

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

PACE touts use of GPS, GIS

Global positioning systems (GPS) and geographic information systems (GIS) can and should be used in conjunction with sensors that monitor soil moisture and turf quality, Dr. Larry Stowell said in San Diego at the PACE Turfgrass Research Institute's 10th annual Turfgrass Research Seminar held in April.

Used together, those precision tools move turf management programs beyond IPM and beyond best management practices, according to Stowell, a PACE research director. They have proved effective in helping resolve problems that include irrigation distribution, soil moisture variability and white grub infestations, he told 145 turf managers.

A camera is an often forgotten but invaluable precision tool for documenting problems, techniques and progress toward turf management goals, Stowell said. In addition, the rise of digital photography makes it possible for turf managers to communicate easily with one another via photographic images.

Rain Bird's McWhirter retires

Rod McWhirter, Rain Bird Golf's national specification manager, retired April 30 after nearly 33 years with the company. McWhirter joined Rain Bird in 1973 as a golf course irrigation specialist. He helped develop the company's golf irrigation division into one of the world's top manufacturers of products and systems.

Stack, Bell Labs founder, dies

Malcolm G. Stack, 70, the founder of Bell Laboratories, died April 16 following a brief battle with cancer. Born May 9, 1935, in Manchester, England, Stack began Bell in 1974 and grew the business, which employs more than 300 people, into a leader in the pest control industry.

Region Crawling With Six-Legged Creatures

INSECTS THE TALK AT COASTAL RESEARCH SEMINAR

By Tom Skernivitz, Managing Editor

These are rich times for self-proclaimed bug lover Rick Brandenburg. The professor of entomology from North Carolina State University is surrounded by six-legged critters in his region. "This is bug heaven," he said of the coastal Carolinas and south Georgia.

Better yet, insects are more prevalent than ever because of pesticides that during the last dozen years have become increasingly kinder to the environment, Brandenburg said. While fish, birds, people and pets are safer today, so are many bugs.

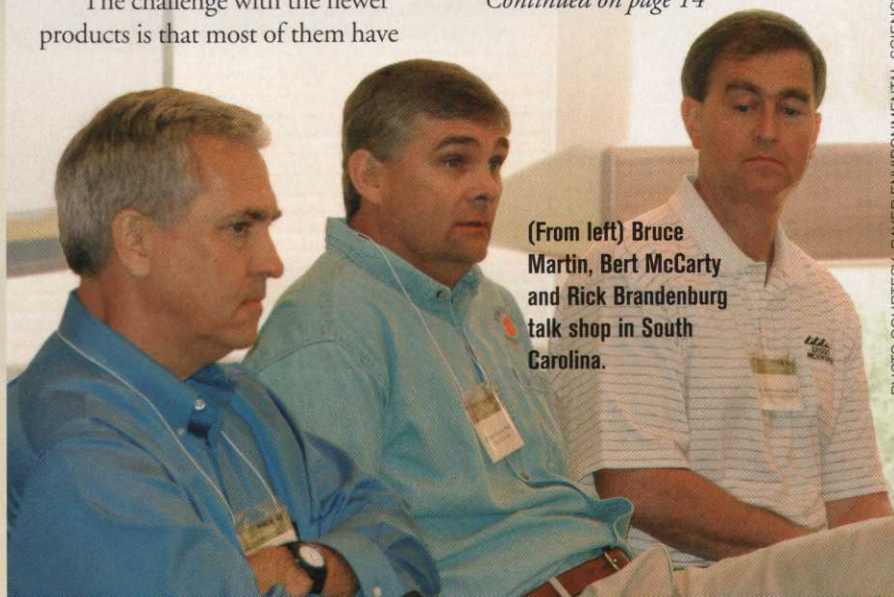
"The challenge with the newer products is that most of them have

gotten a little more restrictive in the spectrum they cover," Brandenburg said at the Coastal Research Seminar, sponsored by Bayer Environmental Science and hosted by the Country Club of Charleston (S.C.) in April. "So we have grub insecticides and mole cricket insecticides and not just insecticides. They changed a little bit. And we have to be much more accurate with the timing for them to work well. But if we do all that, these new products that we have today are absolutely excellent."

So, what's bugging superintendents most these days?

