

Bent Creek, where 30 crew members work under him. He says he has complete authority over the crew, while the superintendent deals with club management and members. He says the Kline influence permeates his dealings with the crew.

"Jay is blue-collar," Bell says. "He works hard and wouldn't tell someone to do something he couldn't do himself. I'm the same way. He makes you learn every part of the course — every sprinkler and bunker. He would tell me that it's my livelihood, so I need to know about everything."

Veteran superintendent Dave Downing, a former Lewistown employee, describes Kline as a teacher and explainer, two traits he has applied to his own career. He was at Lewistown at the time the course was expanding by nine holes. "I was mowing and laying sod for Jay," Downing says.

**"Jay is blue-collar.  
He works hard and  
wouldn't tell someone  
to do something he  
couldn't do himself."**

JASON BELL  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT  
BENT CREEK CC

"I worked for Jay at a time when he had a lot of kids. We were a handful, but Jay was never a tyrant."

Bell, who plans on eventually becoming a superintendent, wants one day to be in Kline's position — being a mentor to newcomers under him. Bell's brother, his girlfriend's brother and friends have all followed him into the superintendent field. He jokes that when he gets married next year, all of his groomsmen will be "turfers."

"I think I've started influencing the next generation," Bell says. "I want to

lead by example. I want them to ask questions. Jay is patient in answering questions, and I soak in those answers like a sponge. Teaching people also helps me learn."

For his part, Kline chooses to deflect the credit away from himself and on to his former employees.

"I'm very proud when the men who

worked for me become superintendents," he says. "But they are their own men. I'm a starter, and they're finishers. They come back for vacations, play golf at the club and we talk. The nicest part is that we still have ongoing relationships." ■

*Krizner is a free-lance writer from Cleveland.*



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# Sowing Sand On Fairways

Topdressing improves soil profiles and playability and is not solely the province of top-tier clubs

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR.

Managing Editor



Certified superintendent Jon Jennings topdresses his fairways once a month.

CHICAGO GC

### Problems

Like the bears beds in children's story, *Goldilocks*, Chicago GC's fairways were too soft, and Hudson National's fairways were too hard. Both superintendents had to make their fairways just right.

### Solution

Topdressing the fairways once a month during the growing season solved both clubs' problems.

**M**ost superintendents accept the idea of topdressing greens as a necessary part of keeping them healthy. It builds a healthier soil profile by controlling thatch, while also helping to level and smooth the greens.

It takes a lot more effort, however, to convince superintendents that they should extend the practice to their fairways. When they calculate cost per acre, many say it's too costly.

Two superintendents, however, decided it was essential to topdress their fairways to solve opposite problems. They say the costs involved are more than worth the better playing conditions the practice brings, and there are ways for superintendents without unlimited budgets to do it (see sidebar).

### The problems

The midnight black soil beneath the Chicago GC is left over from an earlier time. Before the course was built, farmers toiled for backbreaking hours to coax a living from the ground that now lies beneath the course. It's nutrient-rich and descends 3.5 feet below the surface of the club's fairways. Most backyard vegetable gardeners would kill to have soil that good.

Which would be marvelous if certified superintendent Jon Jennings were looking to grow corn, tomatoes or some other food crop on the land. Unfortunately, such soil makes growing the turf he is nurturing more difficult because the soil holds water like it's gold.

"The loamy soil here has a tendency to hold water," Jennings says. "That turns several of the fairways into soggy messes. We had to find a way to fix that problem."



Gregg Stanley, certified superintendent at Hudson National in Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y., had the opposite problem at his course. Hudson National was built entirely on rock, so the fairways were incredibly hard.

"Topsoil doesn't exist on this course," Stanley says. "We had to do something to create a growing medium for the turf."

### The solutions

Jennings says he inherited a topdressing program that the club had started in 1999. He says he wanted to control thatch, create a firmer playing surface between drain lines and level the fairways. The latter was important so he could mow the fairways at lower heights without scalping.

