

course maintenance career when he was 14, mowing greens part-time at St. Cloud CC. A short time after, Nicol joined the course's maintenance crew full-time. He enjoyed the job and loved working outside. He began to entertain thoughts of a career in the field when he graduated from high school.

"Every year [after the golf season], I watched the [St. Cloud] superintendent get in his car and drive to Florida for the winter," Nicol recalls. "I thought to myself, 'This guy has it figured out.'"

Nicol attended St. Cloud State for two years and then enrolled in Penn State University's turfgrass management program. While at Penn State, he interned at the Playboy Resort in Lake Geneva, Wis. After receiving a two-year certificate from Penn State in 1975, Nicol re-

Nicol speaks his mind. And he'll never tell you what you want to hear if he doesn't believe it himself.

mained at the Playboy Resort for two more years. But he longed to return to Minnesota and did so in the spring of 1978. He painted houses and performed other odd jobs during the summer before landing a gig as superintendent at Bunker Hills GC, a municipal track in Coon Rapids, Minn.

Nicol stayed at Bunker Hills for about 19 years. In that time, he says he did all he could do — PGA Senior Tour events, local tournaments and course construction. But after nearly two decades, Nicol felt he'd reached his peak at the course. He was 45 and wanted to move on.

In 1996, a dream job became a distinct possibility. Hazeltine National had an opening for a superintendent and the course's green chairman, Reed Macken-

zie, contacted Nicol to interview for the post.

Nicol says he was offered the job shortly after a Hazeltine committee member quizzed his wife, Barbara, in the restroom of a restaurant where the second interview was held. "People tell me, 'Barbara is the one who got you the job,'" Nicol says with a smile.

Mackenzie, the USGA's current president who served two stints as Hazeltine's green chairman (1985-1991 and 1996-2001), says Nicol was hired for myriad reasons.

"First, he maintained a municipal course with high traffic extremely well on a limited budget, which meant he was fairly efficient and used his resources well," Mackenzie says. "Second, he was well-regarded by the people who played the course daily. Third, he knows how to grow grass."

Hazeltine needed help with the latter, Mackenzie notes. The course's condition was not at members' expectations when Nicol arrived at Hazeltine that October. But Nicol, who says he was "excited and charged" about going to Hazeltine, was subtle in his approach and didn't try to do too much too quickly.

A few weeks after joining Hazeltine, Nicol and Barbara were at the airport waiting to board a plane to Florida for a vacation they scheduled before Jim took the job. Barbara pointed to the morning newspaper and told him to read the headline, which said, "Hazeltine to host 2002 PGA."

"That's how I found out about it," Nicol says. "Barbara and I just laughed."

Nicol didn't scrap his vacation, though, to begin preparations for the tournament. That all began the following summer when architect Rees Jones was bought in to revamp his father's 1962 design, including stretching it to 7,350 yards. Jones also rebuilt bunkers and added a few championship tees.

During a "normal summer," Nicol doesn't work most weekends, and he and

Continued on page 42

Caretakers of the Game



James Nicol
CGCS
Hazeltine National GC
Chaska, Minn.

The 84th PGA Championship will be held at Hazeltine National Golf Club during the week of August 12-18. The prospect of hosting a major championship gives our club the opportunity to again show-

case this terrific design by Robert Trent Jones, Sr., which has been enhanced by his son, Rees.

As the superintendent at Hazeltine, I realize that our staff and I are on the spot to ensure that the golf course is in superb condition for the week of the Championship. I greatly admired the result of the hard work put in by Craig Currier and the staff at Bethpage State Park for the U.S. Open in June, and hope we can enjoy similar success.

It is interesting to learn that 66% of the field at the U.S. Open wore non-metal spikes. I know that Hazeltine is in better condition because of our non-metal spike policy. The dearth of metal spikes simply gives us a better opportunity of having the golf course that the membership, The PGA of America and the players demand for a major championship and everyday play.

We look forward to hosting the game's best players, and if we see a heavy dose of Black Widow cleats that week, the players will then have an even better set of greens for "The Season's Final Major, Glory's Last Shot."

Brought to you by


Softspikes[®]

(800) 638-0075 www.softspikes.com

CIRCLE NO. 117
www.golfdom.com **Golfdom 41**

The Real Deal



Hazeltine National certified superintendent Jim Nicol (far left) is quick to credit his crew for the course's continued success.

