

# Off The Fringe

## Business briefs

### Golfers spending, NGF says

A new National Golf Foundation (NGF) report signals that the downturn in the economy and the cratering stock market hasn't affected the way golf consumers spend their money.

The study, "The Spending Report: Sizing the Golf Consumer Marketplace," reports that consumer spending totaled more than \$23 billion in 2001, up 2.9 percent over the past two years.

Golfers spent \$26 billion on travel to play their favorite courses in 2001.

As a result of economic conditions of 2001, the NGF continues to monitor the spending habits of golfers in 2002, and will release a new report examining spending next April.

### Lesco selling plants

Lesco plans to sell its Novex plant in Disputanta, Va., and its blending plant in Stockton, Calif. The company said it wants to source Novex from the eventual buyer of the Virginia plant and the blended fertilizer for its West Coast sales facilities from retained Lesco blending facilities or the eventual buyer of the Stockton plant.

"Novex is an excellent product for golf course greens and tees," said Michael P. DiMino, Lesco's president and CEO. "However, the Novex plant capacity is far greater than we need for our customer demand. We are looking for a buyer who can supply Novex to us and then use the remaining capacity in markets that are not competitive with Lesco's U.S. golf and professional lawn care markets."

Lesco announced that sales for the second quarter, excluding some charges,

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## About That Fall Fungicide Application

IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE IT, KEEP IN MIND IT'S ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT APPLICATIONS OF THE YEAR

By Ed Vandenberg

**F**all fungicide applications are some of the most important applications of the year. They keep turf disease-free throughout the winter when colder weather in some regions makes applying chemicals nearly impossible. With winter weather and cool-season turf disease working together to damage a course, superintendents need to get the most out of their late-season turf management practices.

Snow-cover, high moisture and low temperatures will weaken turf, providing ideal conditions for the spread of turf disease. By the time weather improves, damage from disease outbreaks may be widespread.

Gray and pink snow mold are the most widespread of the cool-season diseases and are main contributors to winter turf injury. Heavy snow cover prior to turf hardening-off increases moisture in the soil, providing ideal conditions for snow mold development.

Pink snow mold will appear during cool, wet weather, with temperatures ranging from 30 degrees F to 60 degrees F. Snow cover is not required for its appearance, but it does provide favorable conditions for dis-



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**Snow molds are the most widespread diseases to afflict cool-season turf and are major contributors to winter turf injury.**

ease development. Pink snow mold produces small (less than 6 inches across), round spots on the turf. The pink tint that gives the disease its name is most noticeable during the early morning.

Gray snow mold is caused by two species of fungi that thrive when moisture is plentiful (particularly during prolonged periods of snow cover). The disease is particularly common after snowfall on unfrozen ground. Gray snow mold can create significant damage in locations where snow cover has lasted three months or more. Damaged turf will have a grayish-



white appearance with distinctive black sclerotia visible on vegetation after thawing.

Cool-season pythium will affect turf on multiple levels. The turf-quality effects of a pythium outbreak are visible longer than the aesthetic effects. On the surface, cool-season pythium outbreaks appear as small patches of water-soaked slimy grass that shrivel and fade from green to light brown.

Cool-season pythium root rot is difficult to recognize and often mistaken for other diseases. It causes stunted growth and severe rotting of turf roots. Turf exhibits slower, stunted growth and thinning, even after fungicide treatment.

Basal rot and foliar blight anthracnose thrive on weakened turf. Basal rot, the more prolific of the two, first appears in March, but is active through November on *Poa annua* and creeping bentgrass. First signs of infection include irregular patches of orange-to-yellowing turf (also known as "winter anthracnose"). Later, infected plants collapse, looking like bacterial wilt. Because basal rot is difficult to detect in early stages, turf will ultimately die once the disease is visible.

Harsh winter weather will often cause as much turf injury as will disease outbreaks. The overall turf quality decline caused by winter stresses — collectively known as winterkill — can be visible months after the arrival of warmer weather.

There are several cultural practices superintendents can adopt in autumn to prevent winter disease outbreaks. These practices include avoiding heavy nitrogen applications late in the season, mowing fairways late to reduce canopy buildup, improving drainage, increasing aeration and improving sunlight exposure where feasible.

Once winter has arrived, superintendents can continue to maintain their course to prevent the appearance of disease. Large drifts of snow can be avoided using snow fences and landscape plantings, and restricting walking and common snow sports on important turf areas can reduce compaction.

