

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

Course revenues remain flat in 2002

It was another rough year for the golf industry in 2002, with rounds down and revenues remaining flat, according to the latest National Golf Foundation (NGF) study.

The findings, compiled in January from 2,191 golf facilities nationwide, indicated that rounds dropped 3 percent compared to 2001, and total revenues remained essentially flat, increasing only .9 percent.

"The decrease in rounds was expected," says NGF President Joe Beditz. "Lack of growth in the number of golfers continues to inhibit any material growth in rounds played or facility revenues, making facility owners and operators vulnerable to increased competition and the poor economy."

The NGF study defines rounds revenue as the sum of green fees, guest fees, golf car rentals, annual dues and trail fees.

USGA honors former agronomist

James M. Latham of Deltona, Fla., who was actively involved on the USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Committee from 1995-2002, received the organization's USGA's Piper and Oakley Award for his "meritorious service to the USGA Green Section and the game of golf by a volunteer."

Latham worked as USGA Green Section agronomist from 1956 through 1960, and from 1984 to 1994. In between, he worked for 25 years with the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission, helping to promote one of the nation's first businesses designed to recycle waste products into landscape fertilizers.

Talkin' turf disease at Bayer event

Forty university researchers and plant pathologists recently attended the 10th annual Turfgrass Disease Seminar, sponsored by

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Guarding Over Grubs

WEATHER PATTERNS LAST YEAR
WILL AFFECT GRUB
POPULATIONS THIS YEAR

By Larry Aylward, Editor

Grubs can be predictable. They often show up at the same location over and over. But they can also be as unpredictable from year to year as the Dow Jones Industrial Average is from day to day.

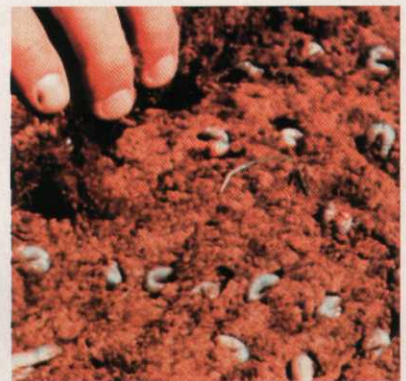
"It's funny how every year is different with grubs," says Chuck Silcox, Bayer Environmental Science's product development manager for insecticides in the turf and ornamental markets. "Every year [superintendents] deal with something new [from grubs]."

Grubs are high on superintendents' pest priority list.

"Grub control is probably second to crabgrass control in the minds of superintendents," says John Price, senior technical sales representative in the mid-American region for Dow AgroSciences.

Superintendents in the Midwest, East and parts of the South know the common turfgrass grubs as Japanese beetles, Asiatic garden beetles, European chafers, Green June beetles and Oriental beetles.

How pestering can the beetles be? Last year, Japanese beetle grubs appeared unexpectedly on several golf



Don't be in a hurry to treat for grubs without doing an adequate site survey.

courses in the late summer because of the drought. The female beetles delayed laying their eggs until they found moist turf to lay them, and the beetles found that moist turf on golf courses. "They laid their eggs as late as early September, and all of the sudden superintendents were dealing with a grub infestation they didn't typically have that time of year," Silcox says.

The drought, which affected about half the country last year, will have an impact on grub activity on golf courses throughout the nation this year, experts agree.

The wild card in all of this is how much superintendents irrigated their courses during the drought. If superintendents didn't irrigate their courses' fairways during the drought and let them go dormant, they might not have a problem with severe outbreaks. But superintendents who did irrigate may experience infestations of grubs on their courses. "Irrigated turf is

sometimes like a magnet for grubs," Silcox says.

Even if a superintendent is only irrigating a course's fairways to keep them a little moist during a water restriction, the course could have grub problems, says Pat Vittum, a professor of entomology at the University of Massachusetts.

"The turf doesn't have to be super moist," she says. "[Irrigation] only has to be at a level where the turf isn't wilting."

The past winter's fierce cold in the Midwest and East will have an impact on grub activity, experts say. Dave Ross, technical manager for Syngenta Professional Products, expects grub populations to be lower because of the harsh winter. "Adult emergence in the early spring will probably be a little reduced in some of those colder areas," he says.

