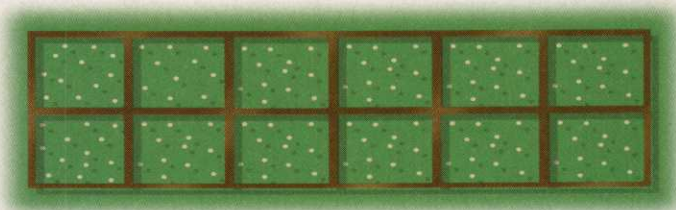




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Circle No. 122

Continued from page 40

"I realize what a difficult job it is to be a superintendent," says Alyn Stanton, the pro at Sun Ridge Canyon GC in Fountain Hills, Ariz. "You're at the liberty of Mother Nature. I've always thought it's important to respect the people that are maintaining your golf course."

Stanton, a 15-year-veteran, realizes that pros shouldn't throw curve balls at superintendents, such as: "Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you. We're having a group of 150 people here tomorrow morning at 7 for a shotgun start." Stanton knows that poor communication of such will only get a superintendent's blood boiling.

"You need to have an appreciation for what your compatriot does — and the pressures and deadlines he or she is under," Stanton adds.

Talk, talk, talk

It's easy to say (and cliché) that communication is integral to a healthy relationship. But why is communication so difficult?

Maybe it's because a superintendent and pro don't view each other as partners and, hence, don't interface. Then when things go wrong — and disagreements mount — their relationship turns ugly.

"Communication is not easy, and it's a big problem," Keene says. "And when there's friction, it's hard to communicate."

Communication is an art, Keene adds. You have to know when to talk and when to listen. You have to know when to tread lightly or hold your ground if there's conflict.

Communication, in its purest sense, means keeping each other informed. If you're a superintendent, you have to let a pro in on almost everything you're doing, Keene says. Splane will be one of the first to know when Keene is aerifying, topdressing or verticutting. And Keene will tell Splane *why* something must be done.

Splane appreciates Keene's efforts because he not only wants to know what's going on, he wants to be able to tell members *why* the greens were aerified or *why* they are slow. "I also act as a liaison between the members and him so I can let him know what's going on," Splane adds.

Splane stresses how important it is for pros

to know *why* superintendents do what they do.

"A lot of pros won't admit that they don't know what's going on," Splane says. "They know what the problem may be — the course is wet — but they don't know why. Then they're quick to jump on superintendents and blame them."

Splane and Keene will criticize each other — constructively.

"If he's upset with something I'm doing, he tells me," Splane says. "If there's something going on that either the membership or I'm not happy out, I tell him."

No one's saying that understanding and communication will lead to a perfect relationship, but it sure takes the pressure off.

"Not every day is a bed of roses, but when there's a dispute we always work it out," Wright says of his relationship with Woodall.

The men meet daily to discuss the day's activities and their concerns.

"We try to work as a team," Wright adds. "A lot of times, superintendents think they're more important than pros, and pros think they're more important than superintendents. They are really a right foot and a left foot — and you must have both."

Wright came to the Country Club of Mobile about five years ago. He wondered whether Woodall, a fixture at the club, would pull rank on him. But he has found Woodall to be a compromising co-worker.

"We have a lot of respect for each other," Wright says.

"We've had a nice understanding from the beginning," Woodall adds. "When Ron came here, I told him that I didn't want him to walk on egg shells around me. I told him to blast away, and that I would blast away. And when the smoke clears, everything will be beautiful."

Woodall would endorse Stanton's philosophy, which has nothing to do with control but everything to do with making concessions. In the end, according to Stanton, it's about superintendents and pros getting the job done together — and liking it.

"I have a saying," Stanton reveals. "We spend a third of our lives working, a third of our lives sleeping and a third of our lives doing laundry."

"So you had better enjoy your work as much as you can." ■

"I've always thought it's important to respect the people that are maintaining your golf course."

