDICT: False.

Also from the golfer’s perspective is the idea that vertical mowing will make greens slicker. But Gross says the opposite is actually true.

“It temporarily slows them down for a couple days,” he says.

Gross says it goes like this: members are always asking what the club down the street is doing, and when they hear the superintendent is vertical mowing, all of a sudden they think their own superintendent isn’t vertical mowing enough.

“And they’re completely oblivious to what the practice really achieves and why it’s done,” says Gross.

MYTH #5

Applying a little extra water is always better.

VERDICT: Usually False.

This is not always true, says Gross, unless the course uses recycled water and must manage salinity.

“This attitude results in a waste of water along with soft, wet playing conditions,” he says.

Gilhuly concurs, saying a lot of people believe this but the top superintendents do not. “But they’re forced into it by people who think golf should be green.”



MYTH #6

Your pest problems will always stay the same.

VERDICT: False.

Brandenburg believes there is the perception out there that the pest problems you've had for 20 years will continue to be the same problems you have in the future. And that's simply not correct, he says.

"If you look at the diseases and weed issues we've dealt with over the last 20 to 30 years, those have changed, partially because products we use and our cultural practices have changed. The same certainly holds true for insects on a golf course. As we change how we do business and the products we use, we see shifts away from some problems to others."

The best example, Brandenburg says, is 30 years ago when he started his career in the southeast and people were concerned about sod webworms.

"The reality is I haven't seen a sod webworm problem in 20 years in North Carolina. But 30 to 40 years ago, people had problems with them."

Brandenburg stresses that a problem that you've historically had that eventually subsides isn't necessarily an indicator that you've done something wrong; instead, it's a reflection of changes in production and cultural practices.

"Insect problems do change over time, not overnight but over 20 to 30 years," he says.

MYTH #7

We don't have to worry about insects developing resistance to products we use.

VERDICT: False.

"Historically, we have seen it with certain products that were used so much that soils contained many microorganisms that would break it down very quickly and it wouldn't work," says Brandenburg.

The idea of "Well, it's working so let's use it again and again," has been proven to be a bad strategy in, for example, the northeastern U.S. with the annual bluegrass weevil.

"Being on a golf course setting where we think insects come and go all the time, resistance is an issue that superintendents need to be concerned about because it can and does happen."



MYTH #8

Rolling greens will compact the soil.

VERDICT: False.

Gross says that's simply not the case. And there is a lot of research validating that, whether it's on native soil or sand greens.

Gilhuly agrees, saying he runs into that all the time.

"All the research shows it doesn't compact the soil at all but just wears the leaf blade off," he says. "So if the turf starts to go on the edges, it's because of wear and not because of compaction."

Gilhuly cited the 2010 U.S. Senior Open in Washington where the superintendent thought he could firm up the approach by rolling it six times. Gilhuly then tested it with a Tru-Firm and found that it didn't change at all.

(continued on page 48)

Clover. Dandelions. Poa. Nutsedge. Fescue.

"Katana® absolutely knocked them out for me!"

– Daryl Pearson, Golf Course Superintendent,
Winterstone Golf Course, Independence, Mo.

Winterstone Golf Course Superintendent Daryl Pearson had a problem – one that golfers and ownership had noticed: weeds.

"We had it all," Pearson said, "All the broadleaf weeds: clover and dandelions, plus Poa and yellow nutsedge. But the biggest problem was fescue, especially in target areas."

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"Katana absolutely knocked them out for me," Pearson says. "I haven't had to retreat those areas. They're all still clean."



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THE 2013 GRAINY AWARDS

The year's best cues and miscues.

It's time for the second annual Grainy Awards. It's certainly been a year of wild theatrics in golf, roller coasting back and forth between soap opera and tragi-comedy. There's been everything from failed coups, to anchors aweigh, rules infractions by the great and not-so-great, even critical reviews for the image of a near-inanimate object acting comatose on a schoolroom floor. With so much acting, shot producing, and even a little bit of make-up (Tiger and Stevie shaking hands), it's time to get down to business. So with apologies to the Oscars, I'm borrowing some of their categories to award the year's best cues and miscues.

