

Off The Fringe



» READER FEEDBACK

Thank you for addressing the plight of aging superintendents in your July 2012 edition of *Golfdom*. As a soon-to-be-member of the “5.9%” and a current superintendent for the past 35 years, the comments from Jay Charnes, Mark Woodward and Joel Jackson describe my feelings and concerns for my future as a golf course superintendent appropriately.



Like many of my contemporaries, I assumed I could perform my duties well beyond the normal retirement age but now wonder at what cost. I’m not so worried about a younger assistant undercutting my salary, as my salary and benefits have already been adjusted accordingly over the course of the economic downturn. Plus, no one knows the irrigation system around here like I do! Keep up the good work!

Tom Brown, CGCS

*Chesapeake Bay Golf Club
Rising Sun, Md.*

The article on “The 5.9%” was a great read. During next year’s U.S. Open I will be part of that group.

I was talking this over with my young supervisory staff the other day, and you would think they wouldn’t care, but it concerns them, even though they are in their mid-20s to mid-30s.

I told them what my dad told me one time; as long as you stay proactive you are fine, when you become reactive it is only a matter of time.

I guess we will see if his philosophy works, to see how deep I get into my career.

Well written as always!

Matt Shaffer

*Merion Golf Club
Ardmore, Pa.*

Seth,

I am pleased as to how accurately you and Beth did your work on my story, the 5.9%. Not an ounce of spin which I could see! That is rare and so pleasing to see. I guess there was some spin in that it sort of made me and Mary look too good. Hey, we were just doing what we do and it turned out to be we got associated with a couple of people who have that rare quality of being “straight up.”

The whole experience has been a charmed event. The way in which you handled it all was professional, kind and supportive. I am just corny enough to think it may make a difference as this “180 rule” thing continues to play out.

Jay Charnes

*Author, “The 5.9%”
Co-owner, Superintendent’s Choice Sod*



FERTILIZERS,
CHEMICALS AND
THE ECONOMY

IN JULY, I ATTENDED the Florida Fertilizer & Agrichemical Association’s annual meeting.

I asked people how the economy has impacted companies within the Ag and Green Industries. Among those I interviewed were **Tim Orton**, southeastern sales representative for Agrium Advanced Technologies; **Gaylon Pfeiffer**, BASF value change specialist; and **Joe Hodges**, vice president, Southern Region, for The Andersons. Here’s what they said:

• **Tim Orton:** “Our biggest decline came in golf and wholesale nursery sales as courses adjusted maintenance budgets down and fewer housing starts affected nurseries. Oddly enough, lawn care companies and big box store sales remained stable or flat. We saw folks downgrade their use of slow-release materials from the highest-grade product to lesser grades, but they still valued the timed-release technology to give consistency of turf performance.”

• **Gaylon Pfeiffer:** “Certainly housing starts have had an impact on our T&O markets, especially in the sales of termiticides. But the number one impact on recent chemical sales in the golf and lawn care markets has been the growth of generic products. We are still constantly developing and introducing Ag and T&O products that meet grower needs with a serious dedicated emphasis on minimizing environmental impacts.”

• **Joe Hodges:** “We are seeing reductions in citrus acreage due to disease and pasture input cultural practices. Traditional agricultural supply companies are now looking to increase business to golf courses, horticulture and lawn care to offset those losses.

“We have seen an uptick in the use of specialty products that improve water quality as more courses use reclaimed water for irrigation purposes.”

Deere Loses a Leader

Shortly before press time we learned of the passing of Gregg Breningmeyer, who was the Global Director of Sales and Marketing for John Deere Golf. He was 56.

We loved interviewing Breningmeyer because he always told it exactly like he saw it. From all of us at *Golfdom*, our condolences to the Breningmeyer family as well as the John Deere family, for their loss.

