



> *Marking Our*

10th Year

> This month, as *Golfdom* continues to mark its 10th year in publishing, we revisit some of the stories we've covered in the past 10 years. Some of the stories, even though they were written several years ago, are still pertinent today. Also, we explain why we decided to introduce *TurfGrass Trends*, the *Golfdom* Report and Growing the Game into the magazine's mix.

Part one of our look back, which appeared in March, highlighted the people who have adorned *Golfdom's* covers as well as the best "Quotables" of the past decade. If you missed it, you can read it online at www.golfdom.com.

We hope you enjoy reminiscing with us. Then, it's time to move on. There's another 10 years on the horizon.

— Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

This Industry Has 'Issues'

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR IN CHIEF

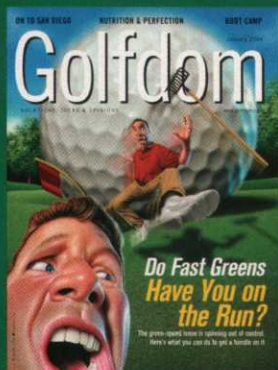
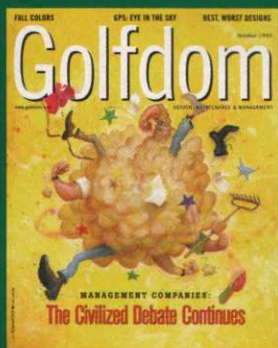
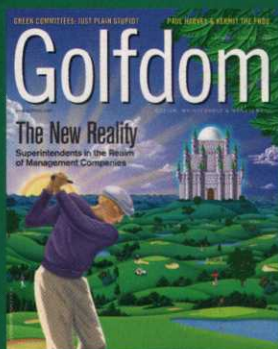
The golf course maintenance industry's complexity has sparked various issues, and they have made for some good stories in the past decade.

Golfdom covered the plight of management companies often during its first year of publishing. Our very first issue — January/February 1999 — went after a pertinent issue: The role of management companies in modern-day golf course maintenance. The story, headlined "The New Reality," reported on the mega-trend that management companies have become. The story surmised that although the "corporate" mentality of management companies grates on some superin-

tendents, many like the stability, mobility, benefits and opportunity for advancement the management company structure allows.

We revisited management companies in our October 1999 cover story. We did this because International Golf Maintenance, a Lakeland, Fla.-based management company, mailed pitch letters to various golf courses that stated: "We are confident our team of turf professionals can develop a maintenance program that will help you get the most out of your investment in maintenance resources — and we're prepared to bring along \$50,000 in new golf course maintenance equipment with the execution of a three-year maintenance agreement."

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(Top) The first issue of *Golfdom* reported on the mega-trend of management companies. (Middle) *Golfdom* has also covered the controversy surrounding some management companies. (Bottom) The problem with fast greens has also been a popular topic.

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Obviously, this rankled many superintendents employed at those courses. But *Golfdom* decided to let both sides tell their stories. We asked Greg Plotner, IGM's vice president of Florida operations, to tell us what's good about IGM and management companies in general. And we asked Mike Hamilton, the then-certified golf course superintendent at Foxfire Country Club in Naples, Fla., to tell us why he liked management companies as much as pickled herring.

The headline of that cover story read — "Management Companies: The Civilized Debate Continues." An illustration depicts a cartoon rumble going on.

Golf course maintenance and politics

I bet there aren't many superintendents who figured they would need political science degrees along with their turfgrass degrees to keep up with all the politics at their courses. It's amazing the "internal affairs" that some superintendents have to put up with at their clubs and courses. We've covered this issue throughout the years.

Green speed causes a lot of the political problems. I've heard many superintendents say they hear from golfers that the greens are too slow. Then, 10 minutes later, other golfers are telling the superintendents that the greens are too fast.

We've kept close watch of the green-speed issue over the years. In January 2004, our cover story asked: "Do Fast Greens Have You on the Run?" In the story, we provided an anecdote told to us by Michael Sauls, superintendent of Butler National Golf Club. One day, Sauls sat at a dining table in the clubhouse eating his lunch. Glancing up from his plate, Sauls saw trouble approaching him in the form of an overbearing high-handicap hacker.

"He came up to me and started complaining about the course's green speed," Sauls says. "He said, 'What's wrong with the greens? They're slow.'"