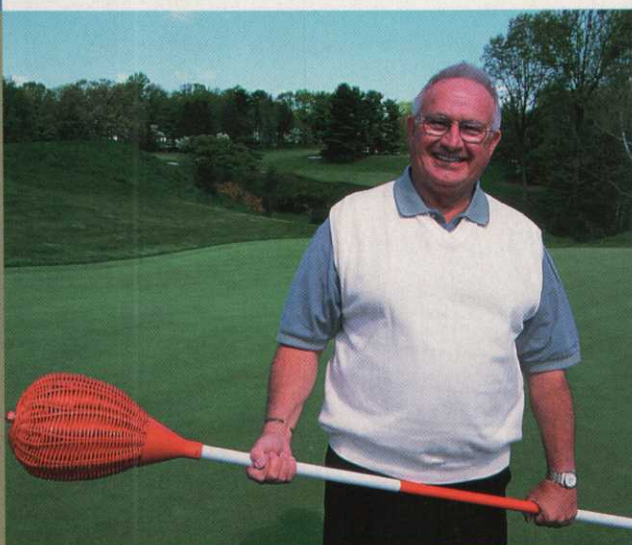
PENN STATE



Get a world-class education in golf course turfgrass management in just 18 months.

"The Penn State Golf Course Turfgrass Management Program provided me with a foundation to build my career."

Paul Latshaw, retired golf course superintendent, host of two U.S. Opens, two U.S. Senior Opens, one PGA Championship, and four Masters Championships



To find out how Penn State's Golf Course Turfgrass Management Program can help you succeed, call 814-863-0129 or visit our Web site at <http://www.agronomy.psu.edu/Academic/TurfgrassT.html>

Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce. U Ed. AGR 02-127

Continued from page 41

Barbara take vacations. But this isn't a normal summer, and Nicol is resigned to the fact that Hazeltine is his second home. The carnival is coming to town, and Nicol is in charge of the main attraction.

"Right now our focus is on the championship," he says. "Everything we're doing is geared toward that week."

Don't ever accuse Nicol of being a workaholic, however. He prefers to work eight-or nine-hour days with weekends off and will return to that schedule soon after the carnival leaves town.

But don't get him wrong, Nicol loves coming to work and thanks the turfgrass gods for leading him to Hazeltine. "I can't imagine having a better job," he says. But being superintendent of Hazeltine is only a job. "It's a priority, but I have a life," Nicol says.

Nicol's life is Barbara, whom he married 15 years ago, his family and his friends. He and Barbara are nearly inseparable. "She's my best friend, and we do just about everything together," Nicol says. The couple doesn't have kids.

Continued on page 44

JAMES C. CASTLE

CR-10

PROJECT TIME



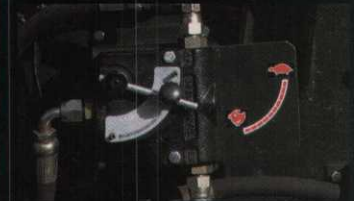
Cross conveyor with swivel action quickly fills bunkers and back fills trenches.



Broadcast top dress from 15' to 40'.



Quickly load top dressers or move material.



Attachment flow control offers greater flexibility over spinner and cross conveyor speeds.



Patent-pending three-position switch makes it easy to handle every CR-10 function.



Whether it's fairway top dressing, bunker renovation or material relocation, the CR-10 makes the most of your projects and your time. Its handheld three position switch, flow control for the cross conveyor and self-cleaning hopper make it the most effective material handler available. Combine these features with the tiltable spinner attachment for a fairway top dresser with unparalleled control over width, depth and angle. For fairway top dressing, construction or renovation projects, make sure you look at the CR-10, the next generation in material handling and top dressing. **Call for a demonstration or FREE video.**



THE LEADER. SINCE 1961.

1655 101st Ave. NE • Minneapolis, MN 55449-4420

U.S.A. • (800)679-8201 • FAX:(763) 785-0556

www.turfc.com

The Real Deal

Continued from page 42

During the golf season, assuming the heat index isn't pushing 190 and there isn't a tournament happening, Nicol doesn't spend many weekends at Hazeltine. And he doesn't apologize for it.

