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**I**t's no news that golf course maintenance is a pressure-packed profession. Soon, the profession will make the Top 10 list for "The Most Stressful Jobs in America." The pressure and stress is directly related to golfers' increased expectations for the courses they play to be wall-to-wall green without a smidgen of brown. Of course, many golfers are getting this crazy notion of perfection by watching PGA Tour events on television.

When golfers see unblemished courses on the tube every weekend, they begin to expect similar conditions at their clubs. Soon, they're demanding such conditions.

All of this is leading to a road of ruin for some superintendents. Many of them try to give golfers what they want, but they don't have the bucks in their budgets to appease golfers' desires for flawless conditions. In the end, they take the blame for being "inefficient."

In turn, some of these superintendents blame their problem on the PGA Tour for only playing tournaments on courses in immaculate condition. But, as it turns out, the PGA Tour may not be to blame.

During a seminar on golf technology at the GCSAA show in February, I asked Jon Scott, vice president of agronomy for the PGA Tour, what he thought about superintendents blaming the PGA Tour for raising the bar on golf course maintenance. First, Scott said the issue was "exaggerated." Then, however, he proceeded to politely blame TV for demanding that PGA Tour courses be in such ideal condition. Although he was gentlemanly in his approach, Scott didn't hold back.

"The advent of the televised golf event has been the driving force in the market demand for better conditioned golf courses," Scott said. "Television isn't enamored with brown. Many times, TV [producers] have come to us and said, '[The course] isn't green enough. Can you put some fertilizer out or can you paint this?'"

"The sponsors connected [to the tournament], who want to sell their products, don't agree with brown," Scott continued. "They like green very much. It's the color of money."

Even if a course contains some brown, which most of the players don't mind as long as brown translates to fair playing conditions, TV

## Time to Turn TV On to Brown Turf

BY LARRY AYLWARD



THIS IS ABOUT  
MORE THAN THE  
COLOR OF MONEY;  
THIS IS ABOUT  
LIVELIHOODS

has a knack for masking it, Scott says.

"Brown isn't beautiful," Scott admits, "but brown is OK. [The problem is,] how do we get that message out? I'm not sure."

To a degree, Scott answered his own question when he said the issue needs to be further discussed, and that more media coverage is needed to explain that brown turf isn't bad. But Scott, while disagreeing with TV's green-is-gold philosophy, sounded like he was ready to wave the white flag.

"You're fighting a losing battle because it's an economic issue," he said. "I'm afraid this cat got out of the bag a long time ago at a club in Georgia that we all revere. And it's awfully hard to put that cat back in the bag."

Well, Mr. Scott, that cat has to be put back — stuffed back — in the bag. What you might not realize is that superintendents' reputations, and jobs, could be on the line because of this inane issue.

This is about more than the color of money; this is about livelihoods. I can't tell you how many superintendents blame the Augusta Syndrome, which was born from The Masters on network TV, for creating hardship in their lives.

It's time Scott and the PGA take a hard-line approach with the TV bigwigs and their sponsors about the issue. The PGA's leaders need to convince TV's leaders that this is far from just an economic issue. I'm sure many superintendents would be willing to assist the PGA in such a lobbying effort.

Finally, let there be no talk from anyone about "fighting a losing battle." Ask any superintendent and he or she will tell you, "This is a battle we can't afford to lose, or it's just going to get worse."

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*Editor Larry Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or [larryward@advanstar.com](mailto:larryward@advanstar.com).*