While these practices will reduce the chance of winter disease from appearing, the best measure a superintendent can take is to develop a preventative fungicide program on important turf areas, especially those that are susceptible to snow mold every year.

The window of opportunity to apply fungicides late in the season can be short, depending on the timing and severity of cooler weather. Therefore, fungicide applications need to perform multiple functions, providing control of winter disease while leaving turf better prepared for the winter weather as well as early spring play. This spectrum of control can be achieved by making applications of a combination of fungicide chemistries. Incorporating different chemistries into regular fungicide applications is necessary to reduce the risk of resistance.

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*Ed Vandenberg is a field development representative for Bayer Environmental Science-North America and works throughout the Midwest.*

## Quotable

**"I was born on a golf course, but the only opportunity I had to use that golf course was to ride a steel-wheel tractor while cutting the fairways when I was 6 years old. The tractor I drove had to be cranked [to be started]. I remember my father saying to me, 'Stay away from that crank, boy.' I said, 'Pap, let me crank that tractor.' And he said, 'You'll get knocked on your (@#\$)'"**

— Arnold Palmer, reminiscing about working with his father, who was superintendent of Latrobe (Pa.) CC

**"I can't believe we're still fighting this stuff — racism, gender equality or whatever. But that's life, I guess. It's not going to change overnight, but hopefully, in the coming years, it will change."**

— Juli Inkster, LPGA golfer and U.S. Open Champion (Associated Press)

**"It is really going to be beautiful. This is Elvis' dream ranch."**

— Pro golfer and Presley fan John Daly on his plans to build a King-themed resort with two golf courses in Memphis (Reuters)



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS



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increased 1.4 percent to \$166.5 million from \$164.1 million in 2001. Golf sales declined 4.3 percent.

"Second-quarter golf sales were disappointing, and there are no excuses," DiMino said. "We are changing the structure of the golf sales team, and we expect better results in the coming periods."

Lesco announced its third-quarter results in late October.

### **Billy Casper to manage Forest Preserve**

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Ill., owner of 10 golf courses and two driving ranges in the Chicago metropolitan area, has entered into a multiyear agreement with Billy Casper Golf of Vienna, Va., to manage its golf facilities.

BCG will provide turnkey-management services to the Forest Preserve District, including agronomy, beginning after the 2002 golf season.

### **Bush Hog, Great Bend expand**

Bush Hog and Great Bend recently opened a 400,000-square-foot plant expansion at Jonesborough, Tenn., to meet demand for their equipment. The facilities are designed to meet Bush Hog's and Great Bend's manufacturing needs for the next 10 years. Additional land has been set aside for future expansion.

# Leave Your Ego at the Front Gate

## BY DOING SO, YOU'LL RID YOURSELF OF A LOT OF STRESS

By Jim Black

**I** have some humble advice about this line of work that I would like to share, especially to assistants going after your first superintendent positions and students ready to take on the real work of a golf course. That advice is this:

Leave your ego at the front gate.

In my observation as a grunt, an assistant and a superintendent, I've noticed an amazing amount of golfers who assume they know my job better than I do. I didn't think about this angle going in and thought I could just grow the grass, mow the grass and everyone would be happy. Well, I can assure you that you won't be able to please everyone — no matter what you do. This is where the trouble starts.

Unfortunately, it's human nature to focus on the negative and overlook the positive. For example, you can have a day of 250 golfers traipsing around, stomping on, driving over and chunking out your turf. I'll take an unscientific guess that 90 percent of those golfers will have no contact with you; 5.4 percent will say the course looks great; you will smile and wave to 4 percent; and then the dreaded .6 percent (one or maybe two people) will have some sort of complaint, criticism or judgement about your hard work.

Now, I don't mean to be preaching to the choir, but bear with me a minute. Who do you listen to? I would venture a guess that while the 5.4 percent complimentary people are nice to listen to, the .6 percent will grate on your nerves. You may even lose sleep over whatever the complaint was.

You will wonder why this "thing" went wrong and who's to blame. If the



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## A Friend of the Earth Offers Educational Tips

You might think someone like Brent Blackwelder, president of Friends of the Earth, a national environmental organization dedicated to preserving the health and diversity of the planet for future generations, would be down on golf. But Blackwelder enjoys the game and can drive and putt with the best of them. "I've spent my whole life playing golf," he says.