He relates a story about bumping into Mackenzie a few years ago on a Saturday. Nicol was working, and Mackenzie was playing golf. Mackenzie had seen Nicol working the previous Saturday as well.

"Reed came up and said to me, 'Jim, what are you doing here? Don't you have this figured out yet?'" Nicol recalls.

Mackenzie was basically telling Nicol not to burn himself out. "If he's done a good job of hiring staff, which he has done, then there's no reason why Jim can't take time off even during the height of the season," Mackenzie says.

The encounter with Mackenzie made Nicol think. It also reminded him of something that legendary turfgrass professor Joe Duich taught students at Penn State. "Duich told us on the last day of school to train our staffs, surround ourselves with good people and live normal lives," Nicol says.

Nicol wants his staff members to have lives, too. After his first two years at Hazeltine, he empowered his staff to devise a plan so they could also have most weekends off. They did, and it has worked out well.

Nicol also isn't one to keep his crew at work until the crickets start chirping. Twelve-hour days equate to a high risk for accidents because employees get tired and careless after working too many hours, he says.

"We also don't work long hours for budgetary reasons," Nicol says. "Overtime costs money."

Nicol is the boss, and everyone on his staff knows it. But he's not a control freak, and he wants his crew to feel in charge of maintaining Hazeltine. "Here's how I look at it: If this place fails because I get in a car wreck and am laid up for three weeks, then I'm a failure," Nicol says.

Storby, in his ninth year at Hazeltine, says he loves working for Nicol because Nicol trusts him.

"He's helped me grow," Storby says. "He's taught me a lot."

Storby prefers Nicol's no-nonsense approach. "He's very straightforward, and you always know where he's coming from," Storby says.

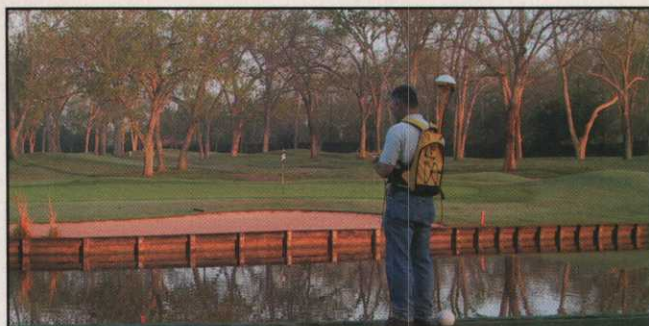
But not everyone likes Nicol's philosophy to tell it like it is. Sometimes, what he has to say doesn't go over well with the people he's talking to, which has included crew members, Nicol admits.

"But here's the thing," he says. "No. 1, it's never personal. No. 2, I do it because I care. No. 3, I'm not always right."

Nicol says he's been described as being "brutally honest," a character trait he does not deny nor relish.

"Some people say it's a quality, but I sometimes think it's

Continued on page 46



GPS Sales - Rentals & Field Services

Precise GPS/GIS data provides many possibilities: Complete inventory of assets, redesign of existing courses, build yardage booklets, produce maps of irrigation system with drainage analysis. Possibly reduce fertilizer cost with precise maps and manage overall course maintenance and management activities.



Golf Course Mapping ♦ Inventory As-BUILTS
♦ Irrigation ♦ Maintenance ♦ Construction

877-755-4680

♦ 5700 GPS TS ♦ Explore/IT Systems

Advanced Geodetic Surveys, Inc.

(979) 553-4677 e-mail pj@agsgps.com

Visit our Website at <http://www.agsgps.com>

(979) 553-3756 fax

CIRCLE NO. 128



Shattertine®



Sportstine®



Finetina®

AerWay® offers low cost, low maintenance, long lasting options for all your turf aeration needs!

A Full Family of Tines - AerWay® offers you customized aeration options for your greens, tees, fairways and roughs.

Effective Deep Tine Action - goes to the heart of soil problems by relieving compaction. This results in strong root growth and outstanding drought resistance.

AerWay®



**AerWay® - Effective Aeration
When You Need It - Where You Need It!**

for further information call **1-800-457-8310**

Advanced Aeration Systems

www.aerway.com aerway@thehollandgroupinc.com

CIRCLE NO. 120

Invested in nature's stewards, the...

