



THE BEST GREENS AREN'T BUILT. THEY'RE MAINTAINED.



No machine maintains greens better than the John Deere 2500 Tri-Plex Greens Mower. After years of extensive testing feedback from literally thousands of superintendents worldwide, the 2500 has been engineered to give an exceptional quality of cut, the utmost in operator comfort, and the highest level of serviceability. Cut is king on the 2500. The cutting unit suspension carries the weight of the lift arms and grass catchers on the traction unit instead of the cutting unit. The 2500 also has the lowest psi of any tri-plex greens mower. And all controls are conveniently located at the operator's fingertips. For a better look at the 2500, call your local John Deere distributor or 1-800-537-8233.

www.JohnDeere.com



JOHN DEERE

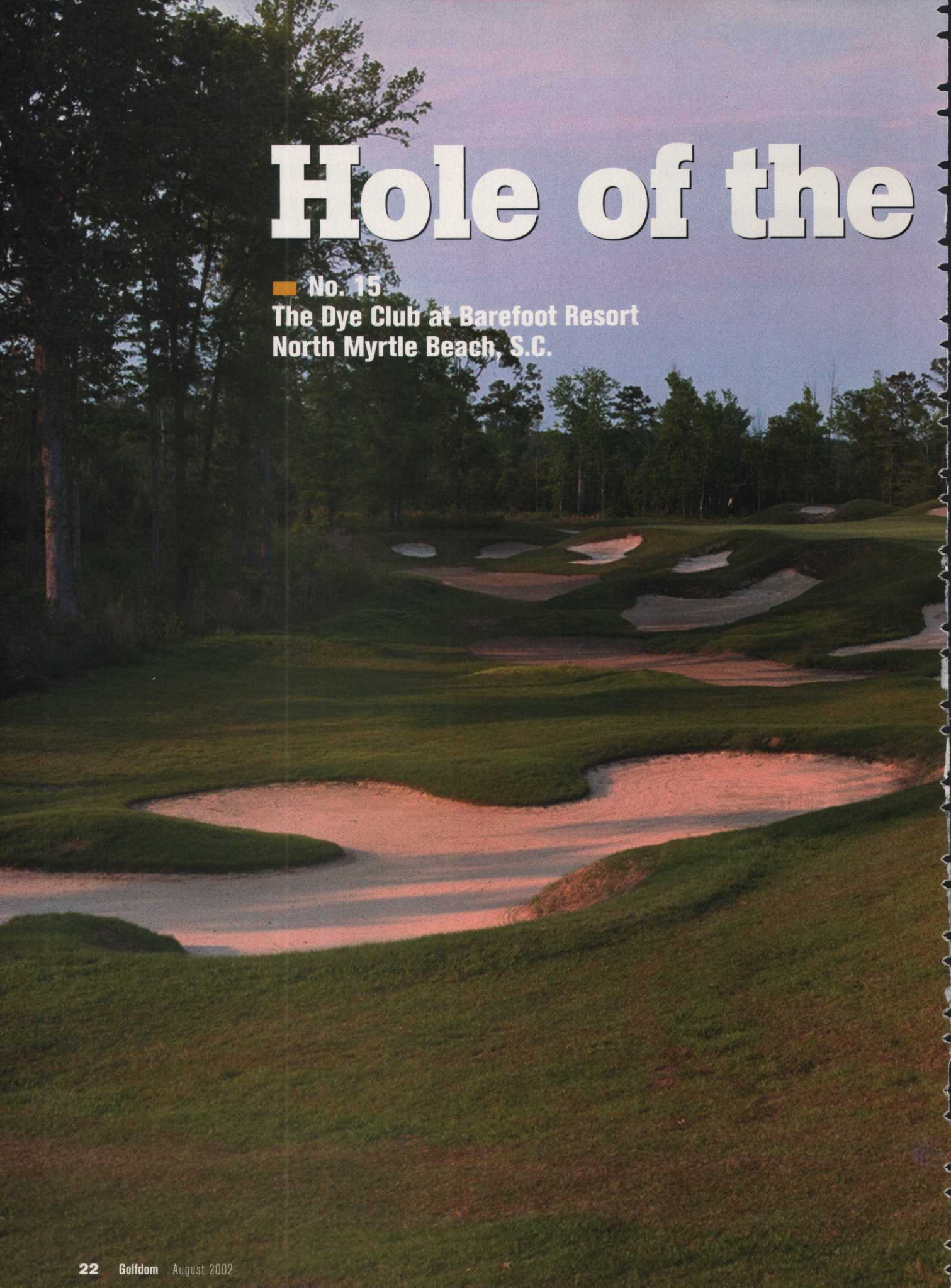
NOTHING RUNS LIKE A DEERE

CIRCLE NO. 110

Hole of the

■ No. 15

The Dye Club at Barefoot Resort
North Myrtle Beach, S.C.