Blackwelder also loves the earth, and believes golf and the environ-

ment can co-exist. At the fourth National Golf & Environment Summit held in Nebraska City, Neb., earlier this year, he offered these ideas for golf courses to educate players on the importance of the environment.

- Use yardage books to convey an environmental message.

- Use signs to educate. "Sometimes signs say to keep out of an area because it's environmental," Blackwelder says. "But the sign

doesn't tell why to keep out. That message can be illuminating."

- Explain the health and harm a course can do to water and wildlife in a golfer's guide.

- Use the media for coverage on what your course is doing to preserve the environment.

- Stage a golf-and-environment tournament to raise money for environmental improvements.

— Larry Aylward, Editor



criticism isn't put forth in a constructive way you will feel like you were attacked and will probably not like this person because you think he or she doesn't like you. And most of us would want to exact some sort of strange revenge to prove ourselves right and the other wrong to save our dignity.

Well, this is the ego talking, and it takes a lot of extra (wasted) effort to satisfy our egos' needs. It doesn't have to be this way, and I would like to offer up a new perspective for whomever is willing to listen.

First of all, consider yourself. Have you been doing your best? Remember that this is a highly visible customer-service position that you're in — you are there to serve the paying customer, no matter if you are at a public or private course. If you know in your heart that you've been doing your best, then rest assured that whatever that person's problem is, it's exactly that — his problem. Don't make it yours, too.

Secondly, consider the source. People are going to ask you questions and make complaints that seem utterly ridiculous. To them, though, they seem totally valid. You know why? Because they just don't know.

But instead of having contempt for them, try a little compassion. Gain a new perspective on the person with the question or complaint. The hardest part is to obtain that perspective in the moment you are talking to them.

What kind of golfer is he? Did he play poorly today? Did he have a bad fight with his spouse the night before? Did he lose the contract he was working on?

You see, even if someone comes in with a complaint about your work, it probably has absolutely nothing to do with you. You don't have to take it personally.

If you can learn to listen constructively, do the absolute best you can do with what you have to work with and leave your ego at the gate, you may be able to rid yourself of lots of unwanted (and unjustified) heartache and stress.

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*Jim Black is superintendent of Twin Shields GC in Dunkirk, Md.*

## Getting It Straight

*Golfdom* erred in its presentation of Stan Kinkead's comments in our October issue in the story "Rotary Club." The reporter accidentally reversed Kinkead's comments as well as a couple of numbers, which made him seem to be wholeheartedly endorsing rotary mowers over reel mowers.

The paragraph in question should have read:

"Reel mowers do take more time, money and energy to maintain than rotary mowers, but they last longer," says Stan Kinkead, president of National Mower Co. "Rotary mowers only last four to six years, where reel mowers last eight to 10 years."

*Golfdom* regrets the error.

## Don't Forget Your Pond's Aeration System This Winter

If your course features ponds and lakes with aeration systems and is based in a cold-weather state, you'll want to read these tips offered by Otterbine Barebo to remove and store your aerator safely for the winter.

If your course's aerator is an oil-cooled unit, subsurface unit or diffused air system, it can remain in the water during the cold season

(diffused air systems can only be kept in as long as there are no moving parts in the water). But if your course's aeration system is run by a water-cooled motor, it must be removed from the water and stored in an area where the temperature will remain above freezing. Freezing temperatures will cause the water inside the motor to expand and crush vital components. What's too cold? Otterbine Barebo offers a basic rule: If the water does not drop and remain below 30 degrees F, the unit can remain in the water.

Removal of a surface-aeration system is based on whether the unit is anchored to the bottom or moored to the pond's shoreline. If it's anchored, disconnect the anchoring lines from the unit and flip it upside down. At this point, either hoist it into the boat or tow it to

shore. If the system is moored, remove the mooring line on one side of the pond and then carefully tow the unit to shore. Anchoring the cable and mooring lines to a buoy is recommended for easy retrieval when it comes time to re-install it.

In both cases, once you have the unit on shore, remove the power cable and store it. For oil-cooled motors, simply store the unit indoors.

When the system is removed, a quick visual inspection should be performed. Glance over the float and spin the propeller to make sure the bearings are free.

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*Editor's note: This article was prepared by Emmaus, Pa.-based Otterbine Barebo.*



**When cold weather hits, it's time to store your aeration system.**





# Get a Grip

THERE'S SCIENCE BEHIND A HANDSHAKE.