Keepers of the Green

"The Tools to Manage Turf"

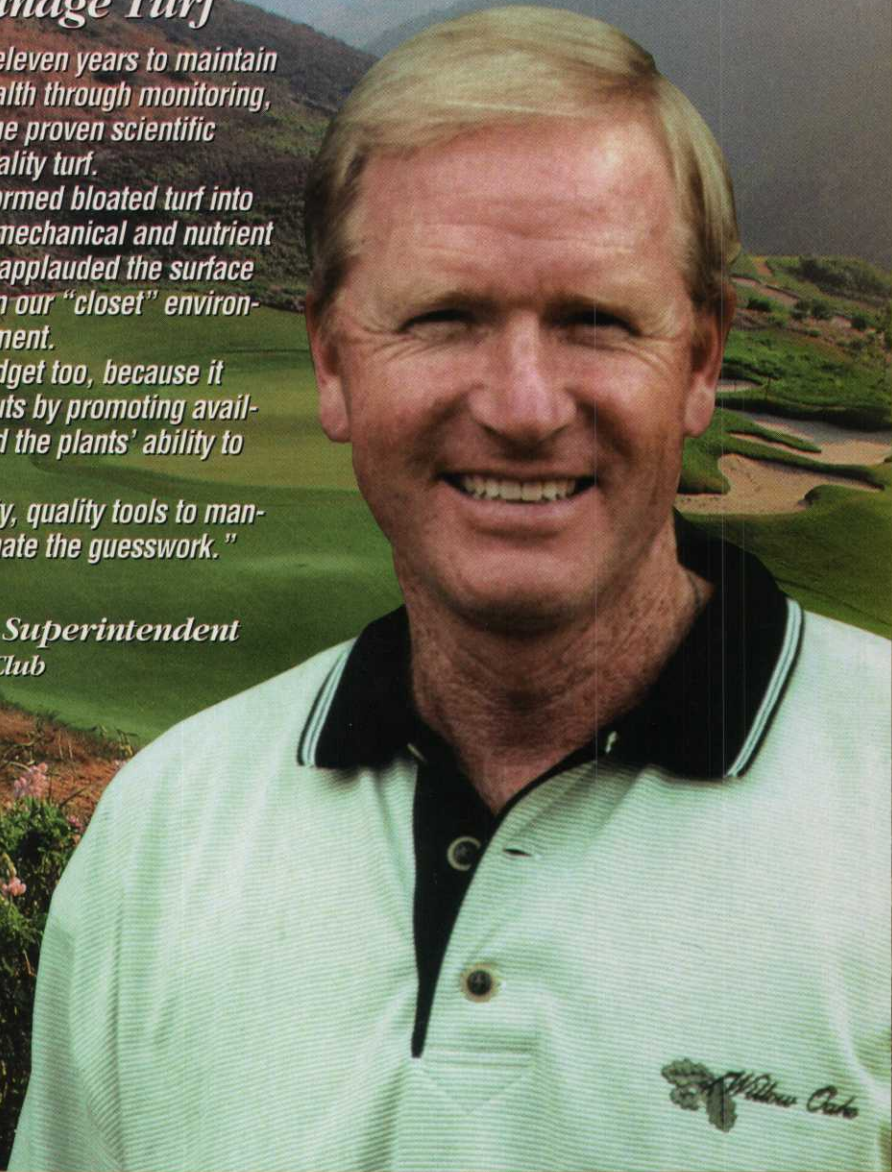
"I have relied on Floratine for eleven years to maintain healthy turf. Focusing on plant health through monitoring, diagnosing, and adjusting gives me proven scientific methods to achieve my goal of quality turf.

In two years here we've transformed bloated turf into a lean and healthy stand through mechanical and nutrient management. My members have applauded the surface the Floratine program produced on our "closet" environment of shade and poor air movement.

The program is easy on the budget too, because it reduces dependence on other inputs by promoting availability of soil nutrient reserves and the plants' ability to process them.

With Floratine, I have versatility, quality tools to manage turf, and the science to eliminate the guesswork."

*John Pennypacker, Superintendent
Willow Oaks Country Club
Richmond, Virginia*



Floratine

Invested In The Wonder

Invested in the power of nature...

Committed to her custodians, the Keepers of the Green.



