

For most superintendents outside of the Sun Belt, Labor Day is like the finish line in a marathon course lined with land mines. The end of the hellicious summer of 2001 (which seemed to instantly arrive after a winter that just wouldn't quit) seems like a good time to reflect on the best and worst of our version of the silly season.

Best recovery from a near-death experience: Winterkill hit many in the Northeast, but nowhere did it hit harder than Salem CC in Massachusetts, site of the U.S. Senior Open. Kip Tyler, his crew and the USGA Green Section brought the course back from death's door in a matter of two months. Nice work, guys.

Best trend of the summer: Thanks largely to the efforts of local superintendents and the GCSAA, golf media in the Northeast were actively supportive of superintendents whose courses were hit by winterkill. Maybe some of these local scribes are finally starting to get it.

Best place to hang out for an architecture junkie: The ASGCA's Donald Ross Banquet, where you can rub elbows and talk shop with the world's finest designers — and then watch them sheepishly edge over to the head table to get autographs from Jack and Arnie.

Worst pest of the summer: This is a tie between the armyworm, which unexpectedly ravaged many courses in the North, and that nasty little woman who hosts "Weakest Link."

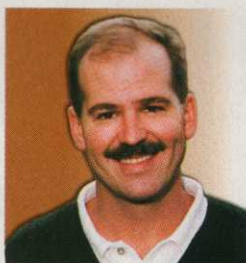
Worst development trend: Some new courses we visited that were opened WAAAAAY too early under terrible agronomic circumstances. Developers are in such a huge hurry to cut cups and start the cash flow that basic grow-in practices are ignored. My message to the money men: A little patience will pay off within a year or two.

One notable exception to the sod-it-and-sell-it phenomenon: David Pursell of PTI, who broke ground on his FarmLinks course in Alabama early this summer. The golf caps given to guests at the event had "Est. 2003" embroidered on the back.

Best round of golf I didn't play: I was merely a spectator at the pro/am honoring superintendents at the John Deere Classic in July. But I nonetheless sweated along with the superinten-

Summertime's Best and Worst

BY PAT JONES



JOHN DEERE

DESERVES CREDIT
FOR TURNING THE
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dents, employers, Tour players and Deere staff who endured a 120-degree heat index to play TPC at Deere Run the Monday before the Classic. And you know what? Despite being baked to medium well, these guys absolutely loved the course and the experience.

Best of all, Big Green has turned the Classic into an unparalleled public showcase for superintendents. At Deere's urging, CBS and the rest of the media generated more awareness of superintendents and maintenance in one week than the rest of the Tour events do in the entire year.

Worst round of golf I did play: I dropped into a well-promoted daily fee in the Midwest for a quick 18 with a friend. After we paid and we're heading out of the pro shop, I gave my card to the assistant pro behind the desk and said, "Please give my regards to your superintendent." He said, "Oh, we don't even have one. We just hire some college kids and some (insert Hispanic ethnic slur here) and the place looks just fine."

After about six holes of hitting balls off dirt and clover, we bagged it and went to a real golf course with a real superintendent.

Worst reporting gaffe of the summer: In my August column, I suggested GCSAA would try to solicit funds from industry companies for its planned new political-action committee. Bzzzzz! Wrong! PACs can only take contributions from individuals. Companies usually can't contribute ... so they'll be soliciting you instead.

Worst proofreading gaffe of the summer: Misspelling Ken Mangum's name in August's Hole of the Month. Doh! Sorry Ken.

Best final words about this summer: It's over.

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