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Mike Wooten



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Golfdom

MAY 2003 • VOLUME 59 • NO. 5

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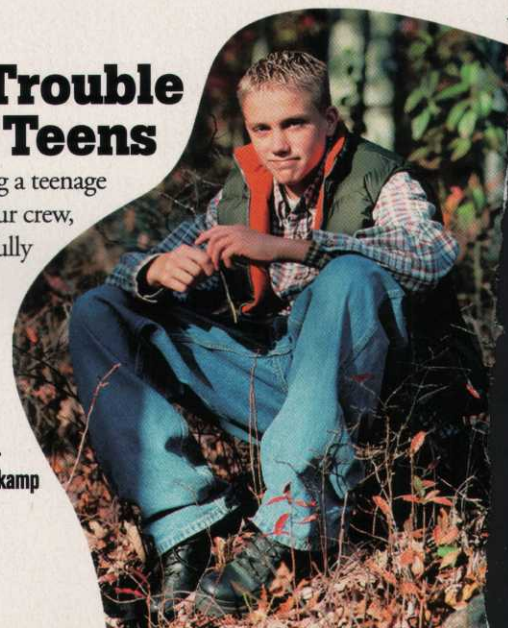
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BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR.

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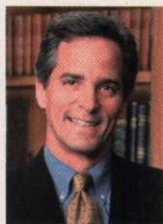
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We Hate It When That Happens

The headline on the lead story in April's *TurfGrass Trends* section (page 39) should have read, "Breeders Refine Tall Fescue's Disease Resistance."

Also, in a April story on new fungicides ("On the Horizon," page 74), the rates for BASF Professional Turf's Emerald for use on dollar spot should have read .13 to .18 ounces per 1,000 square feet.

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This month, *Golfdom's* practical research digest for turf managers discusses the latest problems with dollar spot and more. Pages 43-59.



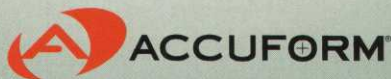
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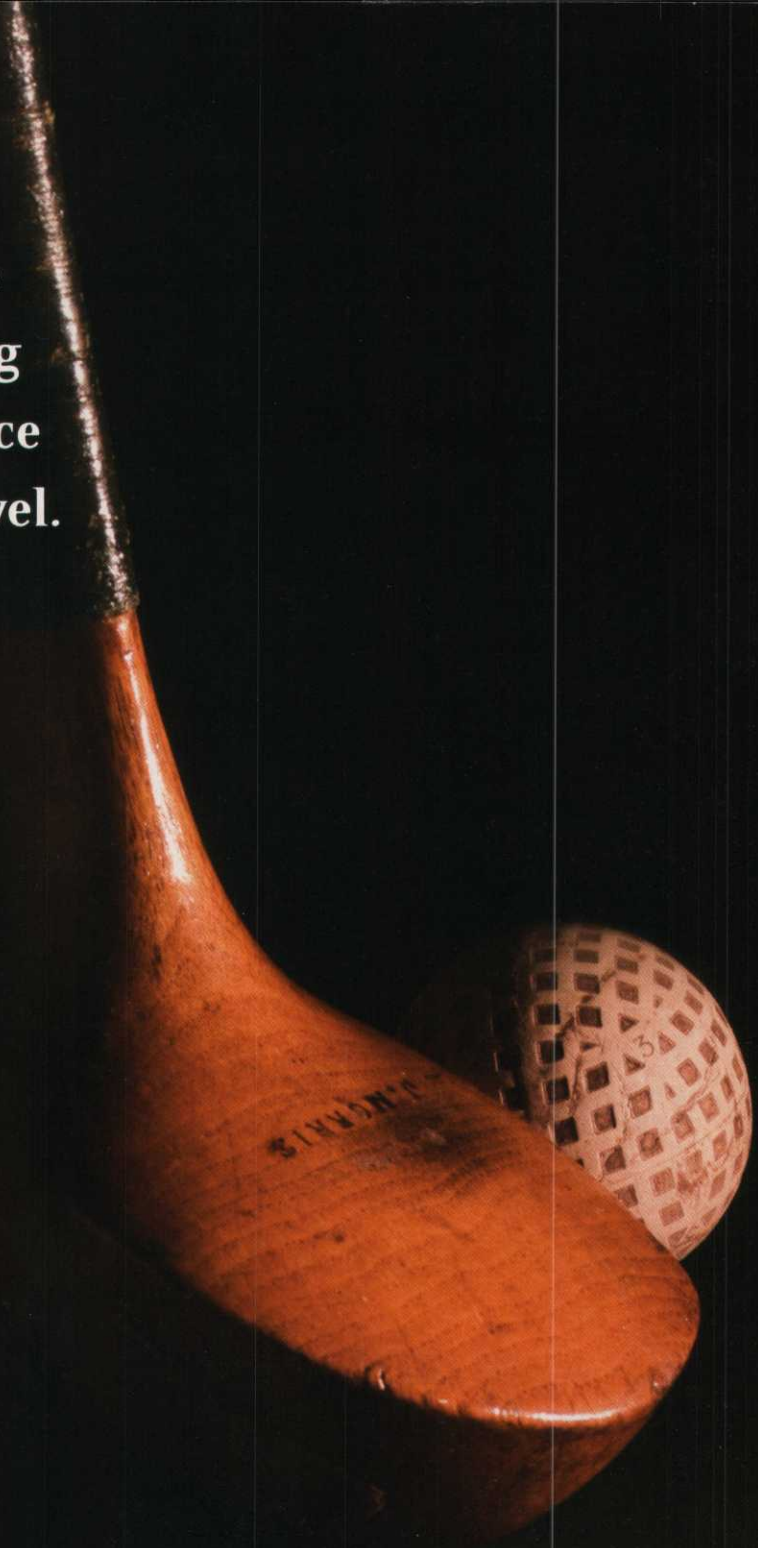
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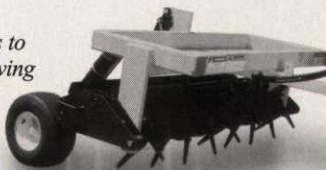
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We've Got Mail