The Real Deal

Continued from page 44

a fault," Nicol says. "Sometimes I step over the line."

Nicol says he's "toned down the rhetoric," but he knows his demeanor has offended some people.

"I know there are people out there who don't like me," he says. "They think I'm brash and arrogant. But I don't think I'm arrogant as much as I'm confident."

You have to be confident to be in Nicol's shoes. Do you think Hazeltine's brass would want a superintendent without a backbone?

"He's a tough and firm employer with rules that [crew workers] are expected to follow," Mackenzie says. "On the other hand, he's fair and treats people well. He's a terrific manager of people."

Perhaps he gets along well with most people because he's a great conversationalist. Nicol is articulate and commands your attention. He'll have you thinking pensively one minute and guffawing loudly the next.

Barbara describes her husband as forthright and honest.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HAZELTINE NATIONAL GC

New at Hazeltine National GC is a bridge dedicated to the late Payne Stewart, who won the last Major held at the course, the 1991 U.S. Open.

"He's an emotional person," she adds. "He's not the type of person who holds anything in."

You get the impression Nicol loves to talk and not keep much in. But he's the first to admit he needs to shut up and be a better listener.

"I try to be quiet," he says with a smirk. "It's hard. It's a fault I work on improving constantly."

Nicol credits Mackenzie for teaching him how to become a better listener. Mackenzie likes Nicol's ability to relate to golfers and green committee members, even when they ask dumb questions.

"He's patient with those people to a point," Mackenzie says. "He's also willing to admit he doesn't know the answer to a question but will find out."

Nicol may help lead one of the country's great courses, but it hasn't gone to his head.

"I'm at a prestigious club and I have a great job, but I'll guarantee you there are superintendents out there who aren't as fortunate as me, but they're better than me," he says. "I know people at small 18-hole and nine-hole clubs that do wonderful jobs. They're the guys I respect, and I tip my hat to them."

For Nicol, there's plenty to look forward to at Hazeltine in the coming years. Next year, the course hosts the 2003 National Amputee Championship. In 2006, it hosts the men's amateur, and the PGA returns in 2009.

Then in 2016, the Ryder Cup comes to town. Nicol, who will be 64 then, says the tournament would make an awesome swan song.

"That would be 20 years for me at Hazeltine," he says dreamily. "I hope I can make it that long. That would be great." ■

Ranked #1

Weed Man®

**North America's
Largest Lawn Care
Franchise Company!**

- Ranked #1 in Lawn Care Franchise Satisfaction Rankings, *SUCCESS* magazine*
- Protected territory enables you to market efficiently
- Systems that will increase profits and efficiency
- In depth training permits rapid integration
- Network of dealers provide a wealth of information
- Leaders in the industry will help mentor and grow your business

2001-2002 projected sales

1-888-321-9333 • www.weed-man.com

CIRCLE NO. 126

Elk-Proof Bunkers

At Druids Glen Golf Course

Some golf course superintendents must contend with geese, others with bobcats and others with gophers. Each geographic area has its own native wildlife and requires the skill and innovation of the superintendents to find the solutions to having their golf courses exist in harmony with that wildlife. Klingstone products have been the answer to some of these conflicts.

Clint Goold, CGCS at Druids Glen Golf Course in Kent, Washington found that the application of Klingstone as a bunker barrier had added benefit of making the bunkers elk-proof. This Keith Foster designed course was built with McKenzie style bunkers - steep-walled with deep bottom floors. The elk had selected the pot bunkers as preferred bedding locations where they could merely raise their heads to survey the surrounding territory. During their residency they would paw the base of the bunker with their hooves, digging into the bunker base and throwing stones and rocks onto the fairway around the bunker. After Klingstone had been applied to address bunker erosion and contamination issues, the elk could no longer dig into the base.

When a golf course in Colorado had problems with rabbits burrowing into the natural cart paths, they contacted Leisure Time Associates of Littleton. Leisure Time applied Klingstone to the problem areas, the rabbits gave up digging, were treated for carpal tunnel syndrome and found more suitable digs. The rabbits are happy in their new neighborhood; the maintenance crews are happy that they don't have to repair damaged cart paths, and the golfers are happy with smoother cart ride - one of those rare win-win situations.