Month

Mr. Sand Man

Pete Dye has distinguished company at Barefoot Resort, that golfing paradise in that golfing mecca known as the Myrtle Beach area in South Carolina. Barefoot Resort is home to four golf courses designed by Dye, Tom Fazio, Greg Norman and Davis Love.

The Dye Club at Barefoot Resort in North Myrtle Beach holds to Dye's reputation of designing challenging courses. Hit a bad shot, and you're going to be in trouble on the par-72, 7,343-yard layout. There's a good chance you'll end up in one of the course's many bunkers, especially on the course's par-3 No. 15, which has 20 bunkers.

"It's a tough hole," says David Zeidler, superintendent of the Dye Club and the Davis Love course. "Golfers are in and out of those bunkers all day."

Of course, the large number of bunkers poses the biggest maintenance challenge on the hole.

"Pete has kept us busy maintaining those bunkers," Zeidler says. "We're sure busy edging. I can tell you that!"

Play the Major Challenge at www.majorchallenge.com.

Golfdom's Hole of the Month is presented in partnership with:

www.johndeere.com



JOHN DEERE

MIKE KLINE

WE THOUGHT IT WAS TIME YOU HEARD THE HOLE STORY.



It's not easy being a pioneer. But since their arrival in 1996, the John Deere line of Aercore® Aerators, with their revolutionary belt-driven system and patented Flexi-Link™ design, have quickly become the number one aerators in the golf equipment industry. And with our tractor-mounted Aercore 2000, the bar for productivity has been raised even higher. Like the tractor-mounted 1500 and 1000 and the walk-behind 800, the Aercore 2000 produces a consistent, round hole. This is due to the Flexi-Link, which is attached to the rear of the tine leg and absorbs the forward motion of the aerator, allowing the tines to stay perpendicular

while they are in the ground. What you end up with are quality cored holes up to 4 inches deep, with productivity up to 100,066 sq. ft./hr. To see the Aercore Aerators in action, call your local John Deere distributor or 1-800-537-8233.



Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

Most of my peers were born in the 1940s and '50s. Many of us proudly performed military service for our country, which might make us part of a vanishing breed. Does it mean we're over the hill as effective superintendents? Thankfully, the answer is no. After all, we still cling to the core values of that bygone era: hard work and loyalty.

Superintendents who fit this profile have managed golf courses through hurricanes and tornados, droughts and floods. We've weathered booms, bankruptcies, grow-ins and renovations — all the while adapting to rapid changes in technology. We've thrived under extensive regulation and increasingly diverse workforces. We learned that the my-way-or-the-highway approach is no way to build a productive team in modern times.

My generation has heard every lame excuse for being absent or late to work. I wish I had a nickel for every power outage that sabotaged an alarm clock. We have wet-nursed and supported husbands, wives and children going through divorces, separations, family tragedies and growing pains. We have mentored future superintendents while still learning each day from the old masters of the craft.

We have also been dogged over the decades by Rachel Carson and subsequent generations of environmental activists in search of an argument over a problem that exists only in their minds. Never mind that one good volcanic eruption would put all their nonsensical arguments about how much golf courses pollute the universe to an end. Meanwhile, as a result of their zealotry, we've been forced to jump through political hoops just to do our jobs.

Where does all this life experience get us? We may long for longevity and stability in our jobs but the average tenure for a superintendent at one location is about seven years, according to *Golfdom's* studies. If that's true and superintendents earn their first positions at age 25, that means they'll be searching for new jobs at age 46 or 53. By then, they are established veterans and hopefully wise in the ways of the golf world. A major question, however, still plagues these long-standing members of our

We Are Definitely Not Over the Hill

BY JOEL JACKSON



THOSE OF US BORN
IN THE 1940S AND
1950S STILL CLING
TO THE CORE
VALUES OF HARD
WORK AND LOYALTY

profession: Is all this experience and training a bonus or baggage when you hit those ages?

The fact is that with a couple of thousand of turf-school graduates hitting the job market each year, there are lots of people in their late 20s and early 30s moving around in that seven-year cycle also looking for work.

And there are serious considerations we must face as we grow older. This is a stressful occupation, and the possibility of health problems increases. True or not, clubs may consider us damaged goods after a serious illness or major surgery. Some might conclude we don't have the energy to tackle the daily grind anymore merely because we have gray hair. While I don't think there is rampant ageism among owners, some clubs favor youth over experience for shortsighted, bottom-line reasons.

While some owners and club members may consider us over the hill, others of us are just tired of dealing with the vagaries of the profession. We have had enough after 30 years of baby-sitting Mother Nature's tantrums, beer budgets combined with champagne tastes, complaining golfers and carping employees, and misguided managers and obstinate owners.

