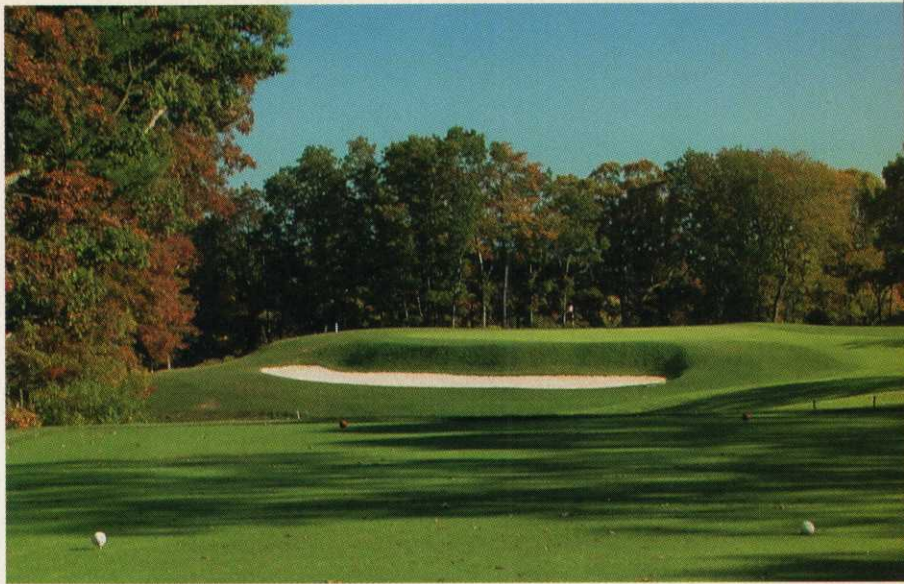


The legacy

As Carrier drives around the other Bethpage courses and surveys upcoming in-house projects, he stops to field questions from golfers. The rejuvenation of the Tillinghast-designed Red Course, which has largely been an in-house job despite campaigns from several architects who hoped to get the job to gain free publicity, is threatening to make the Red more popular than the Black. The Red arguably contains more of the character of an authentic Tillinghast design. It also features Carrier's low-profile bunker restoration work and detailed finish work by the Bethpage crew.

Extensive post-Open work is planned for the Devereaux Emmet-designed Green course, as well as work on several holes of the Blue and Yellow courses.

No matter what the USGA decides about future U.S. Opens on the Black Course, the combination of its support and new maintenance standards has made Bethpage State Park a case study in what all municipalities should strive to do. You can use a major tournament to

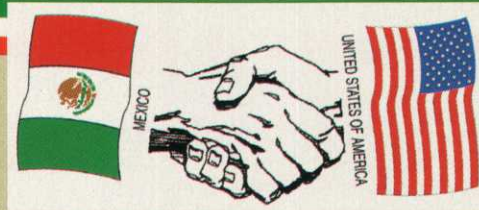


gain USGA's money and spend it wisely to hire top-notch talent — and ultimately give customers a better facility for years to come.

"It's a fabulous legacy," Catalano says. "An investment was made by USGA for a specific purpose, but you are going to have a facility that will be restored to its previous grandeur for the everyday golfer. That's the beauty of the whole thing." ■

After renovations are made to the Red Course, it threatens to become more popular than the Black Course.

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'Smooth as a

Editor's note: In this essay, creative writer **Ron Furlong**, first assistant superintendent at Everett Golf & CC in Mukilteo, Wash., examines elements of his profession while playing 18.

For superintendents and assistant superintendents, getting a morning tee-time is a bit of heaven on earth. It's almost unheard of — like a double eagle or taking a sick day the week of the club championship. It just doesn't happen.

The first obstacle to overcome is fighting the guilt. "Why am I here? I'm golfing? In the morning? What's happening at my course?"

You imagine crew members throwing a kegger on the fifth hole and leaving beer stains and cigarette burns on your 1/10-inch greens. You imagine them having a game of bumper golf cars on the 11th fairway. Arrgghh!

You take a deep breath, suddenly realizing everyone is waiting for you on the first tee. You're up, but you're still trying to shake those thoughts of a moment ago. Of course those things aren't happening. The greens are getting mowed, cups

changed, bunkers raked, etc. Life goes on without you, hard as it is to admit.

Yet that image of part-time worker Jimmy (a.k.a. Evel Knievel), fresh from 11th grade, racing down the hill on No. 4 in a burning utility vehicle with a look of total glee on his face won't leave your mind.

"Ah, Ron? Gonna hit the ball today?"