A startled Sauls almost choked on his food. "I had to do everything I could to bite my tongue," Sauls said. "Here's a 25-handicapper complaining that the greens are too slow. What do you say to guy like that?"

The scene reaffirmed to the veteran Sauls that too many golfers are enamored with fast greens, and that green speed is spinning out of control. The issue is hurting the game and stressing out superintendents.

If fast greens didn't cause problems, superintendents surely wouldn't wince when asked by golfers to speed them up. But that's the problem: Fast greens can cause myriad problems — from damaging turf to slowing down already slow play to even getting superintendents fired. What's worse is that many golfers aren't aware of the problems, don't want to be aware of them and wouldn't care even if they were aware of them.

In the story, we offered suggestions for superintendents to get a handle on the green-speed issue. It seems like many superintendents have made some headway on this political hot potato over the years, including Michael Morris, the certified golf course superintendent of Crystal Downs Country Club. Morris is on the up and up with his members with the green-speed issue. The Stimpmeter has been his most influential tool in the process.

Morris says he not only uses his Stimpmeter every day to make agronomic decisions, but he actually communicates his green speeds to his members — without lying about the speeds.

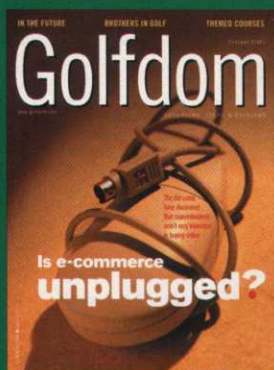
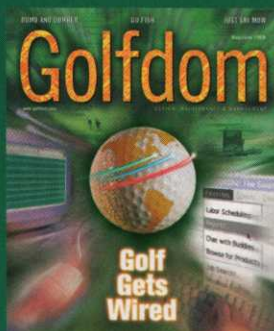
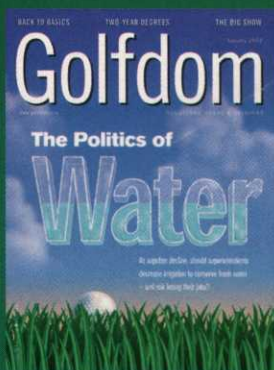
By Stimping his greens every day, Morris says he has found ways to actually raise his height of cut by experimenting with different practices of mowing and rolling on alternate days. By measuring the results of different practices, Morris can maintain expected green speeds by rolling his greens in lieu of mowing some days, which creates less mechanical stress, saves equipment wear and frees up valuable labor resources.

"It's a paradigm shift from the way you've normally done things," he said. "Rolling every day and skipping mowing (every other day) gave us the same result."

Water issues are also causing superintendents political headaches. In January 2002, our cover story reported on the politics of water. We asked readers, "As supplies decline, should superintendents decrease irrigation to conserve fresh water — and risk losing their jobs?"

In the story, we reported on golf course

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(Top) Water issues has caused superintendents some headaches. (Middle and bottom) Golf has gotten wired, but e-commerce sure bombed.

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irrigation and the fact that golfers have come to expect the most vibrant color of green on their golf courses. Problem is, the world is running low on freshwater. And while superintendents have heard the claims of a potential and critical freshwater shortage, some ignore the issue because of pressure from golfers, greens committees and owners to keep courses in choice condition. These superintendents are worried that if they cut back on water use — and allow their courses to turn brown — they'll be fired for their ineptitude.

In the story, Mark Clark, the certified superintendent of Troon Golf & Country Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., predicts politicians will debate water issues for years to come. "This will make oil look like nothing," he said.

Superintendents and others insist golfers must be taught that brown grass in late July is acceptable, especially so golf courses can conserve water. The problem, of course, is getting a golfer to believe that after he has paid \$150 to play a round.

We'll keep reporting on this issue. It will be interesting to see what we're writing about in 10 more years, when the freshwater issue is bound to be even more intense.

E-bust

While some issues — like green speed and water — have been mainstays over the years, others have fizzled. Take electronic commerce, for instance.

Earlier in this decade, e-commerce — purchasing golf course equipment and supplies online — was all the rage. Well, at least that's what some people were saying.

The headline of our May/June 1999 cover story read, "Golf Gets Wired." An article on "point, click and spend" reported that e-commerce's success hinged on whether superintendents wanted to buy from a mortal or through a machine.

In April 2000, we reported on Golsat, an aggressive e-commerce company with a bold marketing plan. Golsat had a solid concept and the capital to roll out a serious e-commerce initiative.

