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Paul R. Latshaw, Former Golf Course Superintendent
Augusta, Congressional, Oakmont, Winged Foot and Riviera

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THE ART OF GROWING
GREAT GREENS

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We've Got Mail

■ LETTERS FROM THE FIELD

ET and the IA

In the article, "Improvement Detected in Moisture Sensors" (August), the Irrigation Association (IA) is used as a statistical source for comments made by Mike Miller of Baseline that compare the water savings associated with evapotranspiration (ET) devices with those of soil moisture sensors. Unfortunately, the statistics quoted are incorrect.

The statements infer that soil moisture is better than ET [as a method of running irrigation controllers]. The IA, however, has never published any statements about whether soil moisture or ET is better. The only statistic we have used is that Southern California trials using "smart controllers" [that use soil moisture sensors] have conserved up to 30 percent of the water.

The IA is currently working to see how both soil moisture and ET controllers do in scientific tests. This project is called Smart Water Application Technology (SWAT), and it's only arriving into the hardware test phase. We don't know how well these "smart" controllers perform today, but in a year the test results will be available. Could you please set the record straight?

Thomas Kimmel
Executive Director
The Irrigation Association
Falls Church, Va.

Farmers Know Best

I really did not know where Jim Black was going with the story (Public Opinion, July) but after reading further I had to laugh. He was 100 percent right.

I just got back from the GCSAA headquarters in Kansas, where I told them in a meeting we tend to forget where we have come from in our career field or as individuals.

My first superintendent's position was a nine-hole course in Durant, Okla., where three of the biggest amateur golf tournaments in the Mid-South Region were played. I made \$5 per hour until they realized the 80-hour weeks cost them more than paying me a salary of \$900 per month since I was the only crew member. The golf course was in-between the city graveyard and large fields with cows. Most of our 200 members were farmers so I received lots of

best-intention advice from "experts." And you know something? Their advice worked.

It turned out, they had all the experience and knowledge, and I just had to apply it to a different crop.

Joseph Hubbard
Certified Superintendent
TA Turner Construction Services
Ashburn, Va.

Just Regulate the Balls

I'd like to comment on Geoff Shackelford's article on the USGA's set up of the U.S. Open (July). I agree with what he wrote, but I would like to take it a step further: I think par is in danger of becoming obsolete.

I have hosted an LPGA tournament for the past 10 years, and advancements in club and ball technology have lowered the winning scores for professional tournaments by six to seven strokes. To compensate, superintendents are unfairly being asked to erase those seven shots with the conditioning of the golf course.

It's a very thin line superintendents are being asked to walk between fair and unfair and brown grass or green grass when faced with protecting par and the integrities of their courses despite all the improvements that have been allowed to clubs and balls.

It seems like common sense that the answer lies with [regulating] the ball and letting manufacturers do whatever they want to the clubs. Controlling that one thing would be the simplest way to solve a multitude of problems.

If the USGA doesn't start pulling the reins in, it will have to face the fact that par will become a thing of the past, like feather balls and wooden shafts. By the way, it didn't seem to bother the people who run the British Open that their champion finished at 10-under par.

Rick Slattery
Superintendent
Locust Hill Country Club
Pittsford, N.Y.

We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Larry Aylward at laylward@advanstar.com, fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130.

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