

Much like sweet tea and hospitality, the South has its own brand of disease pressure. While many northern superintendents will be dealing with ice and snow over the coming months, their southern counterparts will be keeping a close eye on their turf.

Mike Stevens, regional director of agronomy in the Southeast and Ohio Valley for Billy Casper Golf, says his company has 20 courses comprising the Southern Regional team, with turf variety consisting of Champion, TifEagle, TifDwarf, 328, paspalum and zoysia.

According to Stevens, the fall has been going smoothly, with one odd standout.

“This fall has been pretty slow with disease pressure with exception of our paspalum, which has seen a variety of known pathogens up to and including pink snow mold, believe it or not,” he says. “Our guys have been extremely proactive with their cultural practices and focused on basic plant health throughout the summer. With record rainfalls over the spring and mid-summer, they’ve worked hard to keep the canopy open to encourage the necessary gas exchange needed to survive such saturated conditions.

“Consequently, more aerifications and similar cultural practices have been taking place than in normal summers, leading to healthier stands of turf heading into fall, and less need to rely on

chemical means of control,” Stevens adds. “There have been the routine cases of dollar spot and brown patch that you’d expect to see during such expansive times of rain, but overall, it’s been a relatively quiet season.”

In the case of the paspalum greens, the BCG team has been on an extensive recovery grow-in plan on a new property that brought the company on board.

“The plant, being so succulent from the increased levels of fertility, has been more susceptible to diseases during extended periods of rain,” Stevens says. “We’ve monitored conditions to look for times conducive to disease activity and treat preventively according to forecasts, which, unfortunately in Florida and the Southeast, can change at a moment’s notice. In those cases, when disease does break through, tissue samples are sent for testing to verify what we’re seeing and treatment is made accordingly.

“Staying in line with Florida’s BMPs [Best Management Practices] and proper turf management, fungicide class and mode of action are kept in mind and included into a rotation to help avoid potential resistance buildup,” he added. “Systemic strobilurin-based fungicide made up a good base of many of our applications this summer and fall, in combination with a good contact chlorothalonil or mancozeb base.”

The BCG superintendents have seen good control during

“We have been seeing our normal disease pressure increased this fall, **thanks to the tropical weather** we have experienced thus far, from the usual suspects: Curvularia, leaf spot, fairy ring, algae and dollar spot.”

– Jay Abbott, ClubCorp



There have been the routine cases of dollar spot and brown patch that you’d expect to see as a result of such expansive times of rain.

times of application this fall, Stevens says, speculating the quality of products in the market today played a large part, as well as the company’s continuous effort to improve and reduce its overall environmental footprint across the board.

“We’ve become less chemical dependent through our operations, so when applications are made, the response is greater due to the lesser amounts of resistance existing in the field,” he says.

Jay Abbott, ClubCorp’s regional director of agronomy for Southeast Texas, credits Mother Nature for upping the workload for his superintendents.

“We have been seeing our normal disease pressure increased this fall, thanks to the tropical weather we have experienced thus far, from the usual suspects: Curvularia, leaf spot, fairy ring, algae and dollar spot,” Abbott says.

ClubCorp’s southern superintendents, spread out among 47 clubs between Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and Texas, have used chemical applications where needed and cultural practices on others.

“We have some very strong,

experienced and knowledgeable superintendents who do a great job,” Abbott says of the group’s success in battling turf disease pressure.

Brent McBrayer, CGCS, director of grounds maintenance at Pearl River Resort’s Dancing Rabbit Golf Club in Choctaw, Miss., has been seeing fairy ring and zoysia patch in the fairways as a result of wet conditions over the summer. They’ve also seen some brown patch in the Bermudagrass.

“Pro Star has been applied to some of the worst areas, but costs prohibit our ability to treat all affected areas with this product,” McBrayer says. “We are beginning to utilize Torque and Affirm to treat the rest of the affected areas.

“We have seen some success with all of the products, but the weather has continued to be conducive to the development of disease,” he adds.

Over the coming winter months, McBrayer and his team will keep an eye out for dollar spot on the bent greens and hope that spring dead spot is kept in check in the Bermudagrass.