■ LETTERS FROM THE FIELD

Up with the "Down and Dirty"

It's nice to see you recognize the dirty work many superintendents do ("Down and Dirty," March). As the wife of an owner/operator/superintendent, I can attest to how necessary it is to get into the trenches, lead by example and come out looking not so pretty.

With two generations of our family running a course in rural Florida, it's necessary for all of the management to get in the middle of projects. My husband has always said that his job is to do the stuff nobody else wants to do — usually that means dirty work. Thanks for recognizing the hard work of superintendents like him.

Charlene Beebe
Indian Springs GC
Boynton Beach, Fla.

What Constitutes an Elitist?

I really enjoyed the March article on down-and-dirty superintendents. It was a good article to recognize the contributions that superintendents make to their facilities. Maybe it could be reprinted in a nonsuperintendent magazine since we all know how we contribute. But I digress.

Unfortunately the tone of the article turned a great profile into a acidic diatribe on the haves and have-nots. Every position is different for each facility. Job responsibilities, budgets, and pay scales go hand-in-hand.

A smaller budgeted facility may require the superintendent to be more hands-on. A larger facility, possibly with more than one golf course, may require the superintendent to be more of a manager. But what's important not to forget is that everyone mowed greens, whacked weeds, dug ditches and sprayed chemicals at some point in their careers.

Some still enjoy this aspect of the job while others wanted to move beyond it. It's a personal choice that no one can fault someone from taking. It seems the au-

The down-and-dirty superintendent needs to be appreciated a lot more in this profession.

I've been working at golf courses since 1972, and [down-and-dirty courses] seem to be my specialty. I've worked from the resort in Florida to the flat track in Arizona. The small, low-budget course where I am superintendent now seems to fit me just fine. I have made more money in the past, but I don't ever think I have gotten the reward (personally and from my peers) that I have gotten since I took over a "goat ranch" and turned it into some of the best \$25 golf in town.

There is no better pleasure to me than when one of our golfers comes up to me and says, "I was at the high-end course north of

thor has taken offense to those who have moved beyond to positions that make, according to the article, the so-called "elitists".

The article makes it appear inappropriate to wear Hagar slacks, Nike shirts or Footjoys; grasping shiny ball point pens; shooting for money and glory; cool things to hang on their wall; or sitting in a fancy office.

This is an issue that will be with our national organization for quite a while. It's as if this article tries to widen the divide on an already divided issue. If it's not part of a solution, it becomes part of the problem.

I feel that the author's perceived bias needed a different forum for his expressed views.

Do I become an "elitist" while laying in a hole to help fix irrigation leaks in my free golf shirt, Wal-Mart slacks, FootJoy shoes and holding my nice pen?

Michael Litton
Superintendent
Princess Anne CC
Virginia Beach, Va.

Editor's note: Larry Aylward, the author of the story, did not coin the phrase "elitist superintendent." He only reported what was said by a superintendent in the article.