■ **Earthworms:** Brandenburg's telephone has been ringing constantly the last decade because of earthworms that have invaded putting greens, tees, home lawns and athletic fields. "We

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(From left) Bruce Martin, Bert McCarty and Rick Brandenburg talk shop in South Carolina.

PHOTO COURTESY: BAYER ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

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Testing, Testing, Testing

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK
AT HOW CLUB CAR PUTS ITS
VEHICLES THROUGH THE RIGORS
OF THE REAL WORLD

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

In a section of scenic woods, tucked behind Club Car Inc.'s headquarters in Augusta, Ga., is a test track. It's where Club Car's creations, from utility vehicles to golf cars, go to find out if they'll make it in this wicked world of bumps and pot holes.

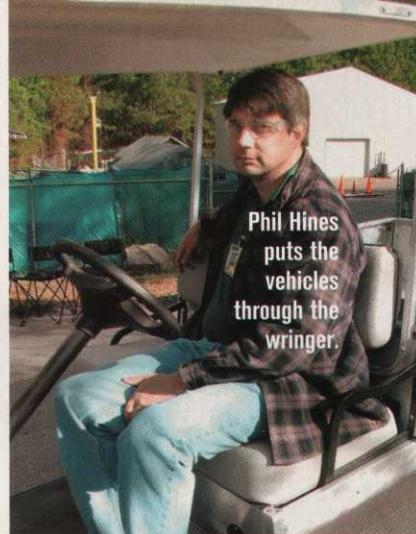
Phil Hines, a Club Car test specialist, helps with the evaluation procedures. It's Hines' job, so to speak, to put the vehicles through the wringer to make sure they can handle the rigors of the golf course under real-life conditions.

In essence, the test track is more like an obstacle course. It's marked with a variety of obstructions to see

what the vehicles are made of, literally. There are steep slopes, brutal bumps and pitiless puddles. Often, it's Hines driving the vehicles through the stumbling blocks.

Get this: Hines says he and other test specialists put the vehicles through 10 years of life in about four weeks.

"We do two types of testing to investigate the stability," says Hines, who has worked at Club Car for about 10 years. "One test is called static stability, where we put a vehicle on the table and tilt it to find the angle where it becomes unstable. The other test is called dynamic stability testing, where we actually drive the vehicle and explore the rigors of the handling. We'll drive it and put it in conditions that no customer should ever have to do. And we'll discover what will happen when we push the vehicle



further than it should be pushed."

Hines spends about half his time driving a vehicle and listening for bumps, squeaks and rattles.

"I note anything that might indicate there's an issue with the car, and then I investigate it," he says.

If the job sounds fun, it is for the most part. The best days are, no surprise here, when projects go smoothly.

"We have long hours and long days," Hines says. "But when we get to the end of a project and have a successful launch and then get rave reviews from our customers, it makes it all worthwhile."

Happy driving.

Tales from Augusta

WHAT SOME GOLF FANS WILL DO
TO SECURE A MEMORY OF THE MASTERS

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

The Masters Tournament, won by Phil Mickelson in April inside the ropes, is not without its stories outside of the ropes.

Bill Bryant, president of Bryant Marketing Communications, a golf industry communications firm in Alpharetta, Ga., says he was walking out the gate at Augusta National Golf Club after the Par-3 Contest on Wednesday of the week and he casually tossed his \$36 admittance badge in a trash bin.

"A couple of seconds later, a guy asked if he could have the badge," Bryant says. "He said he just wanted to get in for a few minutes to see the course. It didn't seem to matter to him that the big course was closed and the day's play on the par-3 course was nearly complete."

Bryant told the man he just tossed his badge in the trash but that the man could have it if he wanted to fish it out of



the trash. "As I made my way to the parking lot, I looked over my shoulder to see the guy fishing around in the trash bin," Bryant says. "That reminded me how revered Augusta National is and what a special spot it holds in the hearts and minds of so many people."

Chuck Calhoun, superintendent of John's Island Club in Vero Beach, Calif., offers this story of a

fan starstruck by PGA player John Daly. Or maybe the fan was just looking to make some money.

As Calhoun was waiting at the crosswalk in front of the No. 7 tee on Friday morning during the tournament, Daly and his group had just teed off and were walking down in front of the tee.