“We will continue preventive applications with various con-

BUG ALERT

Unfortunately, turf diseases aren't the only challenges facing southern superintendents. Bugs – large and small, seen and unseen – can cause potentially damaging affects to golf courses.

Brent McBrayer, CGCS, director of grounds maintenance at Dancing Rabbit Golf Club in Choctaw, Miss., offered a list of the top five offenders his colleagues should prep for in 2014, based upon what he's seeing at Pearl River Resort:

- Grubs
- Cutworms
- Fire ants
- Mole crickets
- Army worms

Jay Abbott, ClubCorp's Regional Director of Agronomy for Southeast Texas, agrees with mole crickets, grubs, army worms and cutworms, but also adds earwigs and pine bark beetles to the list of possible bug offenders in 2014.

Mike Stevens, Regional Director of Agronomy in the Southeast and Ohio Valley for Billy Casper Golf, narrowed it down to the top three ... if you include the nematode as a bug:

- Nematodes
- Mole crickets
- Army worms

"You could include web worms and fire ants in there to round out the top five, but with the increases in control measures out there for those two, there really isn't the concern in the field that there was, even five years ago," he says. "There are discussions about new nematode suppression coming into the market in 2014, but until that happens, there really isn't an inexpensive option to deal with them."



Two top turf pests – mole crickets and army cutworms.

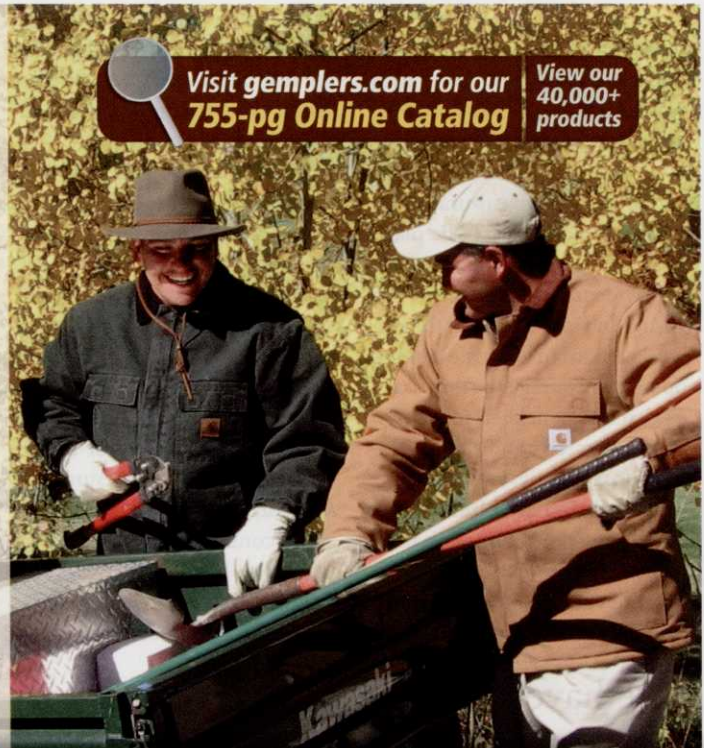
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tact and systemic fungicides as long as conditions are favorable, and monitor fertilizer applications on the bentgrass," he says. "We are applying Rubigan to the Bermudagrass greens and select areas in the Bermudagrass fairways and roughs at the moment to lessen the impact of spring dead spot. I'm really going to miss being able to use Rubigan."

Abbott's team will keep their eyes on leaf spot, fusarium and spring dead spot throughout the winter. At clubs where they've historically had issues, superintendents will spray a preventative fungicide program, while clubs without a history of issues will treat curatively.

If another "extremely mild" winter unfolds, as it has the last two years, Stevens' superintendents will know what's ahead

of them.

"A stronger strain of leaf spot has been the most widespread disease across the board over the past two seasons, causing the most damage, so we'll look to stay ahead of the curve this year, monitoring weather trends and watching for key indicators, especially as we approach mid to late December," Stevens says.

He stresses that the best treatment is, and always will be, a healthy and strong turfgrass plant.