Best Animated Feature:

Brandel vs Tiger

Self-confessed 4th-grade math-cheater Brandel Chamblee took on Tiger Woods, who apparently is in need of a Rules of Golf book stocking stuffer. Thankfully, this drama came to an end as quickly as it started. Too bad Chamblee had to turn in his card from the writer's union while he remains an A-List performer.

Best Director: Matt Shaffer, Golf Course Superintendent, Merion Golf Club

Shaffer took on an unprecedented (at least over the past three decades) project in a challenging location with many moving parts and unpredictable weather and proved the "little course that could" packed a big punch.

Best Documentary: "The Deer Antler Spray Incident" starring Vijay Singh

Rated R for ridiculous

Best Original Score: Dustin Johnson lands Wayne Gretzky's daughter

Nothing more needs to be said! Let's

hope they make beautiful music together.

Best Sound Mixing: Team USA at the Solheim Cup

The cacophony of whining and complaining became deafening about everything – from the Rules to the time of day to the sun coming up in the east – earned the team a special award for their remake of "The Ugly American." Congratulations to Team Europe for exuding grace, class, and sportsmanship from start to victorious end. Their collective behavior earns them a nod for Best Silent Feature.

Best Animated Short Film: "Dufnering"

Actually, it was more like un-animated. And the comedy hit of the season. Lead actor Jason Dufner also earned a nomination for best supporting actor following his heart-felt (butt-felt?) embrace of his wife's rear projection at Oak Hill in the wake of his PGA Championship victory. (Yes Jason, they like you. They really like you. Her, too!)

Best Adapted Screenplay: The Rules of Golf

Get me rewrite! The Rules of Golf were in the news more this year than any time in recent memory. From armchair analysts calling into the networks, to balls at rest moved, to 14-year-old Guan Tianlang being indoctrinated into the big leagues the hard way, even a couple of DQs thrown in for good measure, The Rules of Golf made headlines right to year's end when the USGA and the R&A announced a whopping 87 changes to this venerable book. A Best Editing nomination is in the bag!

Best Adapted Screenplay: Fox Sports

This award is being given in expectation that beginning in 2015 the golf



audience will be treated to either a masterpiece or a mess when Fox takes on the U.S. Open. The hope is that future Opens will be more "That's Entertainment" and less "Apocalypse Now." Maybe they'll try to illuminate the golf ball as they did the puck in hockey a few years back. For a billion dollars plus, they've got to come up with something.

And now, the big winners:

Best Director: Ted Bishop, President, PGA of America

Considering the other "directors" he was up against, this award was a slam dunk for Bishop for his staunch defense of his constituents—PGA professionals—and for taking a firm stance against the anchoring ban proposed by USGA and R&A.

Best Actress in a Leading Role: Inbee Park

She put on a great show in nearly every performance. Too bad no one came to the theaters to watch.

Best Actor in a Leading Role:

Phil Mickelson

Tiger Woods may be the Meryl Streep of this category (nominations nearly every year, occasional victories), but how could I not bestow the best actor award on Phil for his overseas heroics at the Scottish Open followed the next week at the British. His historic Sunday at Muirfield, with full family in tow, was easily the most memorable moment of 2013 for Phil and golf fans everywhere. And knowing Phil, his acceptance speech is still going on. **GCI**

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Supers *in the* spotlight

When the situation calls to engage the general public, a stand-out superintendent makes all the difference as the game's representative.

by Trent Bouts

At 6'3", dark-haired and with a jaw line as rigid as rebar, Darren Davis could be the next James Bond if he wasn't so happy growing grass instead. Those looks may be a factor in why Davis, golf course superintendent at Olde Florida Golf Club in Naples, Fla., is one of a handful of superintendents in the country whose profile extends beyond the far side of the driving range.