But Silcox notes that heavy snowfall, which many parts of the Midwest and East also experienced, could improve

Waiting for Meridian

What's up with Meridian, the new insecticide from Syngenta Professional Products? It was reported three years ago that Meridian was "nearing release."

But like a lot of pesticides, Meridian has been hung up in the EPA registration process in light of the Food Quality and Protection Act. Meridian contains the active ingredient thiamethoxam that will control many chewing and sucking insects, including grubs, at low use rates.

Among the holdups in the registration process is that EPA asked Syngenta to provide more data about the application rates of Meridian, according to Coby Long, Syngenta's insecticide brand manager.

"It has been disappointing for us, but we realize as a manufacturer that we're committed to working with EPA to ensure public safety," Long said.

If everything goes according to schedule within the review process, expect to see Meridian for sale late next year or in early 2005, according to Long.

— Larry Aylward, Editor

the chance of grubs' winter survival. "It's a lot more insulating under a foot of snow than it would be if it was 0 degrees F and there was no snow," he says.

For that reason, certified superintendent Joe Baidy, director of golf courses and grounds for Turning Stone Casino Resort in Verona, N.Y., won't be surprised if there's increased grub activity this spring and summer.

"We had snow but the ground did

not freeze under the snow, which could definitely support grub activity," says Baidy, a veteran superintendent of 37 years.

Even when the ground freezes, certified superintendent Tom Athy is impressed how grubs manage to stay alive.

"They are resilient little pests," says Athy, director of grounds for Omaha

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
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Business briefs

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the Bayer Environmental Science/Chipco Professional Products Group in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., recently to talk about basal rot anthracnose management, bacterial wilt of *Poa annua*, silicon and gray leaf spot in St. Augustinegrass and other diseases. Just as important, they talked about designing fungicide programs for tees, greens and fairways to control the diseases.

"The meeting is designed as a noncommercial summit, providing researchers with an unbiased forum to discuss their research with colleagues," said Eric Kalasz, brand manager of fungicides for Bayer Environmental Science. "This seminar generates a lot of discussion and ideas each year."

Ex-Nicklaus executives face charges

Two former executives of Paragon Construction International, an obsolete construction company owned by Jack Nicklaus' Golden Bear Golf, are facing federal securities fraud charges, according to a report. Christopher Curbello and John R. Boyd face up to 35 years in prison and a \$3.25 million fine if convicted of falsifying records to hide losses.

Textron celebrates feat

Textron was handing out the wrist watches March 12 to proud employees of its Jacobsen's Charlotte manufacturing facility. The employees received the 2003 Textron Award of Merit in recognition of their achieving 1 million hours of operation without a lost-time injury. "This achievement is truly significant when one considers the core nature of our business — building and assembling precision, high-speed turf cutting and aeration equipment, and spare parts," said Jason Kravik, director of environmental health & safety for Jacobsen.

The Charlotte plant manufactures precision turf-care equipment for the golf course and sports-field markets. Jacobsen also announced that the Environmental Management System of the Charlotte Manufacturing Facility had achieved ISO 14001 certification. The ISO 14001 standard — often referred to as the "green" standard — defines the specific requirements for a comprehensive Environmental Management System.

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(Neb.) CC. "When there's cold temperatures and the frost goes deep into the soil, they seem to be mobile enough to move below it."

Joe DiPaola, golf market manager for Syngenta, notes that soil temperatures are much cooler this spring because of the cold winter, and grub development is likely to be delayed. DiPaola advises superintendents to monitor soil temperatures and be on the lookout for outbreaks. (Syngenta provides a convenient online resource — www.greencastonline.com — for doing this, he notes.)

The first grubs of the spring could be European chafers, which are active in Northeast states including Massachusetts and Rhode Island as well as near the shores of the Great Lakes.

"One distinction with the European chafer is that it becomes active earlier in the spring and stays more active in fall," Silcox says. "It's typically the first grub doing damage in the spring."

Vittum says she's concerned about increased populations of European chafers this year because of last year's drought and the fact that European chafers handle the cold better than other grubs.

"European chafers favor dry conditions, and we certainly had that last year [in the Northeast]," Vittum says. "They're also more cold-tolerant, so I'm sure they're untouched by the winter we just had."