"Focus will be to establish the strongest coverage of turf as we head into our winter season, ensuring our soil and tissue tests are producing results necessary to fend off the ever-present pathogens that exist in the field, waiting to attack when conditions are conducive," Stevens



Disease pressure hasn't been an issue this fall with the exception of paspalum, which has seen pathogens, including pink snow mold.

says. "If breakthrough does occur, our treatment will be based on proper disease identification, both by our agronomic team and our national lab partners. There are many lines of products to choose from in the market today, but in a case of basic leaf spot,

we'd likely move toward an application of Chlorothalonil to control any activity."

It's impossible to say if spring 2014 will look anything like spring 2013, but it can't hurt

(DISEASE continues on page 52)


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Tim Moraghan, principal, ASPIRE Golf [tmoraghan@aspire-golf.com]. Follow Tim's blog, Golf Course Confidential at www.aspire-golf.com/buzz.html or on Twitter @TimMoraghan

A LETTER TO MEMBERS

Getting them to realize how hard it is to keep a course both playable and enjoyable.

I write this column every month with you, the superintendent, in mind. I try to make your life easier, more interesting, educational, and just plain fun. Your comments keep me going and give me ideas for future subjects. But this month's column isn't intended for you but for the people you serve, the golfers who enjoy the fruits of your labors, and address some of their concerns and complaints about maintenance.

It's obvious no one is having success getting through to real golfers about how hard it is to keep a course both playable and enjoyable. Our national organizations aren't doing enough, and according to many of you, your clubs aren't either. So let me try. Feel free to cut out the letter below and post it in the locker room or somewhere else you think it will do the most good.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Check out this issue's app edition and/or online edition for a downloadable and printable PDF of Tim's letter.

Dear Golfer:

On behalf of superintendents everywhere, I hope you have a great round today. There's no better game in the world than golf and nowhere better to have fun and challenge yourself than on a golf course.

However, when you're out there, I hope you'll notice the conditions and think about what went into maintaining the course you are lucky enough to be playing.

The Golf Course Superintendent at your facility is a highly trained and educated professional whose job is to take care of your club's most precious asset. No one cares more about the course conditions and maintenance than you

GCS. However, in the current economic climate – and this is true wherever you're reading this – it is very difficult to provide quality playing conditions when dealing with reduced staffing, old equipment, cost cutting and small budgets.

Add to that list one more item: Complaining from the members/golfers like you.

As a club member or fee-paying guest, you are entitled to complain about poor conditions or problems on the course. However, it never fails to amaze me how people who are otherwise successful and astute in their own businesses can become so emotional and irrational about an area in which they have very little knowledge.

Just because you have a backyard or a garden does not make you qualified to be a golf course superintendent. GCSs have spent years in school and on the job learning and honing their craft. They are experts in chemistry, biology, agronomy, turf science, entomology, tree management and much, much more.

Please do not judge a golf course simply by how "pretty" you think it is. Making a course pretty also can make it unhealthy. You want a course to be playable for as many different types of golfers as possible as well as attractive.

The greatest cause of harm to a golf course isn't weather or weeds or bugs. It's golfers, particularly those who don't do the little things – rake bunkers, fix ball marks, repair divots, drive on cart paths, pick up garbage (like broken tees) – that are vital to the course's health.

What's that old line from the 1960s? If you aren't part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

Here are a few other things you might not know. Don't jump to conclusions if you see an irrigation system running during or soon after a rainstorm. Some courses are required to dump effluent

water periodically to meet environmental regulations. Irrigation systems need to be checked regularly to monitor sprinkler heads and throw patterns. Perhaps your superintendent is irrigating new sod or seed, or watering in new chemical applications.

Speaking of rain, have you ever wondered what happens to grass after a downpour? Before complaining that the rough is too long, consider the damage a two-ton piece of equipment would do to soggy soil and turfgrass.

If you spot unraked footprints in a bunker, don't assume someone on the grounds crew put them there. Chances are it was another golfer who was too lazy to clean up after himself. And speaking of bunkers, don't complain about their slopes breaking down if you and your buddies walk up and down them to get in and out of the sand. Walk in and out at the lowest, flattest point and the bunkers will stay in better shape longer.