Last year, a poll by another magazine declared him among "the most famous living superintendents" in the country. His face and words have appeared in print and on screen for more than 20 years in outlets ranging from his local chapter magazine to the Golf Channel. Also in 2012, the same year he was elected to the board of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, this magazine, Golf Course Industry, gave him the Kaminski award for outstanding leadership in social media.

"He has a presence about him, definitely," explains Jeff Bollig, who spent nearly 20 years as GCSAA's senior communications director. He left GCSAA in November.

But for an inch or two, the same could be said of Bob Farren, CGCS from Pinehurst Resort in Pinehurst, NC who also made that list of the most famous. As one of the public faces of the golf course story for enormously successful U.S. Open Championships at No. 2 in 1999 and 2005, Farren saw the kind of ink never experienced by the previous generation. Never experienced, perhaps, but it's not like it was never imagined.

On the contrary, superintendents spending time in the spotlight was very much the vision of leaders like Randy Nichols, CGCS who helped steer GCSAA and, by extension, the profession it serves, into a new era while president in 1993. That impetus to raise the profile and improve the image of the golf course superintendent was central to the roles occupied first by Pat Jones, now editor of GCI, and until November by Bollig.

The directive was for GCSAA's communications department to build platforms for superintendents to be seen and heard. The thinking was that if their work was better understood, it would also be better appreciated and, ultimately, better rewarded. But theories often require modification once they leave the lab for the real world and there were hurdles from the outset.

For one, superintendents operate mostly out of sight. Invariably, their office is



Olde Florida Golf Club's
Darren Davis

tucked deep on some pocket of the property where it's further by concealed behind fences or strategic plantings. They are busiest on the course when golfers are not, and, in fact, are often resented when exceptions occur. Further still, it didn't – and still doesn't – help that golf course stories can be difficult to sell to editors and tell to readers.

Most reporters don't know their dollar spot from a Dollar Tree. And even if they do, the pure turf stuff hardly makes for sexy copy. "I would tell any superintendent, 'If you even utter the words anthracnose or pythium, I'll shoot you!'" Bollig says. "You'll lose them (reporters)."

Then there's the question of the interviewees themselves.

Historically, and to this day, the vast majority of superintendents prefer to let their work do the talking. The very nature of that work reinforces a tendency towards caution and moderation. They are not encouraged to take risks, stick their necks out. The stakes are simply too high should things go wrong.

“You know what, everything I'm doing I'm doing because I enjoy it and I want to give back. Sure, it can be very comfortable behind the scenes. But if we want to get our profession out of the valley then we have to get out from behind our desks or we'll never get anywhere.”

– Darren Davis, Olde Florida Golf Club

Contrast that with the media's reputation for stirring the pot and you can see why the two groups are not exactly attracted to each other. No superintendents want to earn their facility a bad headline.

All of which goes to explain, or more accu-

rately, justify, Bollig's completely off-the-cuff and tongue-in-cheek response on the subject of generating publicity for golf course superintendents: "We want some attention, but we don't want it."

When he came on board at the national headquarters in Lawrence, Kan., the plaintive cry from the profession was constant: "People just don't understand and appreciate what we do!" It was true. Credit to the likes of Bollig and others stretching back 20 years now, including a string of volunteer leaders at GCSAA and paid administrators like Steve Mona, now at the World Golf Foundation, that the chorus of complaint has lost some volume.

Today the profession enjoys more time in the spotlight than ever before. Over the years GCSAA has invested big money buying airtime and column-inches. But it has earned plenty more by massaging relationships. As Bollig reflects, "What price tag do you put on a 45-second discussion about GCSAA and its members by David Feherty during the Sun-

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day afternoon telecast of the Masters?" The upshot, generally speaking, is that today's golfer has a far more sophisticated view of the golf course superintendent.

Whether that progress has fully delivered on the original premise is up for debate. GC-SAA's salary surveys might suggest so. But any picture has been muddied severely by events like the bursting of the tech bubble, 9/11 and, more recently, the recession. The accompanying contraction in golf and golf spending has few superintendents cheering about their professional outlook. Yet none are worse off because of the superintendent image campaign. They would be if Cad-dyshack was still the only thing out there.