HERE'S HOW TO DO IT WITH DIGNITY AND STYLE

By James E. Guyette

**A** handshake doesn't speak, but it says a lot of things nonverbally. On the golf course, a handshake can communicate key nonverbal messages that go far beyond the condition of a fairway. "It's a first impression, and it's hard to get around that," says Tom Kastler, superintendent at the Club at Runaway Bay in Runaway Bay, Texas.

For superintendents meeting potential new employees, an applicant with a wimpy handshake can be quickly squeezed out of the hiring process. Kastler has some gripes about the proper grip, and he offers up two rules of thumb for golf course greeting. "I don't like somebody who tries to crush all 20 bones in your hand, but I also don't like the 'wet paper towel' handshake," he says.

The four-fingered handshake is a particular peeve — an example of soggy salutation that Kastler considers "pretty wormy" in a business setting. "That wears me out," he says.

The experts agree. A study by psychologists at the University of Alabama has scientifically proven what most people already know: A firm handshake helps make a solid first impression for both men and women.

"A person's handshake is consistent over time and related to some aspect of his or her personality," according to William F. Chaplin, the study's lead author. "Those with a firm handshake were more extroverted and open to experience, and less neurotic and shy than those with a less firm or limp handshake." Chaplin adds that the measure of a handshake is its strength, vigor, eye contact and completeness of grip.

Not surprisingly, men typically have firmer handshakes than women — but women who shake with determination do have a hand up on those who don't.

"Women who are more liberal, intellectual and open to new experiences were found to have a firmer handshake and made a more favorable first impression than women who were less open and had a less firm handshake," Chaplin reports. "For men, the opposite was found. More open men had a slightly less firm handshake and made a somewhat poorer impression than less open men."

Thus for men, it's apparently best to be slightly less open during that debut handshake. It's all in the touch, according to Kastler, who also advises against the high five, low five or any other form of fancy fingerwork.

"If they start to move that direction, I just follow them. It's kind of like a dance," he says. "But most people will not do that at a job interview."

That's right. And make sure that it's your hand doing all the shaking. "Hugs and kisses are taboo in the

business arena," according to Etiquette International, a business manners consulting firm based in New York.

The company advises that for a good handshake:

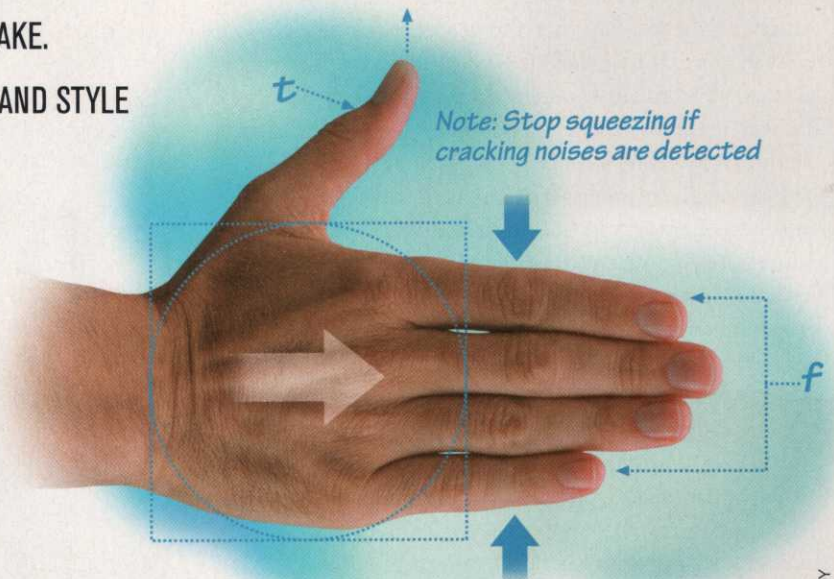
- Keep the fingers together with the thumb up and open.
- Slide your hand into the other person's so that each person's web of skin between thumb and forefingers touches the other's.
- Squeeze firmly.

A proper handshake, says Etiquette International, is firm, but not bone crushing; lasts about 3 seconds; and may be "pumped" once or twice from the elbow and then released after the shake, even if the introduction continues.

Oh yeah, if you suffer from clammy hands, the company suggests a form of Brut force: "Spray them with antiperspirant at least once a day." And carry your drink in your left hand.

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*Guyette is a free-lance writer from Cleveland.*



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