Don't get me started on greens. Yes, they have to be aerified (otherwise they'll decline). Someone isn't going to like their speed, but the course has to be set up for the greatest good, not the small percentage of players who really are good – or think they are. Furthermore, green speed changes every hour based on weather, traffic, environment and the time of year. Yes, hole positions must move every day or else one area of the green will get too much traffic and suffer.

And yes, ball marks really do damage greens and are all golfers' responsibility to repair. Particularly the golfers who made them.

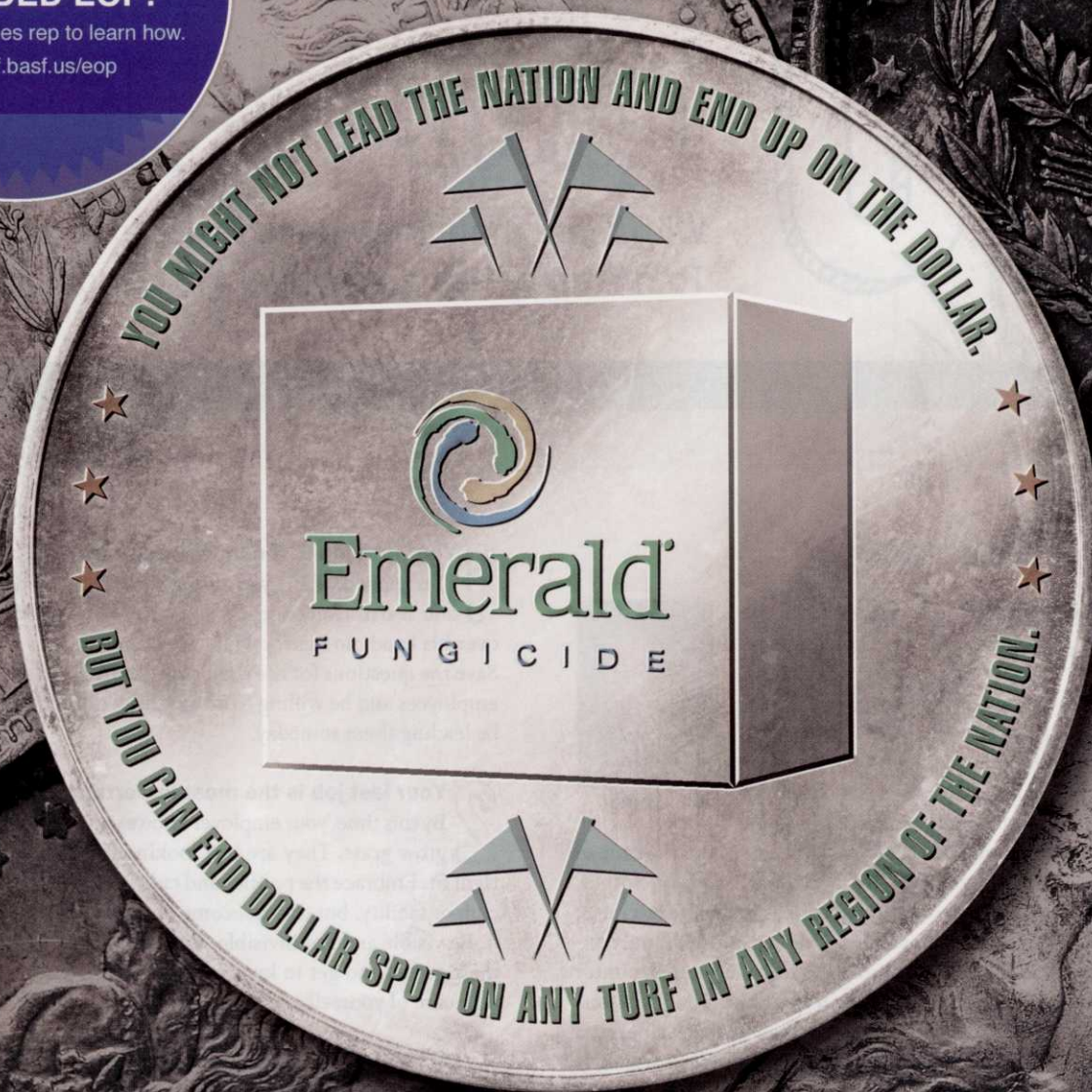
As for the weather? It's not an excuse, it's a fact.