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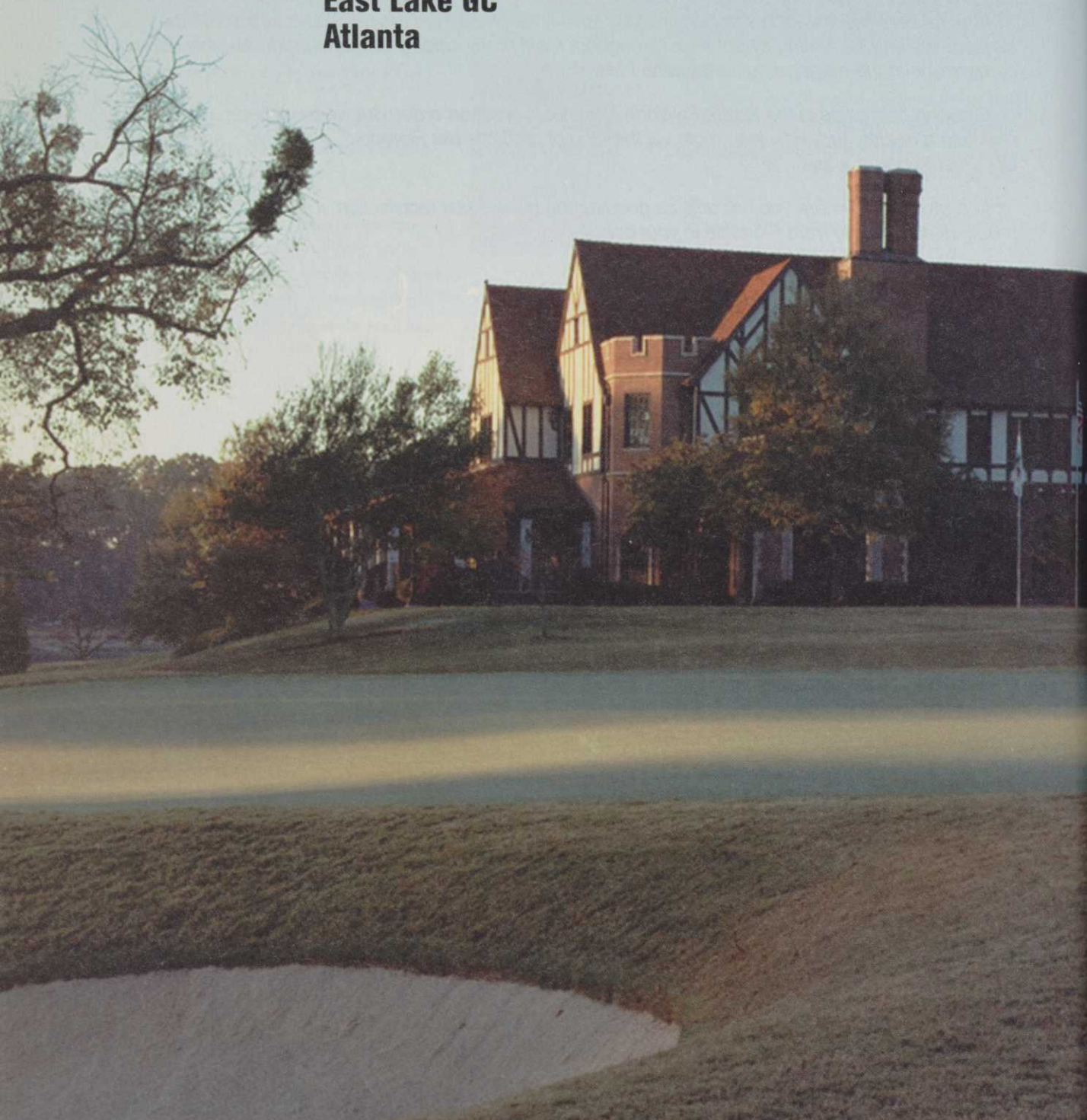
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# Hole of the

■ No. 9  
East Lake GC  
Atlanta



# Month

## Comeback Course

Atlanta-based East Lake GC sports a history as rich as the peach state's largest city itself. The course, originally designed by Tom Bendelow, opened on July 4, 1908. It was redesigned by Donald Ross in 1913 and regarded as one of the top tracks in the country. But East Lake was nearly lost to urban decay in the 1980s.

In 1993, however, East Lake was purchased by a local charitable foundation whose intent was to save the course. Rees Jones restored Ross' layout and the clubhouse, pictured here near the ninth green, was restored to its 1926 condition. By 1995, East Lake had regained its place as one of the country's top golf clubs.

Certified superintendent Ralph Kepple, who joined East Lake in 1992, has watched the club rebound up close. When he joined East Lake, Kepple says the course hadn't received much tender-loving care. But 10 years later, with Kepple providing plenty of TLC, East Lake is back on a roll – like in its early days. "It's unbelievable," Kepple says of the transformation.

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

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A high-angle photograph of a man in a dark suit and white gloves sweeping a golf green. He is using a broom and a dustpan. In the background, two other men in suits are also sweeping the green. The scene is set on a well-maintained, vibrant green golf course under bright sunlight, casting long shadows.

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CIRCLE NO. 114



JOHN DEERE

NOTHING RUNS LIKE A DEERE

**Y**ou've all seen those yellow and black "Dummies" manuals that are supposed to simplify learning everything from computers to patio gardening.

I thought with all the bad publicity golf courses get in the media, I could create an *Environmental Plans For Dummies* book — where smart superintendents could find tips on how to avoid stupid regulations.

Remember — it's easier and less expensive to manage an issue before it becomes a crisis, and planning ahead will help you do that. Most of the following comments are common sense, but others may need an owner's approval because they can change the look of the course.

## A neat maintenance shop

■ Is your shop and maintenance compound neat and clean, or is it a pigsty of clutter and cobwebs? You don't have to have a million-dollar budget to paint and push a broom.

A ramshackle appearance gives the appearance to outsiders of a sloppy overall operation.

## Water conservation

■ Experiment with reduced run times for each irrigation station to determine the minimum amount of water necessary to maintain good turf.

■ Document the gallons saved by reduced run times.

■ Upgrade your irrigation system to computerized controls if you can.

■ Investigate alternative water sources because permits and renewals are getting scarce.

## Water quality

■ Test the water coming into and leaving your property to see if you have a water-quality problem.

■ Institute "No Spray Zones" around water.

■ Grow turf to 3-inch heights along banks and in the rough to filter storm-water runoff.

■ Plant aquatic vegetation to filter any wayward nutrients.

■ Make sure the greens don't drain into ponds or streams. Create a bubbler exit into a swale for filtering through the soil.

