

Let's be honest about something — my job does not suck. As publisher and editor of a golf magazine, I'm frequently privileged to visit some excellent facilities. I like to tell people that I get paid to play bad golf at the best courses in the world. (My buddies are often tempted to smack me upside the head when I say this.)

But as great as my perks might be, I have a dirty little secret: I like golf, but I *love* fishing.

Sorry if it sounds traitorous, but given a choice between the links or the lake, I'll drop my clubs and grab my rods in a heartbeat. Every spring, I wait for the new Bass Pro Shops catalog with the impatience of a kid on Christmas Eve. I have been known to actually kiss a nice fish (no tongue, though) before I toss it back. I carry around an old fishing license autographed by Jimmy Houston. Scary, huh?

I was in Alabama recently for a visit to the Pursell Technologies facility. (Pursell regularly brings in groups of superintendents and media types. The tour is fascinating and the hospitality is great.) I was eager to play golf on one of the best of the nearby RTJ Trail courses until my host, Dr. Jeff Higgins, casually mentioned that the Pursell family has a couple of "pretty fair" bass lakes on its property.

The next morning, I reeled in a "pretty fair" largemouth that weighed close to 10 pounds. For a kid from Kansas, it was bass nirvana.

We played golf later and I probably lost a half-dozen balls and busted 100, but I couldn't have cared less. I walked on air for a couple of weeks and showed everybody my fish pictures like a proud new daddy.

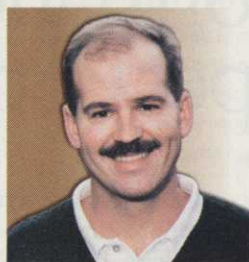
Is there a point to this rambling fish story? Nope, just wanted to brag about my catch.

But seriously folks, the point is that life in the golf course business is a lot like fishing. It can be difficult, frustrating, dirty and downright humbling at times. Weather can be your best friend or your worst enemy. Golfers, like fish, sometimes just don't care — no matter how well you present the bait.

But despite that, in both fishing and golf course management, the payoff can be incredible. Over the years, I've asked hundreds of superintendents why they put up with the long hours,

I Have a Dirty Little Secret

BY PAT JONES



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lack of recognition and scant job security. For many, the answer was, "From the first day I saw the sun rise over a dew-covered course, I was hooked."

Like a 10-pound bass.

Cheers and jeers

Cheers to Allen James and his team at Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment. At an August House of Representatives hearing on FQPA, James and others won over a number of Democratic congressmen who were appalled by EPA's seeming disregard for the original intent of the law. Thanks to RISE and others, FQPA reform bills in both the House and the Senate continue to gain bipartisan support.

Jeers to local anti-pesticide activists to continue to use fear recklessly to ban the use of pesticides. The latest effort in Seattle would prohibit municipal courses from using most products. James recently described the increase in local activism as "death by a thousand tiny cuts."

Jeers to Bill "Mulligan" Clinton who reportedly gives himself frequent "presidential pardons" after errant shots and then fails to include them on his scorecard. Lying to Congress and the American people is one thing, but lying on your scorecard ... jeesh!

Cheers to the superintendent we heard about who had sunk a Stimpmeter in a bucket filled with about 2 feet of concrete. Apparently, it's his personal tribute to the Excalibur story in the King Arthur tales. But in his version of the legend, only a green chairman who is true of heart and who faithfully approves all budget requests can pull the stimp from the stone.

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