I'm not saying golfers sometimes don't have the right, even the obligation, to complain about course conditions.

(MORAGHAN continues on page 56)

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THINGS I LEARNED

With more than three decades of experience, Tom Werner has a wealth of life lessons to offer.

by Tom Werner, CGCS

Choosing the right career is daunting to say the least. Try doing this in an era when technology as we know it today was pure fantasy. Some of us were fortunate to get an opportunity to do what they enjoyed at an early age. For others, it may have taken them somewhere else at first until it became clear. My opportunity came at a time of somewhat innocence, the 70s. Disco music, crazy clothes, post-Vietnam and Nixon. High gas prices, high interest rates, and lots of growth in the game of golf: a game my family enjoyed and still does. My brothers and I worked at the country club we came to know as home in Houston. The place was known as El Dorado Golf Club back then and the super was Gary Luscombe, a K-State grad. The property still exists and is now the Redstone member's course. Lots of houses nowadays, but back then it was woods so thick you couldn't see your way through if you happened to stray from the fairway, which happened to me often.

Gary was great to work for and taught us a lot, especially if you worked hard. One day I asked him about career opportunities, and he suggested a few places and Texas A&M was my next stop. I never had any trouble finding a job when I came back home for the summer and even worked a little bit while a student at the research plots under Dr. James Beard, our turfgrass professor.

College was great, but the real world beckoned in 1980 when I graduated and got married. I began to realize I did not know much of anything, but was willing to learn. That is why I came up with the top 10 things they do not teach you in college or out in the field, because quite frankly, everyone's situation is different and the circumstances change over time. The person who writes this 100 years from now may use some of the same anecdotes, but I hope they learned it better than I.



Tom Werner

1 Your first job is the most important

This applied when I was an assistant. Work hard, listen, and learn. Don't second guess the boss and don't go over his head, no matter what the circumstances may be. Save the questions for the right time. Learn from the other employees and be willing to do anything they do. You will be leading them someday.

2 Your last job is the most important

By this time, your employer knows you can grow grass. They are just looking for the right fit. Embrace the politics and culture of the club or facility, but don't become engrossed in it. Be visible and not invisible. Embrace the members and their guests and get to know them. Lead by example and take care of yourself and your employees.

3 Don't be afraid to admit you were wrong

When something does not work out, don't blame others or technology. Things happen and don't experiment at the risk of losing your job. Give praise to your subordinates and accept blame with humility and do it quick!

4 Surround yourself with good people

Sure, there will be some bad apples, but cull the herd and weed out the undesirables. You are only doing yourself and them a favor. You cannot make everyone happy. Train your replacement and cross train others. No one enjoys doing the same thing over and over.

5 Get involved

Whether it is with your local chapter, your community, your church, or your children's activities. Have a life outside of work and make friends outside the industry. Take time to make time! Network with your old classmates, fellow professionals and friends.



D AS A SUPERINTENDENT



6 Don't think you have all of the answers

You don't know it all. Be humble and kind, but not passive and weak. Be firm, but fair. Be friendly, but not friends (especially with fellow employees). Continue your learning by being involved and search for the answers. Try new methods and technology when the old fails. Don't be afraid and at the same time be cautious. Do your homework!



7 Embrace technology; use it to your advantage

There are a lot of gadgets, gizmos, and snake oils out there, so don't be taken in by the glitzy sales pitch or suspect testimonials. Just because the other person claims (or the sales rep claims) they have been successful does not mean you will be successful. University research is still the best. Apply it to your application.

8 Play golf and enjoy the game

Respects the rules and history of the game. You don't have to be good and others will perceive you are trying, especially the members and golfers at your facility. Play golf with the members and management team. Keep it fun and if you are competitive, be careful.