A smile, sort of, then concentration on that little white Ultra at your feet. Seems so small. How the hell can you hit that tiny thing? You invented this game? You reach down and tee it higher. Can't miss it now (the great fear of all golfers on the first tee). Back swing (good thoughts) and then through with the form of Watson. Unfortunately, that's Nick Watson, a 25-handicapper you occasionally play with, not Tom Watson. The ball sails mightily, high into the air, and for a brief moment you're impressed with yourself. But the ball keeps sail-



Gravy Sandwich'

We all want to be the best, and it gives us comfort to think that perhaps we are. But as I walk my peer's course, I'm struck at how few things I'd do differently.

ing up, not out. Higher and higher.

Thankfully you're spared the "gonna bring rain" comment. Then gravity kicks in. Would have been a beautiful eight-iron — 110 yards, center of the fairway. You feel (if not exactly hear) the muffled snickers of your playing partners.

"Nice and straight," one of them offers.

"Teed it up too damn high," you suggest, grabbing your bag.

Walking a course other than your own is a particular enjoyment only fellow superintendents and assistants can appreciate. Perhaps it's the long hours you spend on your own 100 or so acres. Or maybe it's the opportunity to compare some other superintendent's conditions and practices with your own.

It's the latter I enjoy. On my short walk to my less-than-impressive drive, I instantly look at the rough's height of cut between tee box and fairway, noting any weeds I see nestled in the thick turf. I smile when I spot a clump of chickweed. I look for the intermediate rough height, then

the fairway itself (which I barely made). I am as critical, perhaps even more so, of this course as I am of my own. Why is this?

The sprinkler head a few feet from my ball mocks me with its lack of yardage. Who would need yardage this far out? I've said it myself: If they can't drive it 180 yards, they don't need yardage. Funny how things come back to bite you.

Second shot. Three wood. This time the concentration comes easily. The club feels good. You poke it about 230 yards, just shy of the approach. Now you feel better.

As you reach your ball, you note the approach is walk-mowed, and you are duly impressed. You're able to bump and run a seven iron cleanly off the *Poa* and have it stop within five feet of a tough pin placement in the back left of the small green.

"Nice shot, Ron."

"Thanks," you answer, holding in a smile. Act cool, big guy.

The green is beautiful — a gorgeous stand of Pacific Northwest *Poa annua* atop a slightly contoured 4,500 square feet that you know was built more than 75 years ago. You watch your three playing partners each drain short par putts. Then calmly, coolly and confidently you walk up and miss your own five footer. Bogey.

You're in a constant battle with a swing of emotions throughout the rest of your round on this immaculate early June morning. On one hand, you struggle with your erratic game. A beautiful 240-yard drive down the middle of the fairway is followed by a seven iron shanked into the firs to the left of the green. On the other hand, you're swept up in the beauty of the day and the gorgeous old course.

The view of the Cascade Mountains to the east is stunning; their snow-topped

peaks are inviting, even in June. The 140-foot Douglas firs tower proudly into the sky, lining the fairways like giant soldiers guiding you home. The maintenance of the course, you reluctantly realize, is first-rate. The fairways are perfect, the ball sitting up nicely on the ryegrass-*Poa* stand. The rough is a perfect 2 inches and thick. The bunkers, with which unfortunately you are too familiar, are freshly trimmed and hand-raked.

I admit, I'm as guilty as the next person in taking some small level of enjoyment whenever I come across something I think to be not up to my standards. We all want to be the best, and it gives us comfort to think that perhaps we are. But as I walk my peer's course, I'm struck at how few things I'd do differently. So I found a weed here and there, a sprinkler head not edged around, a bench sitting a bit too far from the tee markers. Who's perfect?

I think of my course, so perfect in my eyes. But what would I think of it if I were a fellow superintendent or assistant playing it on a Saturday morning? Would I feel the same as I do on this course? I realize the answer is yes. I'd be a little critical, but I'd also be a little proud.

As much as we all hope our own courses are the best in town, deep down we all want our peers to do just as well — even the superintendents who are not on your speed dial or show up to the monthly chapter meetings. Even the superintendent who stole your irrigation technician a few years back.

Why are we more critical of someone else's course than our own? Perhaps because other courses are really our own. It's up to all of us to not only improve our own courses but to improve the entire profession, making everyone better in the

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Smooth as a Gravy Sandwich

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process. Golfing your own course is essential to being a good superintendent, but golfing other courses is just as important, if not more.

One of my great faults is that because I work on a private club and play mostly other private clubs and upscale public courses, I rarely see smaller operations. This

is a situation that none of us should find ourselves. We can't lose track of the efforts that go into these smaller operations.