ALYN STANTON

pro at Sun Ridge Canyon GC

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The USGA, to put it kindly, has done a lousy job of presenting its case for ball and equipment regulation. Until four years ago, the USGA refused to acknowledge that rapid advances in equipment technology — which it was supposed to be monitoring — were rendering traditional courses all but obsolete.

But incoming USGA President Trey Holland is pledging to communicate the USGA's desire for equipment regulation with new fervor and energy to combat the perception by a majority of golfers that the blue blazers in Far Hills, N.J., are evil regulators determined to steal everyone's extra 10 yards.

The USGA's pending attempts to regulate the ball are somewhat analogous to Alan Greenspan's interest rate increases. Like interest rates, the ever-increasing length a ball travels affects many variables, all of which are vital to the future health of golf. If something is not done soon, significant changes in the way golf is played will negatively affect the long-term livelihood of everyone in the golf business.

In a nutshell, here is why the ball problem will affect golf negatively:

Courses are getting longer because everyone who builds the latest and greatest either consciously or unconsciously sees themselves hosting a pro tournament someday. So they keep building longer courses to accommodate changes in the game and to pad their yardages.

Longer golf courses mean more acreage is needed. More acreage means more ground to purchase and eventually more land to maintain, translating to higher green fees to be passed onto the customer. With the average new courses getting longer and older ones trying to "upgrade" to the dreaded championship plateaus, the game is getting unnecessarily tougher to play. Worse, longer holes take much more time to play. And to get to the magical marketing total of 7,000 yards, the most amusing holes almost always have to be eliminated from design.

Increasing distance for good players (who are too often the focus of everyone in golf) turns this into a numbers game, yet the most satisfying golf has little to do with playing courses of certain yardage. Ironically, longer and more expensive courses taking six hours to play ultimately scares

It's Time to Stop Distance Madness

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



CAN THE GAME
AFFORD TO
ALIENATE
41 MILLION
POTENTIAL
CUSTOMERS?

people away from golf. The National Golf Foundation estimates there are 41 million people who rarely play or don't play at all because of the prohibitive factors listed above. Plus, golf has only grown by about 2 million players during recent years. At a time of prosperity, incredible popularity and the best widespread course maintenance ever seen, those numbers indicate that golf has not attracted or kept enough players, probably because of slow play and difficulty.