"We felt that if we created a sand cap on top of the soil, we could get the water off the surface more quickly after a hard rain," Jennings says. "It doesn't make the water go away, but it creates a buffer zone for the water to sit in before it works its way down into the heavier soil beneath. It makes it much easier to maintain the turf."

He says the initial program is designed to run for three to four years until a sand base is established. Consistency is the key, Jennings says.

"It's not a good idea to enter into this program half-heartedly," Jennings says. "You're not going to get the full benefits unless you topdress consistently, which for us is once a month."

He also says superintendents should make sure they have multiple staging areas where the topdresser can pick up sand on the course. The intense maintenance, however, does come at a price. Jennings says it costs him \$201.58 per acre to topdress his 37 acres of fairways. Jennings says he spends \$33,000 per year on materials alone.

"It started being too expensive for us to do all 18 fairways, so we started focusing on our six wettest fairways this year," Jennings says. "If you do have problem soils under your course, however, topdressing is a great way to address them."

Stanley didn't need to firm his fairways at all because Hudson National, located 30 miles north of New York, was built completely on rock.

"They had to use dynamite on every hole to build the course," Stanley says. "We had to supplement it in some way. We had no percolation at all."

The crew at Hudson National starts topdressing the fairways each spring as soon as the ground allows them to do so, Stanley says. Stanley and his staff topdress the fairways once a



## What About the Little Guy?

Randy DuFault, sales manager at Dakota Peat and Equipment, has the following tips for superintendents who'd like to topdress their fairways but fear they can't afford it:

### Purchase a multitasking machine.

"If you can budget for an applicator that can be used across a number of jobs instead of just topdressing, it will be easier to get budgetary approval," DuFault says. "The number of different jobs the new machines allow you to do is amazing."

### Buy a wider application machine.

"When you go to purchase the equipment, make sure you buy a spreader wide enough to accommodate fairway topdressing," DuFault says. "If you purchase one that's too small, the labor costs will explode because it will take workers longer to do the job."

### Focus only on the fairways about which you hear consistent complaints.

"Even the wealthier clubs don't topdress all of their fairways," DuFault says. "Pick the ones that give you trouble consistently and treat only those."

### Topdress once or twice a year instead of every month.

"There's no rule that says you have to topdress every month," DuFault says. "Every little bit helps. If you can only afford to do it twice a year, that's better than not doing it at all."

### Outsource the job entirely.

"There are companies across the country who are getting into this business," DuFault says. "See if there's one in your area you can hire for a reasonable price. It will save you from having to make the capital investment yourself!"

month from May to October.

The course uses 1,200 tons of sand per year to cover 20 acres of fairway at a cost of \$20 per ton (that works out to approximately 9 to 10 tons of sand per acre per month). Materials cost \$24,000.

"You handle the topdressing of fairways the same way you'd handle greens," Stanley says. "You do it at a rate that equals the growth rate."

Stanley, who started his topdressing program in 1998, says the effects were evident immediately. He says the fairways are much softer than they were when the course opened, and they're far more consistent. He added that the percolation has increased only "a little" since he started the program, but he believes it will get better.

Stanley moves the sand throughout the course in dump trucks and applies it with a Tycrop MH-400. At the moment, he has built a 2-inch layer of sand under the turf, and he plans to continue until he reaches the 4-inch mark.

"We're halfway there," Stanley says. "During the growing season, it does a fabulous job of reducing thatch and keeping the playing conditions consistent. We've been really happy with the results." ■

Read another  
**Real-Life Solution**  
on page 56.