# Environmental Plans for Dummies

BY JOEL JACKSON



I WANT TO CREATE  
A BOOK WHERE  
SMART  
SUPERINTENDENTS  
CAN FIND TIPS  
ON HOW TO AVOID  
STUPID  
REGULATIONS

## Pesticide use

■ Make a map of the entire course to chart insect, weed and disease outbreaks.

■ Spot treat problem areas only. Document the reduced chemical use.

■ When you find signs of pest activity on three or four greens, spray only those greens.

■ Check the weather forecast before spraying.

■ Experiment with bio-control products.

■ Make sure your mix/load and wash-down areas are self-contained. Ensure any spills can be pumped back into the spray tank and applied on the course per the label.

## Fertilizer use

■ Do not exceed .5 pounds of soluble nitrogen in a fertilizer blend or during specific applications.

■ Spoon feed with foliar applications whenever possible.

■ Do not tractor-spread fertilizer near water bodies. Make hand applications only along the banks and use minimal amounts of granular or foliar products.

■ Experiment with reducing the total amounts of nutrients you apply.

■ Install a fertigation system when the budget allows.

I have one final general tip that will save headaches for you in the future. Create a formal environmental plan in writing. The best defense is a good offense. Document your practices to show how you are positively managing and reducing environmental impacts.

In most cases, you already do many of the ideas I've outlined, but you don't document them as specific goals. It's time to show the world we're no dummies when it comes to the environment.

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



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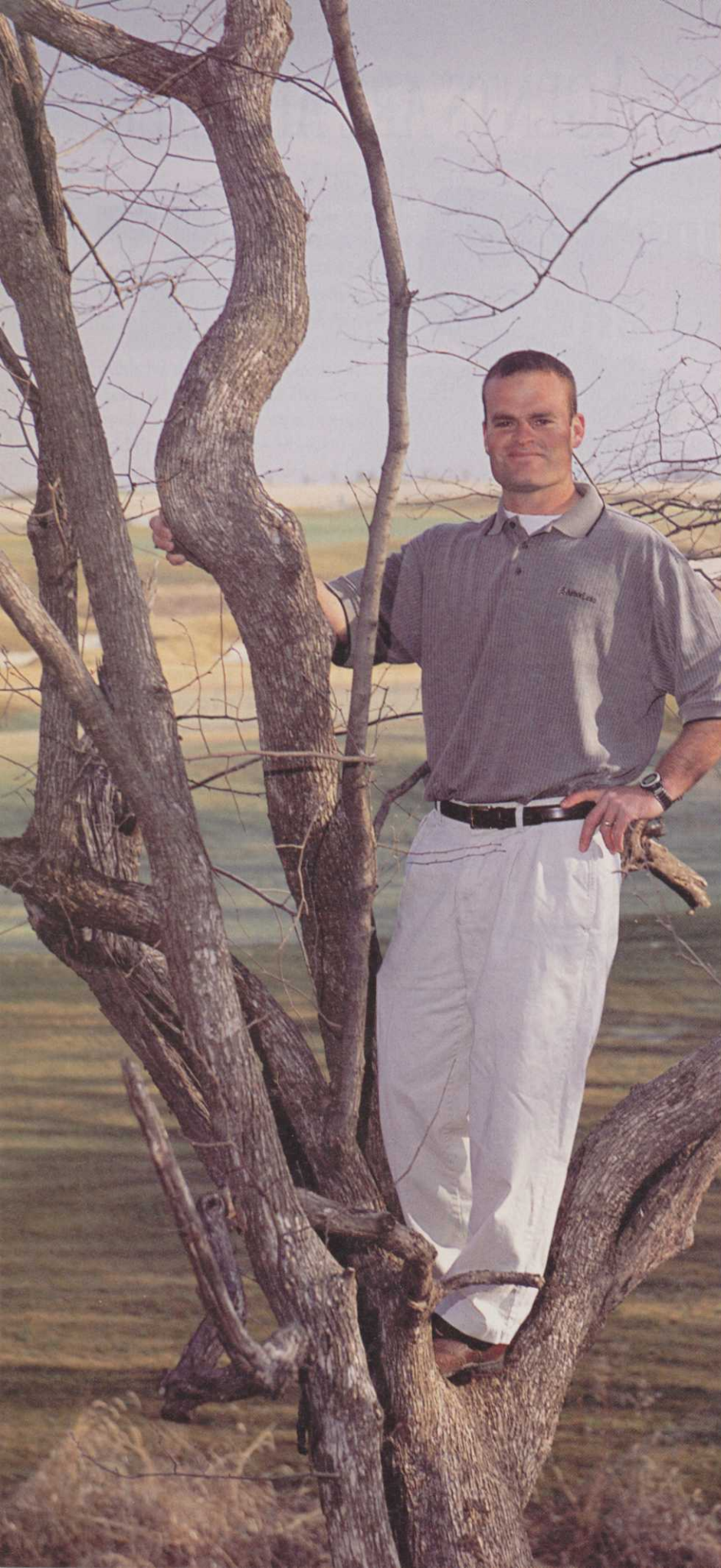
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# Up

**The new ArborLinks**

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**BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR**

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