"Daly throws his cigarette butt down on the ground right on the edge of the crosswalk," Calhoun says. "Well, as soon as the gallery men opened the ropes, this guy runs over and snags Daly's butt and sticks it in his pocket. I haven't checked yet, but it's probably on e-bay by now."

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didn't used to get those (phone calls)," he said.

Less toxic pesticides and changing irrigation practices have created a more favorable environment for earthworms, which is good and bad, according to Brandenburg. "It's good to know that we've kind of restored the balance in what we're doing ecologically," he says. "But the bad news is that you get a lot of earthworms on the putting green."

■ **Moles:** The plenitude of earthworms has led to an upswing in moles. "For years and years you probably heard the message, 'If you have moles, you have white grubs. You get rid of the white grubs, you get rid of the moles,'" Brandenburg said. "That's not necessarily true. If you catch one of those furry, little fellows and cut it open, you'll find that their stomachs are full of earthworms."

■ **Ants:** Fire ant products work particularly well, Brandenburg says, but they're only available where fire ants are widespread.

The dilemma in trying to eradicate ants is that many superintendents spray their putting greens, which solves the problem on a temporary basis. "The little mounds will go away for a day or two and then come right back on you," Brandenburg says. "That's primarily because most of the ant colonies are outside of the putting surface itself, and they send these scouts out that pop up (on the green)."

■ **Rove beetles:** The good news is that this insect feeds on cutworm eggs. But they still litter the course.

■ **Striped earwigs:** The tropical version of the earwig thrives on greens while feeding on cutworms and other bugs.

Striped earwigs dig a foot-long hole straight into the ground — you could slide a pencil into the opening — and push the soil up. Compounding the problem, birds arrive on the scene to eat the earwigs and wind up tearing up the greens. "I haven't figured out exactly what to do with these yet," Brandenburg says. "We've have tried treating them with everything that's labeled for cutworm control, and it doesn't seem to affect them very much."

In order to combat these insects, superintendents need to know the best time to impact a population. This revolves around knowing the life cycles of pests, Brandenburg says. For instance, he says, once grubs and mole crickets become big, they're difficult to kill.

On the bright side for South Carolina-based superintendents, Clemson University could soon boast its own professor of entomology, Brandenburg said.

Two Clemson University professors, Bruce Martin and Bert McCarty, spoke on transition issues at the Bayer seminar.

Martin, a plant pathologist, said the same diseases that affect bermudagrass in a normal scenario affect the turf variety in the transition

Quotable

"This year has been unbelievable. This has been the best winter that I can remember."

— Jason Biddinger, the manager of Lafayette (Ga.) Municipal Golf Course, after recording 2,200 rounds played the first three months of the year, four times more than the same period in 2005. (*Journal and Courier*)

"If I don't get control of my gambling, it's going to flat-out ruin me."

— John Daly, in his new book, on his big bets.

zones. The conditions include dollar spot, yellow patch, brown patch and fairy ring. Another disease, *Rhizoctonia* leaf and sheath spot, is troublesome because its symptoms closely resemble fairy ring.

The quandary general to all transition-zone diseases is what occurs when fungicide treatment is involved.

"If we're spraying fungicides in the spring on our overseedings, what is that doing to the health of our overseedings as we're trying to transition later on?" Martin says. "Aren't we strengthening our overseedings and making it more competitive when we really want to be weakening and to get the bermudagrass [to take] off?"

McCarty, a professor of horticulture specializing in turfgrass science and management, spoke of the appropriate time to remove ryegrass during the transition process to bermudagrass. The latter requires night-time tempera-

tures of at least the mid- to upper-60s to aggressively grow laterally, he said.

"It can be 80 degrees (Fahrenheit) during the day, but if it drops into the 50s at night, it won't grow," McCarty says. "Bermudagrass will green up, but it's just going to sit there."

Hence, superintendents shouldn't apply herbicides until the temperatures reach this point. Considering bermudagrass needs 90-plus days of competitively free ryegrass-growing days, superintendents should apply their herbicides in May or early June.

"For most people in South Carolina, our bermudagrass basically shuts down the 15th of September because the days get shorter," McCarty said. "If you've still got ryegrass in your fairways June 15, I would highly recommend you pull the trigger and get rid of it chemically. Hopefully you've encouraged it to die off before then." ■