Scottsdale, and you have more grass on your driving range tee than they do." Or when someone says, "Your greens are smoother than that

course I paid \$125 at last week." I may not get the glory, but personal satisfaction sure makes you feel a lot better about yourself.

Donald A. Pleger Sr.
Superintendent
Cypress GC
Salt River Pima Maricopa
Indian Community
Scottsdale, Ariz.

I just wanted to drop you a quick line to tell you how much I enjoyed your article about down-and-dirty superintendents. That is where I came from and, many days, where I long to return.

March's "Down and Dirty" was well-done and gave a good look into an area that is often ignored by other publications. I really enjoyed hearing the different points of view from superintendents that truly have a passion for our profession.

Most superintendents that have been in this business long enough can relate to their passions and challenges. I do have take exception, however, to the comments made by Russel "Rusty" Tisdale.

Tisdale's comment on "elitist superintendents" who do nothing but drive around in utility vehicles and bark orders to workers bothered me. He said, "With their budgets, their people and my attitude, I could do 100 times better." I would suggest to this young man that some things are better unsaid.

I'm sure that some of these so-called elitist superintendents (I believe I would fall into this category) would answer back, "If I had your attitude, I would still be in that irrigation hole with you instead of managing and training personnel on how to get out of that irrigation hole."

Rick Tatum
Director of Golf Operations
Grey Oaks GC
Naples, Fla.

I have so much admiration for these superintendents, it's beyond description. I think back over my career and know that my own down-and-dirty experience is one of the reasons I enjoy the success that I have today.

I was one of these guys with no budget who wore Herman Survivors and Levis 365 days out of the year. Now that I wear Dockers instead, I still have the ability to maximize my dollars. I still climb on a backhoe and mower occasionally. It's a great release valve.

Matt Shaffer
Superintendent
Merion GC
Ardmore, Pa.

I thoroughly enjoyed your article on down-and-dirty superintendents. It was nice to read about the working superintendent for a change. I consider myself in that category also. My staff consists of two part-time, semi-retired gentlemen and me. I know from what little experience I have in this profession that many courses are in this boat.

Here in northeastern Iowa, there are more golf courses than I can count on my fingers that have this type of superintendent. We have no choice with the budget restrictions we have. My course alone has an annual maintenance budget of around \$45,000, including wages, for the nine-hole layout. Even with this small amount of money I have to work with, my staff and I still take great pride in what we have accomplished and will again in the future.

Your article really hit home. Thanks for thinking of the "little guy."