That's not to say every day was a disaster or every club a living hell. We often left good people and good clubs to take on new challenges and better-paying jobs because it was time to take ourselves to the next level for a change.

Thankfully, most of us are still manning posts. Some of us have gone into sales to survive and revive. A few have even gone into club management and ownership. Here's hoping all of us will be able to stay engaged in the business we love until it's time to retire with dignity.

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.

Over the



Roger Smith felt comfortable in his job at Ridgefields CC in Kingsport, Tenn. The 52-year-old certified superintendent worked there for 30 years and kept his club in what he thought was excellent condition. Smith had established a good rapport with the owners and thought he'd retire from the course.

In retrospect, Smith says he should have recognized the signs of his impending departure, which occurred in March when he was fired. His friends on the original board of directors left the club or retired, and younger members with unreasonable expectations (in no small part thanks to TV and the Stimp-meter, Smith says) joined the board.

"It started to wear on me mentally about three years ago," Smith says. "I could feel the sense of loyalty waning, and I found myself scrambling more and more to meet the demands of the new board. My biggest mistake was trying to please everyone all the time.

When they decided to let me go, it was almost a relief."

Smith's story is not unusual for superintendents over 50 in a profession that increasingly values youth over experience. After working at the same club for decades, superintendents often fall victim to many of the "old superintendent" myths. Club personnel may perceive their experience as arrogance. Their salaries may rankle some board members, who feel they can hire a newly minted turf graduate at half the price and half the age. Their opposition to green chairmen's whims may strike some as sheer stubbornness.



Old. Overpaid. Arrogant. Stubborn.

Over-50 superintendents say it's time to bust these myths and prove they can still contribute to the profession

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR., MANAGING EDITOR

All these perceptions may doom over-50 superintendents.

The reality facing older superintendents is far more complex than the myths. Sure, some superintendents fall victim to complacency, but far more work hard to stay on top of industry developments to remain competitive in today's tight job market. In fact, such work is a necessity, given how hard it is to find a new job after 50.

There's no doubt the profession can take a toll. Some older superintendents tire of the hours, workload and political headaches, and they change careers. Those who stick it out until they retire say it's important to map out their futures so they're not left wondering what their lives will be like once they stop being superintendents.

But it's clear that the 50-year milestone doesn't necessarily spell the end of superin-

tendents' careers. Older superintendents still have a lot to offer their younger colleagues before they move on, especially if they approach their changing roles with enthusiasm. Fortunately for the future of the profession, most are willing to accept their evolving roles as mentors and look forward to giving back to the industry they love.

Younger all the time

There's no denying that superintendents, as a group, are young. Figures from the GCSAA's 2000 Compensation and Benefits Report show that only 2,612 out of 16,713 active members are over 50, around 15 percent. Only 2 percent are over 60. That means 85 percent of superintendents are age 49 and younger, while the median age of active members is 41. Though there's no research on why superin-

Continued on page 28

“

IT'S A MORE

COMPETITIVE INDUSTRY

THAN WHEN I FIRST

GOT INVOLVED,

AND YOU HAVE TO STAY

CURRENT IF YOU'RE GOING

TO SURVIVE.”

BOB ALONZI, CGCS
FENWAY GC
SCARSDALE, N.Y.

Continued from page 27

tendents choose to leave the profession as they get older, the numbers prove the profession takes its toll as superintendents age.

Abe Hughes, superintendent at Coronado GC in Chandler, Ariz., says he's noticed a trend for golf courses in his area to hire younger superintendents rather than experienced hands. The outspoken 65-year-old Hughes has been disgusted by the attitudes of the younger superintendents he has encountered at recent association chapter meetings, where he sees only eight to 10 colleagues remaining from his generation. It's almost like they're invisible to the younger guys, he says.

“You're sitting in a room with guys half your age, and you're completely ignored,” Hughes says. “They act like they know everything, and you don't know anything. Who do they think trained a lot of them?”

Hughes says he blames the GCSAA for part of the problem because it emphasizes four-year degrees instead of experience.

“I recently received my 25-year membership

pin from the association,” Hughes says. “You need a magnifying glass to see it. That's an indication to me that older superintendents aren't much on the mind of GCSAA's leadership.”

Though Hughes' strong opinions don't necessarily reflect all superintendents over 50, he does represent a number of superintendents who feel the association abandons them as they approach retirement. It may seem that way to someone who only scans the educational program list because the GCSAA doesn't mold its educational programs based on age, focusing instead on superintendent classifications, says Kim Heck, GCSAA's director of career development.