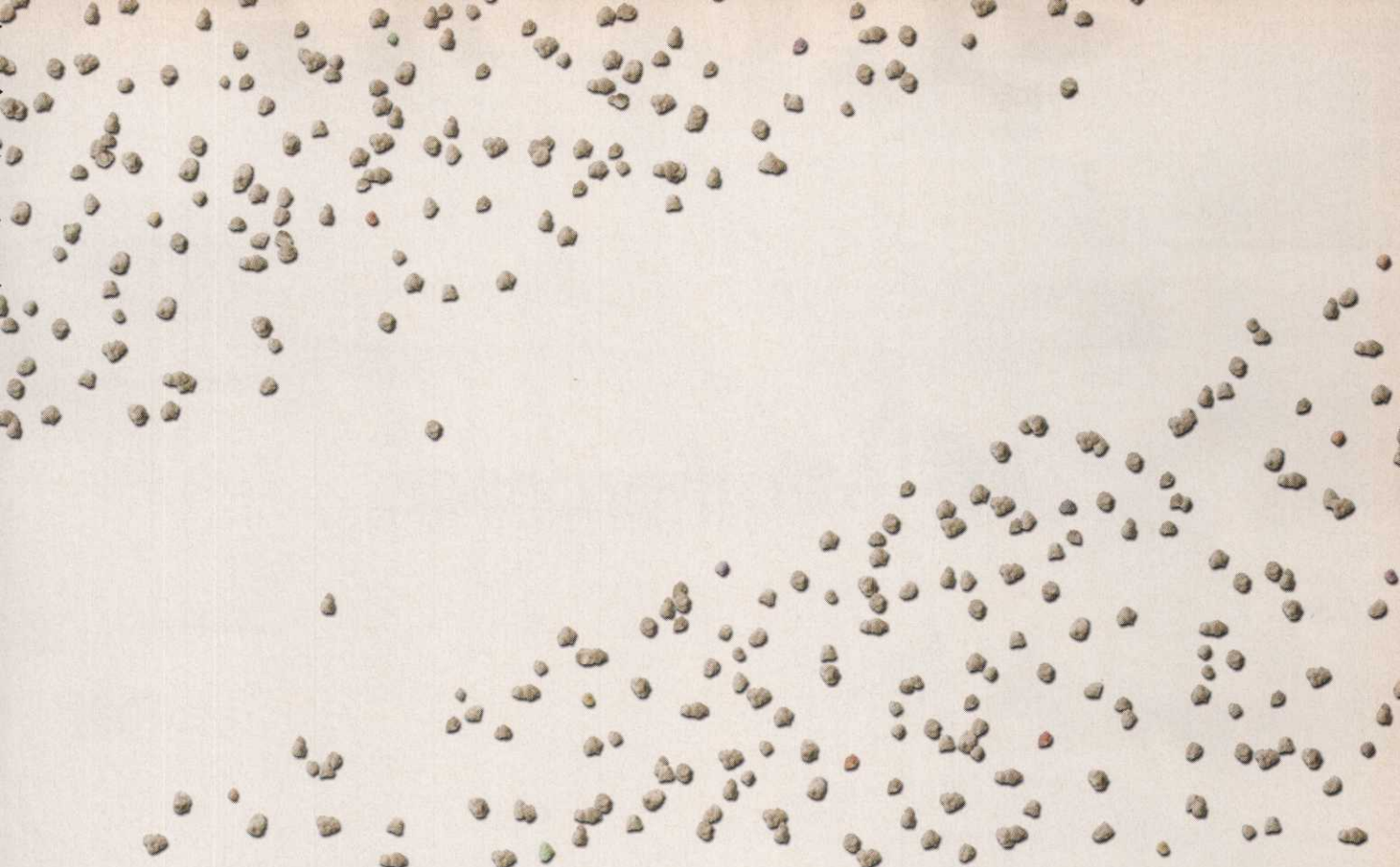
Now, if the ball companies have their way and win the inevitable court battle with the USGA over "optimization" (the technical term for ball regulation), you can guarantee that golf courses will continue to expand in length and those 41 million people will still stay away.

Can the game afford to alienate that many potential customers? Wall Street, whose job is to plant the growth mantra in every industry guru, probably would be surprised to hear that such a huge potential market is being shut out. And all because some golf ball manufacturers won't be able to sell balls based on who won last week on the PGA Tour.

Well, I'm not holding my breath for Wall Street to figure this one out and urge the ball companies to settle. This will have to be a grassroots campaign by the people who make golf the great pastime that it is. Let the ball companies pursue their capitalistic desires. But the USGA needs to communicate with superintendents, architects, the media and management companies to support them in this important cause.

I know you have enough headaches. But supporting the USGA on the ball issue in any way you can is one cause that's vital for the short- and long-term well-being of everyone in golf.

Geoff Shackelford's latest book is The Golden Age of Golf Design. He can be reached at geoffshac@aol.com.



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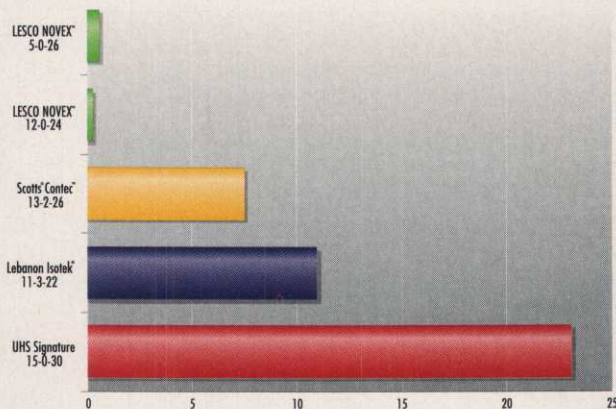
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(The Pennsylvania State University 1999)