For others, the problem is prairie dogs, ground hogs or foxes that burrow into bunkers and pull up the fabric liners. Klingstone (not a fabric) creates a barrier that discourages these and other pests from practicing their vandalism on golf course bunkers.

Klingstone is a liquid polyurethane that is applied to the bunker base and sidewalls where it reacts with available moisture and cures to a permanent polymeric barrier. It eliminates erosion of the sidewalls and contamination of bunker sand from the soils beneath. The fact that it can stop bunker damage by the native wildlife is an added benefit. Klingstone has been used on golf courses throughout the United States. call for references, literature, pricing, etc.



Green Mountain International, Inc.

1-800-942-5151

235 Pigeon St., Waynesville, NC 28786

www.klingstone.com



Warren Buffet is worth a few billion dollars because he's all common sense. He recently wrote about big business's latest self-destructive trend: corporate doublespeak. Some might call the talk BS, but Buffet put it more diplomatically in a recent Berkshire Hathaway annual report: "Bad terminology is the enemy of good thinking."

He was referring to the smoke and mirrors that CEOs and their press-release writers put out to cover up for their inability to function with integrity. Buffet transformed his unusually sarcastic remarks into a golf analogy, mocking today's financial reports: "In golf, my score is frequently below par on a pro-forma basis. I have firm plans to restructure my putting stroke and therefore only count the swings I take before reaching the green."

Naturally, because we've all been told one too many times that golf is a metaphor for life, the insulting doublespeak approach has found its way to the golf course business.

Many courses have chugged along over the years doing quite fine on mom-and-pop business models. Management companies stepped in and turned around many run-down munis, often creating jobs and better facilities in the process.

Great. But then these courses and companies began going public. Their owners began to fantasize about IPOs and buying second homes in Malibu. Unfortunately, golf companies tried to grow steadily in a business that is cyclical by nature. They tried to grow by paying too much for courses that too few people play at a time when the game isn't growing.

Now, other than a couple of straight shooters who wisely remain privately held and devoted to customer service, plenty of golf management companies are experiencing growing pains. But instead of saying it like it is and trusting people who know golf to help them right the ship, they are dumping bad terminology on us to mask what we all know. They had started when we went from "public golf" to "daily fee." Then "marshals" became "player assistants."

Now the MBA Doublespeak 101 has become downright insulting. A few recent gems:

Let's Deep Six the Doublespeak

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



IN THE WORDS OF
WARREN BUFFETT,
'BAD TERMINOLOGY
IS THE ENEMY OF
GOOD THINKING'

■ "We have improved the demographics of our customer base." But aren't all green fees printed on the same paper?

■ "It's a platform to reposition the brand." Translation: "We're starting over from scratch."

■ "Quality of rounds is more important to our brand than quantity." Do you mean that fewer rounds played at a higher price is better than satisfied repeat customers over the long-term? Yep, that's working really well.

■ "He has left us to spend more time with his family." Also, "He's pursuing other interests." Yeah, right.

■ "We can create a unified, focused corporate structure to unlock the full value of our combined property portfolio." In other words, we're going to merge to avoid going out of business.

■ "We will not devalue our properties by lowering green fees." Tell me, how does going broke help your property value? I guess we'll ask the bankruptcy judge who gives your course away for a couple of old gang mowers and a bucket of range balls.

Apparently, many in golf's upper echelon do not understand Buffet's simple advice never to invest in a business you don't understand, buy companies with strong histories of profitability and always invest in the long-term.

Golf is a game of integrity. It's also a difficult, expensive pursuit where customers need — ugh, MBAism coming here — "value" to keep coming back. But not the property "value" that MBAs are caught up in.

It's terminology that should go like this: Give people decent service and a fair green fee on a nicely maintained course that can be played in a reasonable amount of time.

Let's hope good terminology becomes the enemy of bad thinking.

Contributing Editor Geoff Shackelford's can be reached at geoffshackelford@aol.com

Welcome to...