The GCSAA doesn't ignore its elder statesmen, however, Heck says. The association offers some educational programs at every annual conference specifically for superintendents over 50. At each of the last three conferences, for example, at least one seminar was dedicated to career-path planning, whether the superintendent wants to stay in the profession or move into other green industry careers, Heck

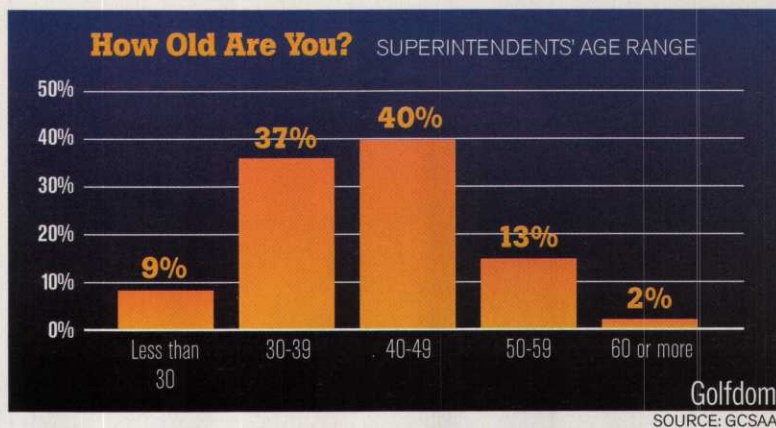
IN A PERFECT WORLD
THERE'D BE NO
BROWN
PATCH.

says. GCSAA also offers seminars on financial planning and retirement. "We view ourselves largely as a clearinghouse for information for older superintendents, whatever their interests may be," Heck says.

Warding off complacency

If they want to stay in the business, the worst thing older superintendents can do is succumb to complacency, say Bob and Joe Alonzi, 50-something brothers who care for courses in New York. It's easy to do, particularly when a superintendent has worked at the same club for several decades. Superintendents can become stuck in their ways and resist change.

But the 59-year-old Bob says older superintendents must remember they're competing against kids right out of college, fresh with the latest theories and technologies to care for courses. If older superintendents can't show their owners that their knowledge is current and comparable, they may find themselves being shown the door. Once that door slams shut on older superintendents, it's hard to



pry it back open to get other jobs.

"You have to stay abreast of the latest developments to prevent yourself from becoming outdated," says Bob, certified superintendent of Fenway GC in Scarsdale, N.Y., and a 35-year industry veteran. "It's a more competitive industry than when I first got involved, and you have to stay current if you're going to survive."

Continued on page 30

HEY LOOK, A PERFECT WORLD.

Ever notice how brown patch can turn a perfect course into a perfect mess? Good thing there's Fore[®] Rainshield[®] specialty fungicide. It provides the most cost-effective control of brown patch, pythium and more. Plus, it features patented Rainshield technology to minimize wash-off under extreme moisture conditions. There really is a perfect world – and it's available at just the right price.

NO BROWN PATCH FOR LESS.

Dow AgroSciences
Fore[®]
Rainshield[®]
Specialty Fungicide



Bob (left) and Joe Alonzi say they've survived as superintendents into their 50s in part because they've been able to support each other through the rough times that come with older age in the profession.

Continued from page 29

Fifty-three-year-old Joe, certified superintendent of Westchester CC in Rye, N.Y., says older superintendents must recognize when they tire of learning about new developments or engaging in political battles at their clubs. When the job ceases to be fun, it's time to leave, he adds. It's always better to leave a job on your own terms rather than be forced out.

"I've talked to a lot of older superintendents who feel they've learned everything about the industry and aren't willing to change with the times," Joe Alonzi says. "It's those guys who eventually find themselves out of jobs."

Five Alternative Professions After 50

Several GCSAA committees looked at a list of careers superintendents could consider if they decide to leave the profession. The top five are:

- general management;
- design and construction of golf courses;
- golf course ownership;
- sales/consulting in the green industry; and
- research or teaching in the field of turfgrass management.

SOURCE: GCSAA
Golfdom

Changing careers

If superintendents grow weary of daily battles with Mother Nature, golfers and boards of directors, maybe it's time to consider moving into other professions (*see sidebar left*). Heck says she doesn't field many calls from older superintendents asking for advice about how to stay in the profession. On the contrary, most of her calls come from superintendents looking to get out.

"The majority of calls I get are about career counseling as older superintendents look to get out of the business," Heck says. "As they get older, superintendents start thinking about their futures, and they have to make a choice about whether they want to stay in golf course maintenance. Many do not."

Smith and Hughes both say they're ready to leave the profession, although they'd like to stay in the green industry. Hughes already has a consulting firm. Smith is still considering his options, which may include starting his own landscaping business.

"My wife has begged me not to go back to being a superintendent," Smith says. "[Since I left the profession], my blood pressure is down, my weight's down and I'm more relaxed than

Continued on page 32