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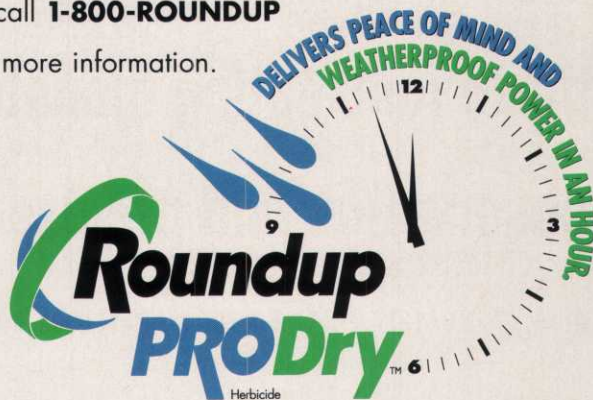
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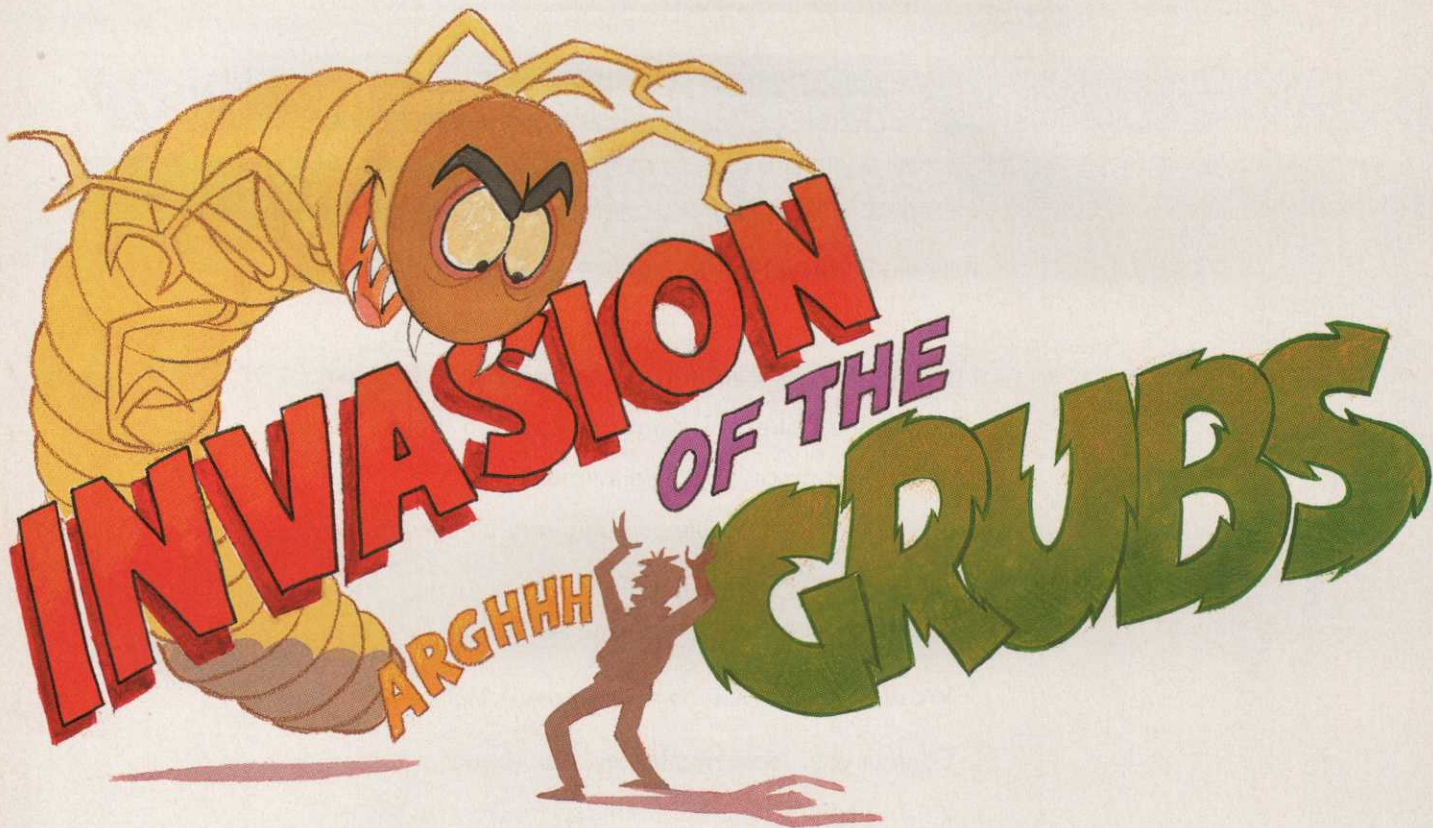
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Control of these root-eating monsters depends on careful observation and precise timing