9 Learn how to deal with Mother Nature and human nature

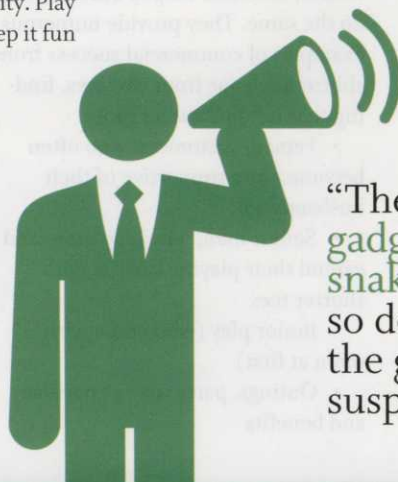
Remember, they don't always get along and there is nothing you can do about the former. The latter is hard to master, but try to understand others whether it is the members or fellow employees. Imagine yourself in their situation and don't overdo it. Keep it simple and sensible when it comes to your speech. Don't bake the cake, just serve it!

10 Know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em

If you aren't part of the solution, maybe you are part of the problem. If the situation is bad, get out. If the situation is good, stay. The grass is not always as green on the other side of the fence as it may appear. Don't give up and show that you don't care. Don't complain and voice your opinion to others. Agree to disagree, but never argue or get mad. It only shows you are weak and lack self-control. Carry yourself about professional and look and act the part. When you do part company, make sure you thank your employer for the opportunity no matter what the circumstances. Look at change positively and keep in mind that it is better to build a bridge than to burn it. There are good jobs out there and sometimes it may require a lateral move or career change. Good luck and enjoy the ride! **GC**



Tom Werner, CGCS, has spent 33 years in turf, 30 of them as a superintendent in Texas and Florida. He works in turf equipment sales and resides in Katy, Texas.



“There are a lot of gadgets, gizmos, and snake oils out there, so don't be taken in by the glitzy sales pitch or suspect testimonials.”



Jeffrey D. Brauer is a veteran golf course architect responsible for more than 50 new courses and more than 100 renovations. A member and past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, he is president of Jeffrey D. Brauer/GolfScapes in Arlington, Texas. Reach him at jeff@jeffreydbrauer.com.

ONCE MORE ON FORWARD TEES

Because it's just that important.

At a recent golf conference, I again presented the case for generally shorter forward tees. It seemed more industry people attended and at least nodded in agreement. That, of course, is no guarantee they will rush home and rework their courses.

One of the most interesting things I heard was a GM relating that "His job is to let our players have fun and prolong their playing careers." Perhaps Baby Boomers are finally abandoning our quest for "eternal youth" and admitting we are getting older. As golf's biggest demographic, it may spur us to finally design courses for the way golf is really played (The second most interesting thing was a consensus that continuous putting is the biggest key to increasing speed of play).

In the last 30 years of design, there was too much concern over "how Tour Pros would play this" even though chances of hosting any kind of tournament were about equal to the chance of an alien landing. At the same time, there was far too little concern for whether seniors or females could carry a creek, had an awkward angle or were even having fun on the golf course. In other words, we spent three decades designing for all the wrong creatures.

I was made aware of designing for all players early. My mentors designed mostly public courses, and actually sent me out to spend a day measuring where average golfers, seniors, and women actually hit their tee shots. (About 225, 190 and 140 yards respectively back then, and no different today, despite the distance gains at the top).

As ASGCA president in 1995, Alice Dye, an early forward-tee proponent, sought me out to discuss an article I had penned for *Golf for Women* magazine. I had written that I design

most par 4s so a woman's third shot was equivalent to an average man's typical approach shot, i.e., both being about 7 irons.

She asked one simple question – Why? I asked one, too. Why couldn't I answer?

It just seemed too difficult to design for 140 to 300 yard tee shots. Maybe so, but why favor the 1 percent who hit it 300 yards? Why ignore the 20 percent of senior golfers and 4-20 percent female players? Pure math compels us to design for those who actually play the course the most.

Setting tees 25-30 yards shorter than the previous tee gets all tee shots to the same landing area, with an economically efficient single set of fairway bunkering, etc. However, leaving both back and forward tee players with the same distance to the green creates vastly different golf experiences and certainly isn't equal.

Old paradigm – determine forward tees with 25-30 yard tee splits.

New paradigm – determine forward tees by a percentage of hole length. Front tees should be about 48 percent of back tees, based on 140 to 290 yard tee shots.