If you don't get out there and see what's happening down the road, how can you ever get better? You can post discussions on the Internet, read trade journals and watch tournaments on TV until

your blue in the face, but there is nothing to compare to the actual experience of hitting the ball from someone else's rough, putting someone else's greens, and, in my case, searching through someone else's woods for that damn little white ball.

On the 18th green, I lined up a 45-foot putt — a downhill I knew had to break at least 10 feet from left to right. I needed this putt for a fretful 95, a score I would have been embarrassed with 10 years ago but is more the norm today. I gently brought my arms back and through to the ball, starting it on its eventful journey. The speed looked good, and the break was perfect — a wide 12-foot swing out toward the mountains and then back toward the deep, blue water of the Puget Sound. It landed with that beautiful sound of aluminum ringing true at the bottom of the hole.

"Great putt, Ron."

This time I didn't fight the smile, reaching down for my ball. "You ever doubted it?"

As I walked off the 18th green on that glorious Seattle afternoon, I remembered a match I had in Florida against a hulking Australian chap years before. After draining a 40-footer to beat me on the last hole, he flashed me a toothy grin and said in his down-under drawl, "Smooth as a gravy sandwich, Ronny boy. Smooth as a gravy sandwich."

Though I've never eaten a gravy sandwich, the analogy was too rich in detail to be missed. I realized his cocky comment referred not only to his putt, but also and mainly to the perfect stand of bermudagrass green as well. I have never forgotten that line and the smile that accompanied it.

On this Saturday afternoon, it was not the golfing gods I thanked for my breaking, bending putt that somehow found its way home. Nor was it my high school coach of nearly 20 years before who had constantly drummed "tempo tempo tempo" into my head over and over.

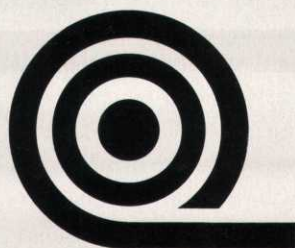
No, it was the superintendent, his assistant and their crew that I thanked. After all, we're in this together. ■

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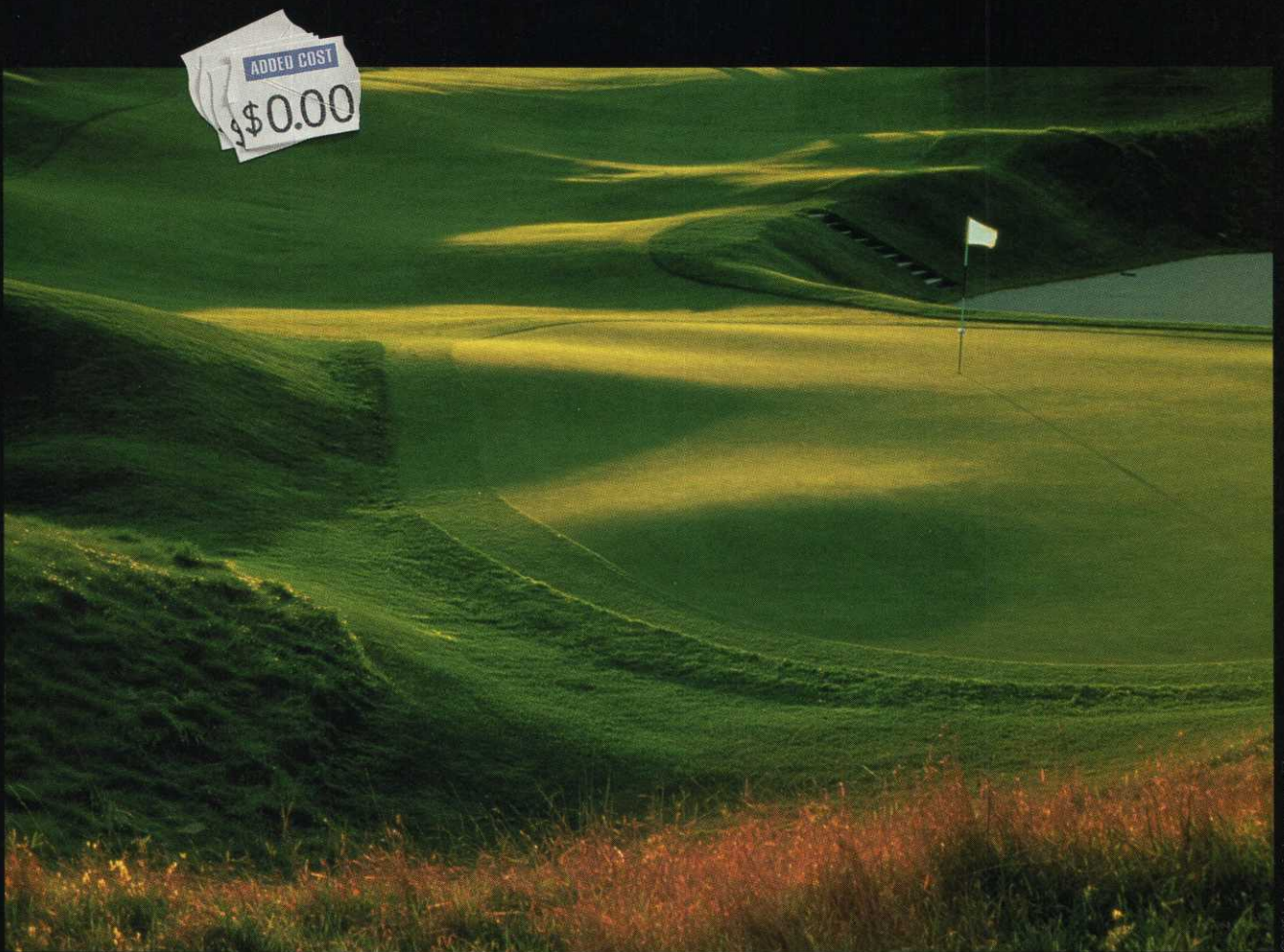