If superintendents signed up with Golsat,

the company offered new members a new Pentium III computer, a 19-inch monitor and broadband Internet access for just \$29.99 a month. Then members could surf Golsat's search engine for the products of their choice. Golsat made its money by getting transaction fees from suppliers listing products in its search engine.

There was also greentrac.com and golfso-lutions.com. The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America even explored e-commerce. But e-commerce bombed like a bad American Idol contestant. In our October 2001 issue, we asked the question: "Is E-commerce Unplugged?" In the accompanying story, we wrote: "The e-commerce companies counted on superintendents to purchase equipment, chemicals and other goods from the industry suppliers they featured on their sites so they could garner 3 percent to 5 percent transaction fees on the sales.

"... but most superintendents, whether they're from the computer generation or not,

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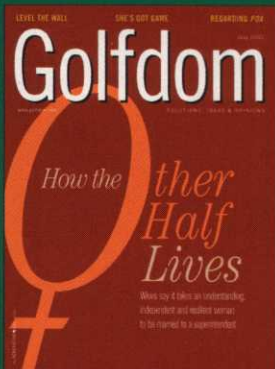
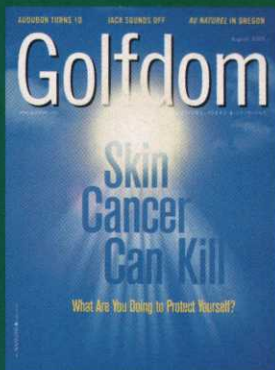
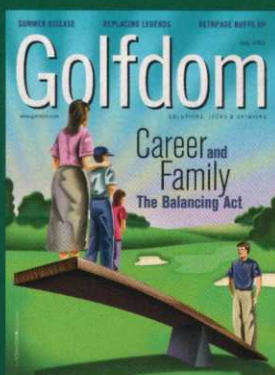
We're Riding on the Growing-the-Game Bandwagon

In one short decade, the words "growing the game" evolved from marketing mumbo jumbo to a synonym for the survival of golf.

Golfdom has brought the industry a continuing series on strategies on how to increase rounds and generate additional revenue, including initiatives to court women, minorities, disabled people, baby boomers and junior golfers.

Strategies of note: Some golf industry manufacturers, notably Club Car, have developed employee incentives to make the game more accessible among their employees and in their respective communities, showing the rest of the industry that some lessons must begin at home.

We've also explored emerging golf concepts that address time scarcity, such as three-hole, five-hole and six-hole layouts. Most recently, ClubCorp unveiled its Short-Course Initiative, which will implement far-forward tees for juniors, beginners, families or traditional golfers looking for an hour-long round. The company is also flirting with alternative routings at its courses. ■



(Top and middle) Many superintendents empathized with our "Career And Family" cover story, as they did with a story about the dangers of skin cancer. (Bottom) *Golfdom* spoke with several superintendents' wives for a story on "How the Other Half Lives."

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weren't interested in purchasing goods from Web sites operated by third-party vendors. Suppliers were also skeptical. They weren't sure if they wanted to sell their products on sites that also featured the competition's goods. Suppliers also didn't want to share private sales data with e-commerce vendors."

Pete Salinetti, the former certified superintendent of Schuyler Meadows Golf Club in Loudonville, N.Y., said he thought e-commerce could work in the industry, but he stressed that distributors must play an integral part.

"If anybody is going to get my money, it's the distributor here supporting me," Salinetti said. "Superintendents across the board feel the same way. They've developed professional relationships with their salespeople."

Maybe e-commerce arrived before its time, and we'll see a rebirth of e-commerce companies in the next decade. Then again, maybe we won't.

Life issues

We've had tremendous feedback on stories about human issues that run peripheral to superintendents' careers. A story that still resonates is "Career and Family: The Balancing Act," which appeared in July 2001.

Superintendents say they spend less time with their spouses and families because they work long hours and take few days off. They say their spouses accuse them of ranking their careers ahead of their families because of the passion they have for their livelihoods.

So how can they maintain a demanding career and a healthy family life in a profession with a perceived high divorce rate? How can they learn to balance work and family?

One superintendent in the story, who was married for 13 years at the time, said it takes focus, communication, dedication, patience, self-control, compromising and prioritizing, among other intangibles. "It's a bunch of things rolled into one," he added.