# Concerned

Superintendents fear possible affects of antipesticide regulations

BY SHANE SHARP

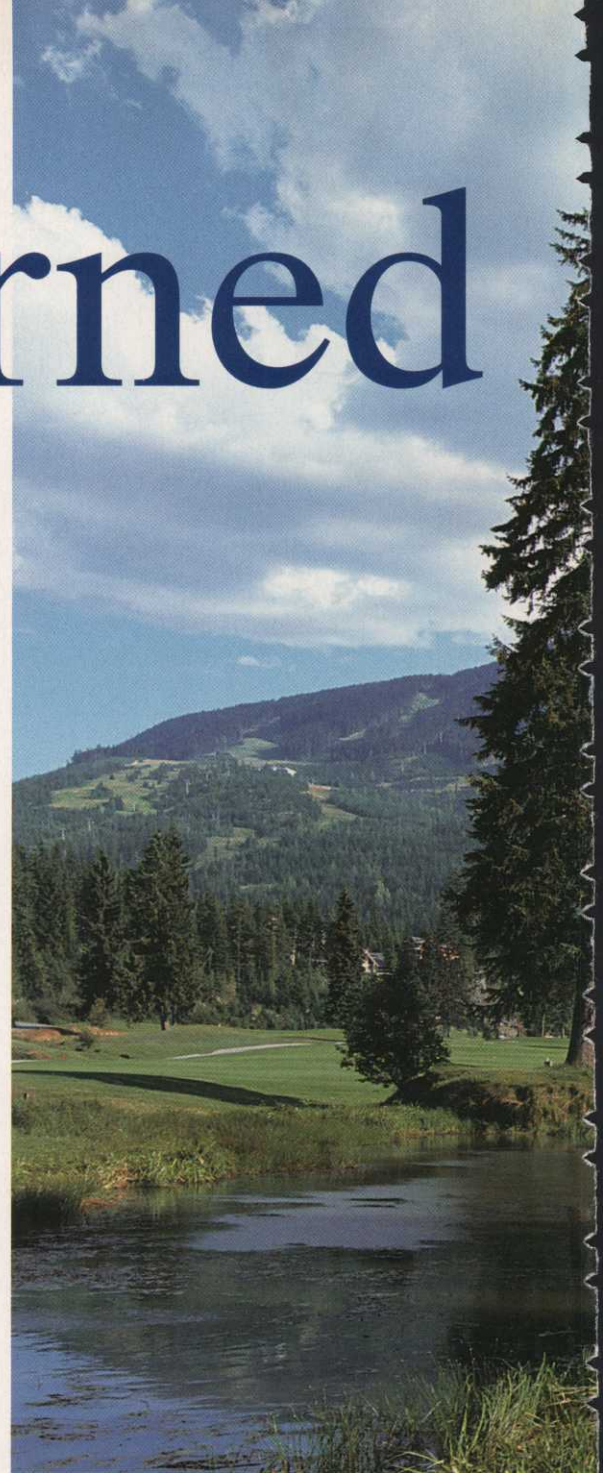
A 6,000-square-foot strip of brown grass on the 17th fairway at Erie Shores Golf & CC in Leamington, Ontario, roasts in the uncharacteristically hot Canadian summer sun. But all around it, lush and green turfgrass springs from the earth, waiting to cushion the fall of a well-struck tee shot.

The green portion of the fairway has been treated with pesticides. The sliver of ugly brown grass hasn't. The sacrificial lamb is necessary, says Erie Shores superintendent David Cours, should a 2001 Canadian Supreme Court ruling restricting pesticide use in residential lawn care make its way over from neighboring Quebec and on to the golf course.

"I've let the membership know what we're doing, and we are showing them what will happen without pesticides," Cours says. "Now, if we need it, we'll have 450 people to back us in court. It's not here yet, but we are preparing just to be safe."

The court case, known as the "Hudson ruling," allowed Quebec cities to ban the use of pesticides in residential areas if the substances were perceived as public health threats. To date, at least 50 towns in Quebec have passed ordinances either banning or restricting the use of pesticides in lawn care applications, including the trailblazing town of Hudson.

Although golf courses were not specifically noted in the Hudson ruling, the Supreme



Court decision potentially gives municipalities the right to restrict the use of pesticides on golf courses within their communities, says Teri Yamada, managing director of the Royal Canadian Golf Association's golf programs and services.