The Future of Growing Grass

THE HydroSeeder® ADDITIVE SYSTEM
CREATING THE IDEAL GROWING ENVIRONMENT



SPRAY-ON ONE-STEP TURF ESTABLISHMENT

- **Seed—Mulch—Fertilizer—Bio-Stimulants**
- **Soil Amendments—Beneficial Bacteria**
- **Erosion Control Tackifiers**
- **No need for sod or blankets**
- **Cut costs by 50%**
- **Reduce watering and fertilization**
- **Establish quality "weed free" turf at an accelerated rate.**

SMARTER WAYS TO WORK™

FINN

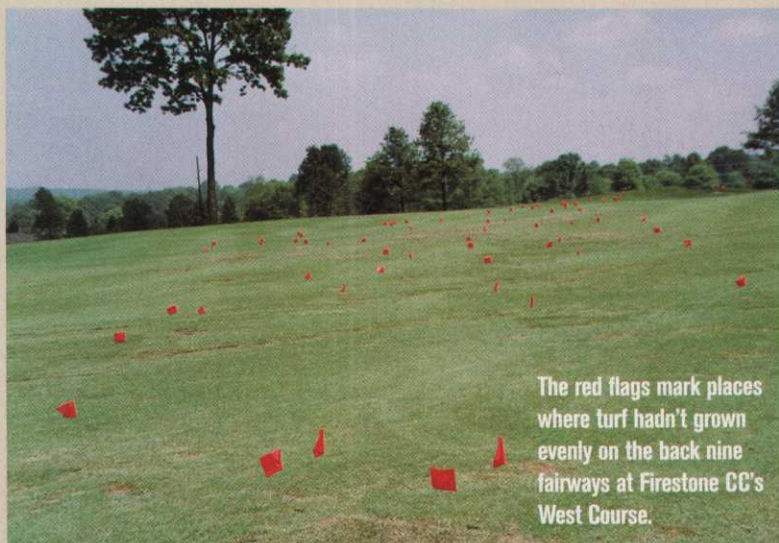
1-800-543-7166 • www.finncorp.com

9281 LeSaint Drive, Fairfield, OH 45014

Seeds of Struggle

Lessons learned from problems seeding the back nine smoothed the way for a flawless front nine seeding at Firestone CC's West Course

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR., MANAGING EDITOR



The red flags mark places where turf hadn't grown evenly on the back nine fairways at Firestone CC's West Course.

Problem

Firestone CC's natural drainage patterns allowed rainstorms to wash away seed on the back nine fairways continuously, leading to increased labor costs and uneven coverage.

Solution

When it came time to seed the front nine, superintendent John DiMascio decided to put a layer of hydromulch over the seed to protect it from nature's wrath. The result was a consistent, smooth playing surface at a lower cost.

Mother Nature just wouldn't cut Firestone CC superintendent John DiMascio a break as he renovated the Akron, Ohio, club's West Course. Every time the construction crew seeded the back nine fairways, She'd blow in with high winds and rain, which washed the seed into drainage swales and roughs. Then DiMascio would send a crew to put down more seed, only to have another rainstorm destroy their work.

"We finally got the seed down to stay, but it wasn't pretty," DiMascio says. "There were a lot of bare spots and uneven seeding because we had such a hard time keeping the seed down on the fairways."

Despite the problems on the back nine, DiMascio says he and Brian Mabie, the club's director of golf course maintenance, never con-

sidered sodding the front nine when the project reached that stage of construction.

"We decided it would be too expensive and wouldn't grow in evenly," DiMascio says. "It was back to seeding, no matter what problems we'd had before."

The problem

Firestone CC has a history of hosting tournaments on its 54 holes, which are divided into the original South Course (1929), the North Course (1969) and the West Course (1989). While the South Course is by far the most famous, the other two courses have also hosted their share of the world's best players. Unfortunately, the West Course never caught on.

"Revenue declined on the West Course and it never captured the hearts of our players," Mabie says. "With the other two courses being so famous and well-respected, we decided to tear out the West Course and improve the design."

In 2001, the club hired Tom Fazio, who doesn't like to use catch basins in fairways, to handle the redesign, DiMascio says. Therefore, the fairways are edged by steep swales which carry water to catch basins in the roughs. Though the swales help the fairways drain quickly after a rainstorm, they presented problems during seeding. After a hard rain, the water washed the seed into the roughs. DiMascio says he and the crew tried to stop the erosion by building sod barriers to prevent the seed from washing into the rough — to no avail.

"It stopped the seed from washing away to an extent, but what really happened was that it built up on the edges of the rough," DiMascio says. "That meant uneven growth in the middle of the fairways."