Silcox says the European chafer and the Oriental beetle have both expanded their ranges. Silcox adds that he's surprised how fast the Oriental beetle has expanded its range, noting it has been discovered as far south as Atlanta.

DiPaola stresses that superintendents need to discover what type of grubs are intruding on their golf courses. The type will influence what kind of insecticides they apply, as well as application rates.

If you had grubs last year, you'll probably have them this year, Dow's

Price adds. He advises superintendents to monitor grubs' flights. When they fly, which could be around now (early May), apply an insecticide within a week, Price says.

Speaking of insecticides, make sure to apply them appropriately, Athy suggests.

"Grubs are one of the easiest pests to control," he says. "But if you don't get them, they can be a serious problem. If you screw up your application, they'll eat your course alive, and you won't know it until it's too late."

The key is to ensure that the insecticide you're using ends up in the soil, not in the thatch layer. It can't kill the grubs if it doesn't reach the soil where they're feeding.

"Start watering it in as soon as it's on the plant," Athy says. "Then it doesn't have the opportunity to dry on the leaves."

Superintendents also have to know how long to irrigate after the application. "Some think a 15- or 20-minute set will get it down through the thatch, but it might take longer than that," Athy adds.

Another key in dealing with grubs: Don't be in a hurry to treat for them without doing an adequate site survey. Eileen Buss, an assistant professor with the University of Florida's entomology and nematology department, advises superintendents to step back and establish the need to treat. That means to establish how many grubs are in the turf and to assess the level of damage to the turf. A healthy stand of turf can survive as many as 20 chafers per square foot. For green June beetles, three to five per square foot merits a spray.

Buss says the newest turfgrass pests in Florida are sugar cane grubs. "They are mowing through St. Augustinegrass," she says, adding that finding two to three sugar cane grubs per square foot would merit a treatment.

Curt Harler, managing editor of Golfdom's TurfGrass Trends, contributed to this story.

Off The Fringe

Cast of Characters

YOUR SUMMER IS PROBABLY A LOT LIKE MINE

By Jim Black

Ahh. The mid-Atlantic winter chill is beginning to give way to longer, warmer days and the promise of the coming season. I'm also reminded, by the excessive ringing of my phone, of the onslaught of seasonal job seekers, looking for something to do in exchange for a little pocket change and gas money.

Oh sure, they all seem great when they walk in the door — full of energy and eagerness to be the best employees ever. But once the first couple weeks go by, reality sets in.

One by one they come into your office and sling the proverbial knapsacks off their shoulders,

spilling all the contents of their personal issues on your desk. After they get hired and are somewhat

comfortable in their positions, they all of a sudden can't really do exactly what you need them to do, or work exactly the hours you need them for, but could you please pay them exactly on time anyway?

I'm sure this is a staff we can all relate to. Its members whine about using a shovels with no seats, put away broken equipment without telling anyone for fear they will get in trouble, expend more energy to avoid work than actually doing any, and etc, etc.

That said, here's a sample of anyone's summer crew at Anybody's Country Club and Golf Course:

Tardy Daley — Tardy is somebody who lives two miles away from the club and can't help but be five minutes late for work and 10 minutes late from lunch daily.

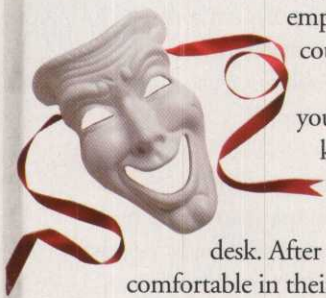
Phil Divots — He's the topdressing applicator. After you set the topdresser to "light-frequent," Phil thinks that not enough sand is coming out, so he changes it to "heavy-quarterly." As a result, you wear out three grinding stones and two extra drag mats.

Harry Vetch — The spray technician, Harry will overdose the back left corner of No. 5 green with 2, 4-D, thinking he can control the oncoming annual onslaught of goosegrass. Nothing will grow there and you will have to blame it on heavy foot traffic.

Nick Wyres — In charge of anything related to irrigation, he will have to redig the malfunctioning sprinkler head in the back left of the No. 6 green seven times until you realize he wasn't careful enough when he dug it up in the first place.

Hank Ford — Retired union worker who always has a better idea on how to do something and spends countless hours convincing everyone he is right.