In August 2001, we reported on the dangers of skin cancer. Mark Woodward, golf operations manager for the City of San Diego, talked about the first time he had a skin cancer lesion removed. He was 31 at the time and

didn't think much of it. After all, the lifelong Arizona resident was young and healthy. Besides, when you're a superintendent in a state that has more than 350 sunny days a year, it's a hazard of the job.

Woodward soon learned he had to take the necessary safety precautions to avoid skin cancer. But it took several more treatments and a relatively major skin surgery. Woodward doesn't mess with the sun anymore.

In July 2002, we reported on how the other half lives. "Wives say it takes an understanding, independent and resilient woman to be married to a superintendent," the headline on the cover said. We interviewed several wives of superintendents and learned that life isn't always easy for them because their husbands work so many hours. They're not at home much to pitch in around the house, prepare meals and help raise their kids. But the wives understood that going into the marriages, which makes a big difference.

Career issues

Superintendents face myriad career issues. And while they rise in rank of importance at golf courses, their career issues will only increase.

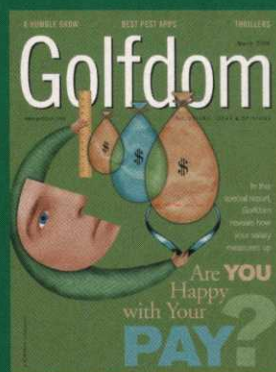
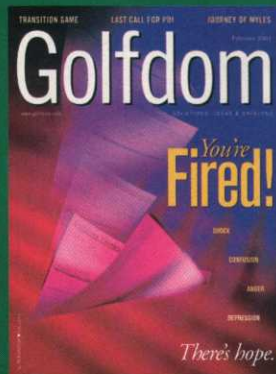
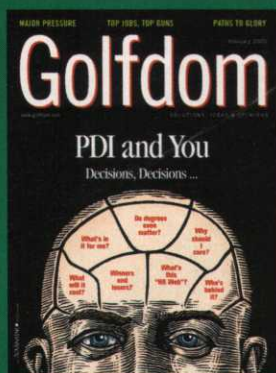
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Surveying Superintendents

For the better part of the decade, *The Golfdom Report* has offered superintendents insights into the profession, golf business and factors that influence both. Through our annual survey of superintendents, we've uncovered sentiments about everything from salaries, stress and retirement to budgets, labor recruitment and employee retention.

During the years, we've tracked the decline in golf course construction and golfer demand, and we've looked into our crystal ball through the eyes of industry experts and emerging data.

Findings of note from the most recent report: private golf club superintendents are three time more likely to be satisfied with their salaries compared to their counterparts at public courses. Also, despite the ups and downs over time, most superintendents (82 percent for the past two years) say they would become superintendents if they had the opportunity to do it all over again. ■



(Top) PDI was a huge issue back in 2000. (Middle) Getting fired – and how to deal with it – will always be an issue for many superintendents at pressure-packed clubs. (Bottom) Pay, of course, is important to most everyone.

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The Professional Development Initiative (PDI), which was featured as our February 2000 cover story — “PDI and You ... Decisions, Decisions” — has impacted superintendents’ careers. PDI, introduced by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America to “improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of the professional superintendent,” was the talk of the profession in 2000.

The initiative was developed in response to member concerns about a lack of recognition, compensation, job opportunities and job security. With its passage, Class A superintendents must meet requirements in areas such as formal education, continuing education, job education, pesticide licensing and service.

Former GCSAA CEO Steve Mona spearheaded PDI, which was approved at the association’s annual meeting in Dallas in 2001 and implemented in July 2003.

Controversy surrounded PDI. In the end, some superintendents argued that GCSAA watered down the measure so the association wouldn’t lose members. Mona, in a recent interview with *Golfdom*, disputed that thinking.

“What’s interesting about that argument is there are really two sides to it,” Mona said. “Some people say PDI is wrong because it requires people to do things to become a Class-A member, which is not the role of the association. They say we should just support our members through education, information and representation and not create an elitist organization with the haves and have-nots. And then I also hear the too-watered-down argument, which makes me think we probably got it right.”

Job security is a big career issue with superintendents. Most realize that being a superintendent is a lot like being a Major League baseball manager — you can get canned at any moment. Many superintendents believe they’re more prone to being fired these days because of the increased scrutiny they’re under to keep their courses in near-immaculate condition.