"The reason we're concerned and superintendents in other provinces are concerned is that other provincial municipal acts may be interpreted to allow restrictions, and then towns could decide to apply them to golf courses," Yamada says.

Superintendents throughout Canada are carefully monitoring the situation in Que-



# in Canada



bec. If they weren't already losing sleep over the Hudson ruling, then a recent piece of legislation crafted by Quebec Environment Minister Andre Boisclair should make for some restless nights. The proposed provincial law would ban the use of 30 pesticides on public lands, including parks, schools, day-care centers and hospitals. Golf courses would also have to establish pesticide reduction plans by 2005 or face hefty fines.

At least one Quebec superintendent says his golf course is getting along fine despite the antipesticide legislation and rhetoric. Michael Bailey, superintendent at Whitlock GC in Hud-

son Heights, feared the worst when the Hudson ruling hit, but he says the exemption has enabled him to gradually reduce pesticide use while tinkering with new ways to grow green grass.

"It has been a learning curve for me," Bailey says. "There are more weeds out there than anyone would like to see, and we don't spray preventively. But I've learned which things work and which don't."

Bailey says a golf course pesticide ban would not drastically alter Whitlock GC's *modus operandi* since he and his staff have been in pes-

*Continued on page 46*

**If Canadian golf courses, such as Chateau Whistler GC in Victoria, B.C., brown out from disease and insects, they may lose their draw — specifically American golfers.**

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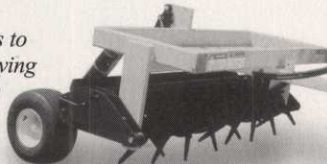
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CIRCLE NO. 114

## Concerned in Canada

*Continued from page 45*

ticide-reduction mode since the spring 2001. If anything, he sees the legislation as an attempt by the provincial government to wrestle the decision-making power back from municipalities.

"Actually, it would put it back in the provincial government's hands and create an even playing field for all golf courses," Bailey says. "However, the legislation is explicit that the goal is to go pesticide-free in Quebec."

In the meantime, what's a Canadian superintendent to do? The answer varies drastically by province. For now, any and all pesticide restrictions stemming from the Hudson ruling or the proposed law applies only to Quebec. But golf courses as far away as British Columbia are intently monitoring the goings-on back east and are organizing groups to lobby on their behalf.

"There is a huge amount of concern among superintendents everywhere," says Paul Robertson, superintendent of Victoria GC. "It would change the industry forever."

Robertson says Victoria, B.C., is acutely aware of the Hudson ruling, but that government officials have opted to stay out of the debate. Their rationale, while not explicit, is obvious if one reads between the lines: money. Both Victoria and British Columbia rely heavily on American tourist dollars to support resort meccas such as the Chateau Whistler GC and Banff Springs GC. If Canadian golf courses along the border brown out from fungi and harmful insects, American golfers may simply decide to stay put.

Yamada also points out that golf tournaments in Canada are a major source of revenue for charities. If courses are changed by the antipesticide laws, fund raising could take a major hit.

"We are in an interesting position because for years we (the RCGA) have worked with golf courses to reduce the amount of pesticides they used," Yamada says. "Now we're in the position of opposing an outright ban. The main concern is whether the municipalities have the expertise to determine how pesticides are best used. We should leave these decisions to those that have the expertise, and those people are at the provincial and federal levels."

According to Yamada, the pesticide wars could eventually trickle down into the United States, where San Francisco and Long Island have already drafted restrictive pesticide ordinances. It's no coincidence that American-based environmental groups like the Sierra Legal Defense Fund have jumped on the antipesticide bandwagon north of the border, she points out.