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR., ASSOCIATE EDITOR / ILLUSTRATED BY DAN ZOLA

Biblical plagues of locusts have nothing on the "Great Grub Infestation of 1992" that struck the Orinda CC in Orinda, Calif.

Dave Rosenstrauch, then superintendent at the course, says the grubs invaded the course with a vengeance that summer. The saga began when Rosenstrauch noticed small patches of his fairway being eaten away by what he diagnosed as wilt. His crew members spot-watered the affected areas to bring them back, but nothing helped.

Then one day a member of Rosenstrauch's crew returned to the shop with news that as he had backed up the fairway mower, the turf rolled up behind it like carpet.

"I rushed out to the fairway to see what was wrong," says Rosenstrauch, who is now the director of golf for the Alisal Guest Ranch & Resort in Solvang, Calif. "As I peeled

away the turf, I could see I had a grub problem."

Rosenstrauch counted 20 grubs per three feet of turf. The next weeks were spent in what he calls a "Guns of Navarone" mode, spraying practically around the clock in an effort to eradicate the grubs. In the end, despite he and his crew's best efforts, the course lost 10 acres of turf.

Reports from around the country indicate that increased effectiveness of pesticides, combined with increased vigilance on the part of superintendents, means fewer intense grub outbreaks have occurred in recent years. As the case of Orinda CC shows, however, superintendents must never yield to complacency.

"Even once you've killed off a grub population, you may be able to back off the application of pesticides, but you still need to monitor the turf closely," says Stan Zontek, director of the mid-Atlantic region for the USGA. "If you get a

serious grub infestation these days, you've missed something along the way."

Pesticides such as Merit or Mach 2 prevent grubs from forming if sprayed at the right time. Those two products have eliminated many of the grub problems in his part of the country, Zontek says. "You don't hear the horror stories about massive turf loss that you used to hear," he says.

Identification ranks as the most important element in controlling white grubs on a course, no matter which species, according to Timothy Gibb, a professor of entomology at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. The way to tell grubs apart is to examine the number and the arrangement of hairs on its rear end, he says.

Once the species is identified, it will determine the best timing for pesticide application. Understanding the turf-grass site and conditions such as thatch, irrigation, turfgrass variety and use will allow a superintendent to select the insecticide that will be best for that particular area, Gibb says.

"There are enough products on the market that you have a good selection of products to use," Gibb says. "Only superintendents will know exactly what's best for their situations, so I recommend they do their homework so they understand their problems thoroughly."

Pat Vittum, a professor of entomology at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Mass., says her recommendation is to put down Merit no earlier than June 15 and that July 1 is usually the optimum time. For Mach 2, Vittum says it should be put on turf between July 1 and the middle of August.

Grubs live in stages called instars, and they develop from one stage to another fairly quickly, Vittum says. The smallest grubs feed for two weeks. In the second stage, they feed for two to three weeks. By the time they reach the third and final stage — a full-grown beetle that will feed for as long as three months — it's too late to prevent them from doing at least some damage to the turf.