Russell Feathers — He has a very hard edge along with a



PHOTODISC

Quotable

"Bayer is a basic manufacturer. What we do is bring new technology forward. And shame on us if we don't bring new technology forward."



— Dan Carrothers, vice president of Bayer Environmental Science's Chipco Professional Products.

"Beavers are not always our friends."

— Buck Workman, certified superintendent of Catechee GC, discussing how the animals contribute to his Audubon International Certified Signature Sanctuary course despite the fact that they occasionally take down memorial trees on his course.

"If we stay in Lawrence, (Kan.), we have to say that in 10 more years we'll probably look at this again because that's what good businesses do."



— Mike Wallace, past president of the GCSAA and certified superintendent of Fairview Farm GC in Harwinton, Conn., on the relocation issue.

dry wit. The rest of the staff will have countless complaints about him, but he's really harmless. It's amazing to see how easily grown men get their feelings hurt.

Mai Hiro — Armed with nothing but good intentions, Mai is the puppy dog of the staff who's always trying too hard to be the big problem-solver. His overenthusiastic initiative is usually counteracted in a negative way by his general lack of turf knowledge.

With any amount of dumb luck, maybe one of your walk-ins this year will have a little more experience than just, "I know that you need to spread the roots out on a potted plant before you put it in the ground."

I could go on with this topic, but you'll have to excuse me: My phone is ringing again.

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

Off The Fringe

Computer Modeling Helps Make Case for Tree Removal

IT'S NOT CHEAP, BUT IT COULD BE WORTH IT

By Frank H. Andorka Jr., Managing Editor

Scott Robinson, vice president of Toronto-based ArborCom Technologies, suggests superintendents consider using computer modeling to help make the case for tree removal when talking to green committees.

Robinson's company created a computer-modeling program five years ago that graphically shows green committees how much shade a green receives during a day.

ArborCom plots the position of the green and the trees that surround it. Then the program creates a three-dimensional model of the green

complex. Entering the longitude and latitude of the golf green, which allows the computer to calculate exact sun angles as it crosses the sky, allows the software to show how shade moves across the green during the day.

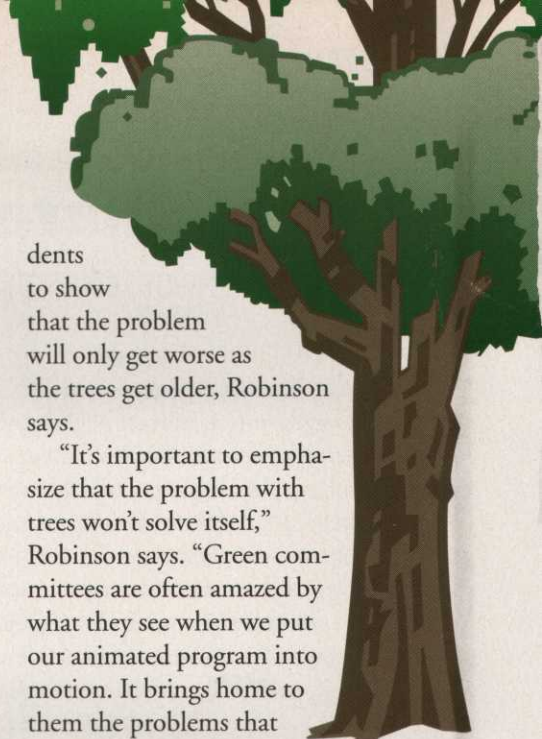
It then calculates how many hours different sections of the green remain in the shade, Robinson says. This gives superintendents additional ammunition when they explain why certain trees need to be removed.

The program also allows ArborCom to "age" trees for a set number of years, which allows superinten-

dents to show that the problem will only get worse as the trees get older, Robinson says.

"It's important to emphasize that the problem with trees won't solve itself," Robinson says. "Green committees are often amazed by what they see when we put our animated program into motion. It brings home to them the problems that trees are causing on their turf."

Robinson warns, however, that hiring his company to create such models isn't for everyone. The cost of an evaluation is \$3,500 per site, whether it's a tee, green or fairway edge. "It's not cheap," he adds.



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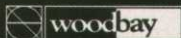
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