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Circle No. 116

Summertime Blues?

USGA agronomists warn what turf diseases to watch out for and where

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

USGA agronomist Jim Skorulski can't consider summer turf disease without pondering New England's wicked winter earlier this year. "[Disease] this summer is predicated on winter injury," says Skorulski, who oversees the Northeast Region.

Mother Nature spared no mercy on New England last winter. The Northeast received significant snow and ice, especially in the Boston area, where many golf courses were damaged. But what hurt turf most were freeze-and-thaw cycles, Skorulski says.

"There were a few periods last winter when it got warm, the snow on the ground melted and it rained," Skorulski says. "Then there were severe temperature drops and the water froze."

Golf course greens and turf suffered crown hydration, the rupturing of plant cells caused by ice crystals, Skorulski says. Many Northeast superintendents had to reseed damaged areas. Hence, their courses contain young and tender turf with underdeveloped roots, making it more susceptible to summer disease such as pythium root rot.

"Superintendents need to be vigilant with their disease management because they're starting from scratch with a lot of young plants," Skorulski says. "It's going to be a tough summer if it gets hot. On the positive side, there's more bentgrass growing on the greens, which means more disease tolerance."

Skorulski advises superintendents in his region to be patient and conservative in their cultural practices this summer because of the young turf. "We're in a stage of recovery," he says.

While gray leaf spot is not the threat it was a few years ago because many superintendents replaced ryegrass fairways with bentgrass, Skorulski warns that dollar spot could be a problem. "It was an issue beginning in early June (last summer) and pressure remained high throughout the remainder of the season," he says.

To combat dollar spot, Skorulski notes that superintendents are modifying their cultural practices by applying higher rates of nitrogen. They are also re-evaluating fungicide rotations, and application rates and water volumes with applications, he adds.

Golfdom spoke with USGA agronomists from throughout the country to get their takes on summer disease. Here's what they report:

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Brown patch affects all turfgrass. The disease often occurs during extended periods of wet weather.



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Summertime Blues?

Continued from page 46

Mid-Atlantic Region — Agronomist Keith Happ says the extreme wet and dry cycles the region experienced in the spring makes it difficult to predict summer disease. In late May, Happ reported that golf courses were still dealing with pink snow mold. But superintendents are misdiagnosing pink snow mold as pythium blight, Happ says.

Last summer, dollar spot was a problem in a few areas, says Happ, who's based in Pittsburgh. But superintendents made adjustments to their fertility and cultural programs to combat it this summer. "Rather than just spray, superintendents made adjustments so the environment is better for healthy turf, which is the first line of defense against any pest, especially dollar spot," Happ says.

Happ expects to see gray leaf spot on golf courses in late August. He says superintendents should be careful not to misdiagnose it.

"Sometimes people throw water on it because they think it's drought stress," Happ says. "Then the problem is exacerbated tenfold."

Last summer, Happ says he saw "devastating damage" from gray leaf spot at courses around Pittsburgh. "[Superintendents] didn't know they had it, and they didn't know how to treat it," Happ says. "It's new to this area."