Difficult Situation

David Shetlar, professor of entomology at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, says superintendents should evaluate the following factors if the usual methods aren't killing the grubs:

- Was the application liquid or granular? Depending on which it is, the effects of the sun will cause the product's efficacy to vary.
- Was the turf — and more importantly, the underlying thatch — moist or dry at the time of the application? Dry thatch can create impermeable barriers that will not allow pesticides through.
- How thick was the thatch? Anything over a half inch is going to reduce efficacy of any grub insecticide. Shetlar recommends not treating any turf where the thatch layer is over three-quarters of an inch.
- How heavy was the grub pressure? There may be more grubs than the insecticides are designed to handle. Shetlar says

"During the winter, they burrow down below the frost line because they can't survive in frozen turf," Vittum says. "But they do survive, and if you haven't gotten them by the time winter rolls around, you're going to have problems in the spring."

Vittum also recommends that superintendents rotate Merit and Mach 2 to avoid building up a resistance in the grubs. Though there is no clinical evidence to support a contention that grubs are beginning to resist the insecticides, there is increasing anecdotal evidence to suggest it's possible, she says.

"It's not that there is no control at all," Vittum says. "But I've heard stories about the control becoming less complete after several years of use."

The entry of Novartis' latest product, Meridian, in August will help alleviate potential problems in that area. Both Vittum and Gibb agree that Meridian's biggest impact will be as another option open to superintendents.

"Any time superintendents can add another weapon to combat grubs, it's a good thing," Gibb says. "As long as the superintendents stay vigilant, they should be OK." ■

Peering into the Crystal Ball

Dave Rosenstrauch, director of golf for the Alisal Guest Ranch & Resort in Solvang, Calif., has seen the future of golf course maintenance, and it will be gravely affected by complete pesticide bans.

Rosenstrauch has watched with interest as cities like Seattle eliminate the use of pesticides completely, and he sees movements in cities like San Francisco and Arcata, Calif., to do the same.

"Superintendents better be ready to use alternative methods for situations such as grub control," Rosenstrauch says. "It's inevitable."

Rosenstrauch applies only organic materials to his two courses to keep the pH of the soil perfectly balanced. He uses microbes to keep the soil neutral, which he says keeps the turf healthy. Unhealthy turf attracts insect and weed problems, Rosenstrauch says, so monitoring the soil is important to keeping out pests such as grubs.

He also says he allows natural grub predators like birds handle small infestations. After all, the holes the birds put in the ground are like a mini-aerification, he says.

"It's a little more work than the wholesale spraying of chemicals," Rosenstrauch says. "In the long run, however, superintendents who understand how to use organics will have far more job security than those who only know how to spray chemicals."

superintendents have to monitor their turf closely to avoid running into that difficulty.

SOURCE: DR. DAVID SHETLAR, EXTENSION ENTOMOLOGIST, THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, "GRUBS TOUGH TO KILL", TURFNET MONTHLY, OCTOBER 1999

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THE MOLE CRICKETS



You can take out these nasty critters with both new and tried-and-true insecticides. But you must constantly map and monitor their activity.

BY LARRY AYLWARD, MANAGING EDITOR / ILLUSTRATED BY DAN ZOLA

If you ask superintendent Carl Benedict, he'll tell you the Mesozoic-era monsters of *Jurassic Park* have nothing on the repulsive pests of modern golf courses — mole crickets.

"If they were big enough, mole crickets would eat you," says a half-joking Benedict, director of golf course maintenance for the Orange County National Golf Center in Orlando, Fla.

It's March in central Florida, already summerlike, and Benedict already has mole crickets on his mind. "This will be a very tough year for us with mole crickets," he predicts.

Mole crickets are to superintendents what pitcher Arizona Diamondbacks pitcher Randy Johnson is to left-handed hitters: dreaded. The insects, including the tawny mole cricket and the southern mole cricket, have been defacing southeastern U.S. golf courses for years.

Superintendents have seen what mole crickets can do — over and over. The critters dig tunnels and feed on grassroots, causing turf to dry out die.

"So much of my time and money has been spent on mole crickets . . .," Bene-

Continued on page 52