In February 2001, we offered the story, “Getting Over Getting Fired,” to help superintendents endure the trauma of losing their jobs. In the story, James P. Kell, an Aus-

tin, Texas-based career consultant, said that it’s necessary and beneficial to grieve when someone loses his or her job. Kell said it’s also all right to be angry, depressed and stressed. But at some point, a fired superintendent must forge ahead.

“You accept the fact that you were fired, and you realize that it’s possible to go on with your life,” said Kell, noting that most firings occur because of work-place politics and downsizing. “But there’s a delicate balance between grieving and moving forward, and no two people do it the same way.”

Superintendents’ pay is also a top career issue. The good news is the pay has gone up substantially in the past decade. We reported this in our March 2006 cover story, “Are You Happy With Your Pay?” In 2005 the average base salary for a superintendent rose to \$68,914, according to the GCSAA. The figure represents a 9.3 percent jump from 2003 and a 29.5 percent jump over seven years. It’s not at all unusual now for superintendents to be making six figures these days.

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TurfGrass Trends Into Golfdom

In 2002, Questex Media decided to merge one of its turf publications into another — that would be *TurfGrass Trends* (TGT) into *Golfdom*. *TGT* and *Golfdom* shared much of the same audience. *TGT* met the agronomic research needs of the golf community, and *Golfdom* focused on management. Most *TGT* readers subscribed to *Golfdom*.

Ever since its founding by Mary Haber in 1991, *TGT* was known industry-wide as the forum for independent, objective research in turf. Early on, there was a mix of sports turf and golf turf. However, as golfing grew in the late 1990s, golf-oriented turf management articles took over. When Curt Harler became managing editor in 2000, the lion’s share of research was golf-related.

It became apparent that by rolling *TGT* into *Golfdom*, subscribers could save a bundle of money while the publisher could save on postage. Readers of *Golfdom* got an in-depth look at the latest in research. *TGT* readers got a slick magazine, with sponsor support, devoted to all aspects of golf. It was a win-win. ■



Our August 2000 cover story addressed job opportunities for minorities in the industry.

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A recent *Golfdom* survey indicates that 72 percent of superintendents are "OK" with their salaries. Another 19 percent claim they "make great money" while 9 percent believe "the pay stinks."

In regard to career issues, we've covered the job opportunities for minorities in this industry. In August 2000, our cover story asked: "Why Is the Industry So White?"

We interviewed Larry Powell, superintendent of Clearview Golf Course in East Canton, Ohio, who understands the hardship that golf's legacy of racism can inflict. His father, William, was forced to fund Clearview's construction privately in the 1940s when white banks wouldn't loan him the money because he was black.

"I know there were people in my father's day who wanted to keep blacks out of golf," he says. "But I wasn't going to let that stand in the way of doing something I always wanted to do. It's not about black and white at this course. It's

about green. It's about caring for the course."

Golfdom will continue to report on this issue, which can impact the industry in so many ways.

With a little help from our friends

We bill ourselves as the magazine for golf course superintendents. That will continue to be our mantra.

We also realize we wouldn't have made it this far if it weren't for the thousands of superintendents who have consented to interviews for our stories. We thank you. We would also like to acknowledge the many superintendents, including Ron Furlong and Jim Black, who have written for the magazine over the years. They write just as well as they tend turf.

Finally, here's a toast to the past decade.

And the next. ■

Editor's note: David Frabotta, Thomas Skernivitz, Frank Andorka and Robin Suttell also contributed to this story.

CALL FOR ENTRIES!

2009 Dog Days of Golf Calendar



Is Your Canine Camera-Friendly? If so, please submit a photo of your dog to be considered for the LebanonTurf's 2009 Dog Days of Golf calendar. Photos of your dog in a golf-related setting, in action or with you are encouraged. The 2009 calendar will feature dogs from your favorite course and be circulated to golf course professionals throughout the country. Any questions? Please call Cynthia Andrews, 1-800-532-0090 ext 253.

Submit your nomination today for LebanonTurf's 2009 Dog Days of Golf calendar. Complete the following information and send in a **high-resolution photo** of your dog to *Golfdom* magazine, Attn: Kristen Morabito, 600 Superior Avenue East, Suite 1100, Cleveland, Ohio 44114 or e-mail it to kmorabito@questex.com.

Deadline for entries: August 1, 2008

Free gift to all who submit!

Dog's Name: _____
Dog's Breed: _____
Course: _____
Your Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Calendar brought to you by:



Improving the Way Professionals Care for Turf

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