But the superintendents who've had gray leaf spot are converting their fairways from ryegrass to bentgrass and bluegrass to avoid the disease, Happ adds.

Happ warns that superintendents who shaved their greens in the spring to make them fast and rid them of *Poa annua* seed-heads also weakened them in the process. They had better watch closely for summer disease. "You're going to pay the piper in July and August," he says.

North-Central Region — Agronomist Bob Vavrek Jr. reports that dollar spot was the biggest and most persistent problem for superintendents in his region last year because of unusual weather patterns. But Vavrek, based in Elm Grove, Wis., says he's uncertain if dollar spot will return this

year. "[To be safe], a few more courses will be budgeting for fairway fungicide applications," he adds.

Mid-Continent Region — Agronomist Brian Maloy, based in Carrollton, Texas, says he didn't see a lot of disease last summer, and he doesn't expect to see much this summer.

"It's hard for folks down here to get excited about disease when you have low humidity and dry conditions," Maloy says. "[The environment] is not conducive to disease."

Still, Maloy notes that golf courses located in or near Dallas, Tulsa, Okla., and Shreveport, La. — in places where



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Dollar spot attacks turf low in nitrogen during warm, humid weather.

humidity is a factor — are at more risk for summer disease.

Maloy stresses that proper greens construction is vital to combat summer disease. "If you have good internal and sub-surface drainage, the greens are less likely to suffer disease outbreaks," he says, noting that push-up greens with tight soil rootzone mixes are more susceptible to summer disease.

Rocky Mountain Region — Agronomist Matt Nelson isn't expecting any major summer disease problems. But Nelson warns that snow mold, which was prevalent in the region even in late May, could lead to anthracnose in the summer. "Anthracnose is more likely on turf that has already been weakened," says Nelson, who's based in Twin Falls, Idaho.

If snow mold-damaged areas return as *Poa annua*, there's a good chance the turf will suffer again this summer because *Poa* is less resistant to summer disease. Hopefully, superintendents re-established damaged turf with bentgrass in the spring, Nelson says.

Southeast Region — Agronomist Chris Hartwiger doesn't expect anything unusual in regard to summer disease on bentgrass greens. "Spring temperatures have been cool for bermudagrass, but ideal for bentgrass," says Hartwiger, based in Birmingham, Ala.

Hartwiger says superintendents have made great strides to improve growing conditions in the spring, which has resulted in healthier and stronger turf in the summer. "Fans, shade reduction and summer cultivation tools have been instrumental in improving the quality of bentgrass in the summer," Hartwiger says, noting that Syngenta's Heritage has "greatly reduced" summer disease problems since it was introduced in 1997.

Southwest Region — Agronomist Mike Huck also isn't expecting anything unusual.

"Typically, we get bouts with anthracnose and summer patch on *Poa annua*," says Huck, based in Santa Ana, Calif. "If we get a spell of humidity, some brown patch or pythium can occur."

Florida Region — Todd Lowe says many summer diseases are caused by poor maintenance practices. Lowe, based in Rotunda West, Fla., warns superintendents not to cut bermudagrass greens too low, even if members demand the greens stimp faster.

"That can bring on secondary pathogens, such as helminthosporium," Lowe says. "You're setting yourself up for problems if TifEagle is mowed consistently below one-tenth of an inch."

Dollar spot is an occasional summer disease in Florida, but can be overcome by nitrogen, Lowe says. However, too much nitrogen combined with overcast weather could lead to brown patch, he stresses. ■



This is one tough little princess.

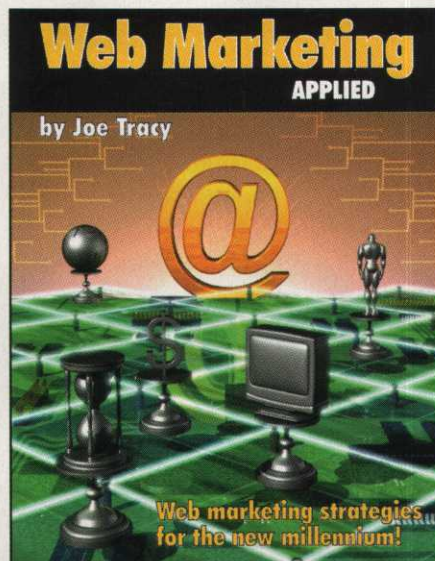


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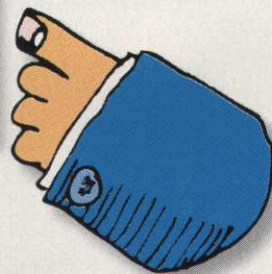
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