My co-presenter was Arthur Little, who with his wife Jan Leeming, had added shorter tees at their own golf course, and later helped other courses do the same. They provide numerous examples of commercial success from shortening your front two tees, finding that it helps attract more:

- Female customers, who often become more supportive of their husbands golf
- Senior men, who play more and extend their playing careers with shorter tees
- Junior play (who come with mom at first)
- Outings, particularly charities and benefits

- Women feel they are a contributing and valuable team member

- Men actively recruit women to play on their teams (A "D" player who can reach greens is really valuable!)

Bringing in all these less-traditional golfers increased revenue through a larger and more durable customer base. Some revenue increase was a result of faster play because with properly positioned forward tees, not only are many shots eliminated, but back tee players don't have to wait as long for players ahead to be out of range. Lastly, the perception of women as slow players started to disappear!

I asked Arthur and Jan how much marketing this took. As it turns out, women share their feelings more than men (who knew?) and word-of-mouth was about all it took to bring a new customer base to these golf courses.

Adding forward tees is usually easy and not terribly expensive to do. On most holes, I can add one back tee (for those "must have 7,000 yard holdouts" and two forward tees, as per the example below. The middle two tees often remain untouched, while we convert the former red tees (often over 5,000 yards, rather than at a more desirable sub-4,400 yards) to white, which is just about right. (These are shown just right of the power orange line depicting power lines). Then, we add the new red tee well up the fairway at the proper yardage.

We have found that it's easier to convince golfers if we look at individual holes (especially those with forced carries, or long par 4s that are just out of reach) rather than tell them up front we are wholesale shortening the course. There is still some male ego and female aversion to "condescending attitude." However, they usually adjust when shown the benefits on a hole-by-hole basis. **GCI**



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Bob Lohmann makes a close examination of Basamid, one of golf's few future fumigation options.

As we've all been waiting for the clock to run out on methyl bromide use, it's surprising to see just how few fumigation options have surfaced to fill that pending void.

We had the opportunity this summer to use one of those options, Basamid, as part of a summer greens renovation project at Brown County Golf Course in Oneida, Wis., up near Green Bay. It went very well, so I wanted to share our experience, and that of Brown County GC's superintendent Scott Anthes, as one window on the future.

There were two main factors that pointed us toward using the Basamid fumigation method at Brown County GC:

- Anthes has used Basamid before, to fumigate a chipping green;
- This summer project was approved very quickly (the way so many renovations are these days – when the money is made avail-

able) and we had very limited time to get all 18 greens ready, fumigate with MB, get seed in the ground, and achieve meaningful growth before the fall.

Instead, we at Lohmann Golf Designs worked with the contractor, Janesville, Wisconsin-based Links Land, LLC, to prepare a few greens at a time, after which Anthes and his crew would come in and fumigate. Basically, Anthes followed Links Land around the golf course as we went along.

"They would strip a green and the surrounds of all sod," Anthes recalls, "and then they'd grade them, eliminating all the sand dams at the edges. Then they came in and put in the slit drainage. Once the slit drainage was done, we fumigated to be sure we got all the *Poa* seed. After 5 days of fumigation, we aerified to let the gas escape. Then we came back and fine graded a bit, resodded the surrounds and seeded the greens with Luminary bentgrass."

These greens were interesting. They were old push-up jobs and drained very poorly. Indeed, that poor drainage and the infestation of *Poa*, which led to severe winter kill this past year (and several years prior), were two primary reasons for the renovation.

But this poor drainage was one of the reasons Basamid worked well on this job. Basamid is a granular product that emits a gas – the fumigant – when it comes into contact with water. That gas can move quite quickly through a green's drainage network. In fact, I'm not sure the deployment of Basamid is a very good idea on greens that drain too well, i.e. those modern, USGA-spec green profiles. If you're dealing with old push-up greens where you're sure there is little to no drain tile in them, it's a solid option.

Here's a good capsule of what to do and expect:

- Day 1, put the Basamid down and water heavily (avoid windy days, on account of its fine, granular nature; mornings make sense).
- Day 2, water less heavily.
- Day 3, water three times – morning, noon and night.