"Certain U.S. groups are looking at Canada as a shining example of how to deal with this issue," Yamada says. "There was a political will in Quebec to take on this issue, and now Quebec is out in front." ■

*Shane Sharp is a free-lance writer based in Charlotte, N.C.*



**M**y name is Lester “Skip” Looney, and I joined Burning Brook in 1999. I’m honored to be running for one of four available seats on our club’s board of directors.

As you might imagine, I have a vision of what needs to be done to improve our golf course. Since space is limited here in our wonderful club periodical, let’s get to the most important matter — me.

Following a stint as senior vice president of Serviceable Debt And Earnings Repurposing at Amortization, Greed and Growth until the SEC mistakenly shut us down (don’t believe the rumors), I decided to go to law school. Skip Looney has since been working as a senior paralegal for three years at the firm of Fault, Detainer and Tort. My experience there, combined with several hours spent sitting in on recent board meetings, tells me that we must restructure our club’s massive debt obligations if we hope to modernize our golf course.

Many of you have witnessed my extensive team building and leadership skills during our weekly poker games in the Old Tom Morris room. I’ve squelched many brouhahas that have surfaced, and I believe the management experience gained during those circumstances have helped me prepare for the rigors of running a club like Burning Brook.

This brings me to the real reason Skip Looney is running for elected office. This past year I wrote a letter to the green committee and our greenskeeper (whose name eludes me at the moment) appraising the course. Skip Looney now regrets this letter because it lacked the direct tone necessary to affect change. As a member of the board of directors, I promise never to make such a mistake again.

My letter’s closing statement sums up the feelings of most golfers I talked to while handing out campaign buttons at last month’s new member meeting:

“Remember when you took pride in being a member of the ‘toughest short course in the central valley.’ If we take ‘toughest’ out of that statement, what we’ll be left with will not be

## If You Elect Me, I Assure You ...

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



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AT HAND AND  
VISIONS THAT I  
HAVE FOR OUR  
GOLF COURSE

pretty: a defenseless, meager golf course.”

With an approved master plan in place to “restore” Burning Brook, including senseless tree removal to supposedly help the turf in our fairways, we will only destroy the integrity of our great course. This cannot be allowed to happen.

With our handicaps already traveling poorly in monthly team play matches (is it any wonder we haven’t won a match in four years?), the Burning Brook board must not let this situation become any more dire. Skip Looney fears that this restoration will only further accentuate an already unacceptable state of affairs. As your elected official, I assure you that Skip Looney will not allow Burning Brook’s course rating to dip any lower. Strong words, I know, but these are ominous times.

We need a modern course here at Burning Brook. I promise that when we spend your hard-earned money, which the board is obligated to do, these outlays will be done to protect your right to challenging golf and not the rights of some dead architect named Ross.

In closing, I think you should know that Skip Looney’s father-in law spent a summer working on the construction site of a Frank Duane-designed course. So through osmosis as well as years of reading *Golf Digest*, I will bring a wealth of knowledge on golf architecture and course greenkeeping to this board.

In concluding, Skip Looney thanks you for the fine friendships that Burning Brook has extended to my fiancé Bunny and myself. Good luck on the links, and remember — vote for Lester “Skip” Looney for board of governors. It’s a vote you will not want to “skip.”

*Contributing Editor Geoff Shackelford can be reached at [geoffshac@aol.com](mailto:geoffshac@aol.com)*



# Rotary Club



Pressure from golfers forces superintendents to provide high-quality cuts, even on collars.

NATIONAL MOWER

## Improved quality cuts and ease of maintenance are fueling the resurgence of single-blade mowers for collateral areas

**BY FRANK ANDORKA JR.,**  
Managing Editor

**I**t seems incredible that superintendents would worry about the quality of cut in areas of the golf course meant to be penal. But golfer expectations for course conditioning and other issues force superintendents to worry about collateral areas (like roughs) almost as much as they worry about greens, tees and fairways.

Tracy Lanier, John Deere's administrative manager of golf and turf market development, says he first became aware of the demand for a better quality of cut in roughs in the mid-1990s.