For all of that, there is another significant aspect to the story that swirls about in the shadows outside the spotlight occupied by the likes of Davis, Farren and a small cadre of others. Recently, another of that band, Ken Mangum, CGCS, from Atlanta Athletic Club was inducted into the George Golf Course Superintendents Hall of Fame. He had al-



Pinehurst's Bob Farren

ready been on the cover of the association's magazine earlier in the year for winning GCSAA's Distinguished Service Award and was before that, in 2011, when hosting the PGA Championship.

"There was a point (around the PGA Championship) when I lost count of the number of magazine covers I was on," Mangum says. "And, you know, I did hear from some people

saying, 'I'm getting tired of seeing your face,' in a joking manner. I guess it's like complaints about your golf course. You don't get many directly but you hear about people saying things to each other."

Mangum is not alone in that experience. "Certainly, I've heard people criticize friends I have in the business who are the in the spotlight regularly," Davis says, in the same breath acknowledging the logical extension that others likely take similar pot shots at him.

Mark Esoda, CGCS, from Atlanta Country Club was inducted into the Georgia GCSA Hall of Fame at the same ceremony as Mangum. Perhaps in cart-before-the-horse fashion, he had already been inducted into the Georgia State Golf Hall of Fame two years earlier. His leadership on the frontlines of water issues and more has seen him quoted beneath many headlines and the winner of multiple awards.

He too has heard and felt the grumbling. "That sentiment is out there," he says. "There's been private stuff and stuff that has filtered back to people. It's not just in

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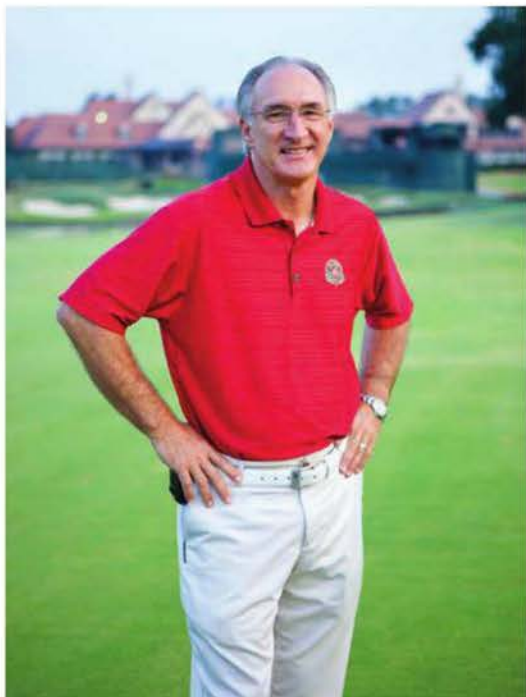
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our profession. It's in everything, this tendency to be resentful of success. I don't know why it is but I think it's out there. I would be less than honest if I said I wasn't aware of it."

Jeffrey Connell, now superintendent at Fort Jackson Golf Club in Columbia, S.C., was on his way to becoming president of the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association in 2010 when he became uncomfortable with the amount of publicity he was getting. The Carolinas GCSA was the first regional association in the country to employ a full-time communications director and as a rising star Connell was one focus of resultant media traction.

"It was all so new and I was getting some heat from other guys in the business who were tired of seeing my face," he recalls. "But then I realized I could refer media enquiries to some of those

same people. And that was always the goal, for everyone in the profession to benefit because it was finally a superintendent, not the golf pro, talking about the golf course."

"Not everybody sees you as a serial murderer," Esoda laughs. "Our families, our employers and the vast majority of our peers, they appreciate it. The few detractors out there are not going to get in the way of the good that comes out of it. Everybody in our industry has the obligation to step up and defend what we do. If you're not going to then you're doing yourself and the profession a disservice."

Mangum concurs. "I think we all have a responsibility to generate a positive impression," he says. "I guess some people could be jealous because I was on TV a lot during the PGA Championship but I felt like I had a

Atlanta Athletic Club's Ken Mangum



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