"We received reports of superintendents taking our fairway mowers into the roughs," Lanier says. "While roughs are supposed to be penal, they also can't be so difficult that they slow up play. That's why the focus has shifted toward improving the quality of cut."

"Golfers increased the pressure on superin-

tendents to improve the quality of the roughs," says Tim Koch, senior marketing manager of riding/rotary products for The Toro Co. "It's changed the way superintendents care for those areas."

Superintendents maintained the roughs almost exclusively with reel mowers in the 1970s and 1980s because they felt they could get a better quality of cut. Over the last decade, however, superintendents asked the bigger mower companies to look into improving the quality of cut and the ability to stripe.

The mower companies listened and have introduced several new rotary mowers that meet those needs. They're generally less expensive, easier to maintain and give superintendents nearly the same quality of cut as reel mowers. Smaller, more flexible cutting decks have allowed this to happen.

### Riding the reels

In the early days of golf course maintenance, superintendents primarily used pull-gang reel mowers. Then hydraulic drive systems revolutionized the industry 20 years ago, giving more



choices and improved quality of cut with increased clip rates, says Larry Jones, product manager for Textron's Golf, Turf and Specialty Products Division.

"You couldn't cut lower than 2 inches with a rotary mower on undulating turf because you would scalp it," Jones says. "Hydraulic reel mowers allow you to cut lower than that even on severe slopes."

Reel mowers have some disadvantages, however. They take much more time, money and energy to maintain than rotary mowers, says Stan Kinkead, president of National Mower Co.

"There's been this trend toward making mowers that are more expensive, heavier and that require more people to keep them in working order," Kinkead says. "I'm not sure why the industry moved in that direction, but it has."

Kinkead says hydraulic-driven reel mowers only last four to six years, where rotary mowers last eight to 10 years. "Why would a superintendent pay more for a mower that's not going to last as long?" Kinkead says.



Still, reel mowers will always outdo rotary mowers for overall quality of cut, though the gap has narrowed considerably over the last four years, Lanier says. Rotaries with a smaller footprint have made great gains in the market.

**It's often easier to maintain newer rotary mowers than reel machines.**

THE TORO CO.

#### Rotaries make a comeback

Koch says he starting hearing requests for more advanced rotary mowers about four years ago.

*Continued on page 50*

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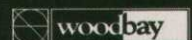
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Continued from page 49

"Rotaries are becoming the product of choice in many cutting conditions when superintendents purchase collateral mowers," Koch says. "That's not to say there's been a 100 percent shift as reels still perform better at lower heights of cut, but the number of people who are using reels is decreasing significantly."

Though rotary mowers are far from perfect machines, they do offer several advantages over reels, Lanier says.

First, they don't require as much labor to maintain. Instead of having to grind several reels and make sure they all stay in adjustment, technicians can remove the rotary blade, sharpen it or replace it without too much effort.

## It's important to find a supplier who can support you over the long haul.

Second, rotary mowers are easier to operate, which is important in a tight labor market when superintendents don't have a lot of time to train new employees.

"You can put employees on a rotary mower in the roughs and let them go with minimal training," Lanier says. "They'll be familiar with rotary decks because they have probably used some form of rotary mower at home."

Third, superintendents can get the striping they desire with a rotary mower, as well as healthier turf because a rotary mower thins out lateral growth, Jones says.

### How to decide

Koch says superintendents should consider many factors, including turf varieties, height of cut, frequency of mowing and other items, when they decide which mower will work best in their collateral areas.

Both types can be used on cool- and warm-season turfgrasses, depending on those other factors.

Kinthead says superintendents should research their mower suppliers before making a purchase.

They should evaluate a dealer's support network to make sure they can get proper service after the sale, Kinthead says.

"You need to look for dependability, not only in the machine, but also in the dealer," Kinthead says. "It's important that you find someone that will support you in the future if you have problems."

Otherwise, superintendents could find themselves having a rougher time when they start to mow in their collateral areas. ■



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