Monte Graff
Superintendent
Maple Hills CC
Tripoli, Iowa

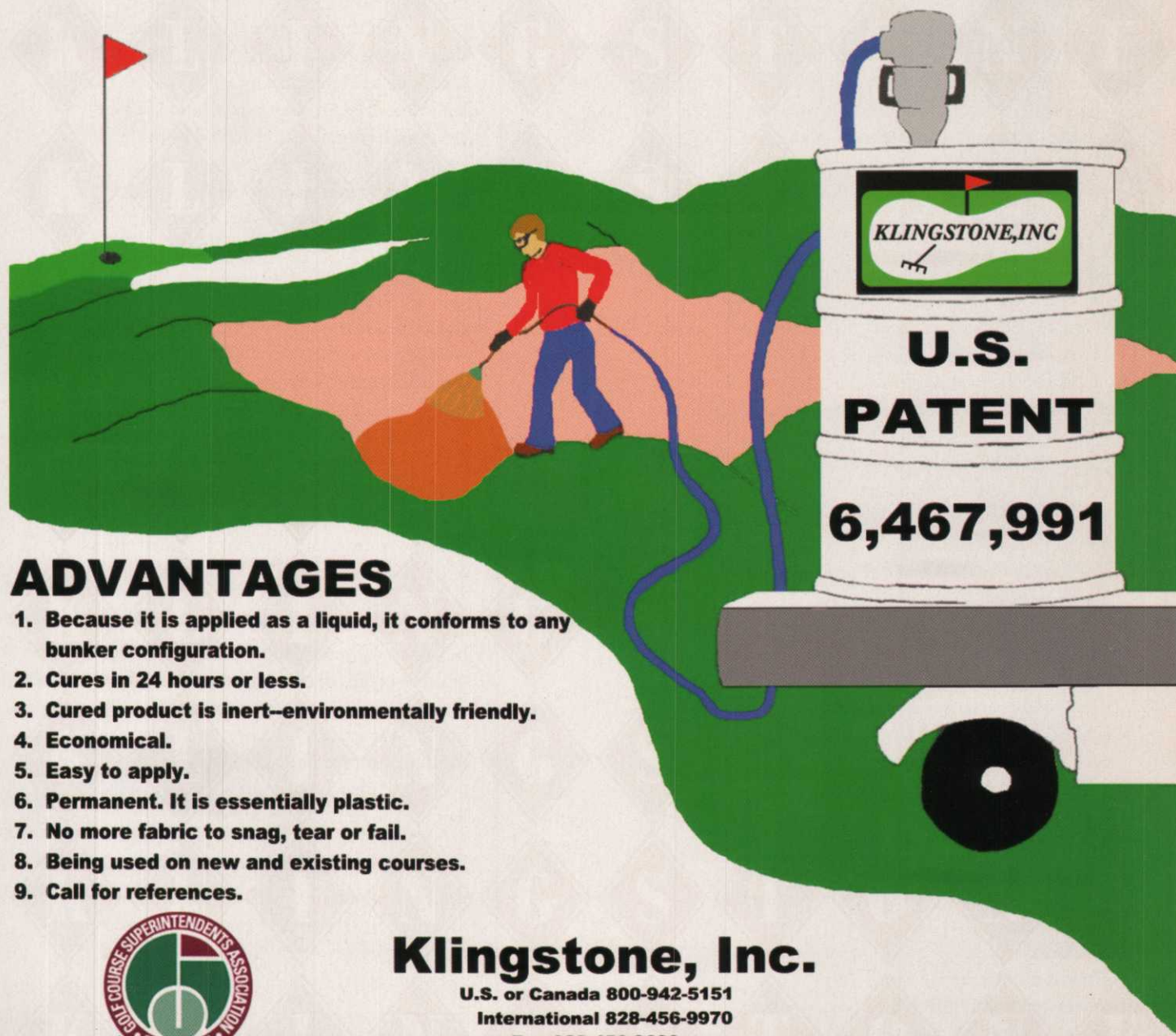
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Faithful readers may recall that the first issue of *Golfdom* (January 1999) had a cover story titled, "The New Reality: Superintendents in the Realm of Management Companies."

You'll be shocked (well, actually, you won't be) to learn that the topic wasn't new then, it generated loads of controversy, and it was clear the concept of corporate management companies was *not* going away.

The basics haven't changed much in five years. According to a recent study, the general idea of outsourcing still appeals to about 13 percent of owners who find themselves incapable of managing the finances of an often ill-conceived operation or who otherwise just don't want to be bothered with the details of running a course.

In short, they're like those unfortunate people who love the idea of having kids but don't have the patience or commitment to take care of difficult children once they actually become parents.

Also unchanged is the fact that many superintendents have a knee-jerk reaction against the idea of management or maintenance companies. As I talk with you, I get the impression that it somehow seems wrong to place the words "corporate" and "golf" next to each other in the same sentence.

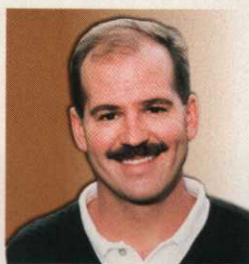
After all, you are a breed of professionals who have been trained to value both the art *and* science of greenkeeping. I know I'll get letters for saying this, but there are still too few superintendents who understand that the third piece of greenkeeping is working at a profitable golf course. That, as we said way back in 1999, is the "new reality."

There are also many of you who, sometimes rightfully, equate management/maintenance companies with the practice of dumping experienced, tenured superintendents for cheaper, less-qualified and (usually) younger alternatives.

Does this happen? Sure. Does it happen as often as it did a decade ago? I hear the horror stories, but I also hear that corporate golf is getting smarter. Management and maintenance companies now realize the superintendent is the key person at the facility and let-

Get Used to It: They're Staying

BY PAT JONES



**SUPERINTENDENTS
NEED TO DEAL WITH
THE FACT THAT
MANAGEMENT
COMPANIES AREN'T
GOING AWAY**

ting that person go simply to save money is bad business.

The fact is that management/maintenance companies are here to stay. There will always be a certain percentage of courses that lend themselves to centralization or simply aren't as profitable as they could be with a little help from an outside manager. And, unless you're working for an old-line private club where money is still no object, profitability is what this business — and it is a business — is all about.

The big boom in traditional management companies occurred during the savings-and-loan crisis of the late 1980s. That's when the enormous bubble of course construction as an anchor for housing developments suddenly burst and corporate golf moved in to fill the void.

It's obvious to me and others that we'll see a similar (but I think smaller) boom in outsourcing over the next few years as we deal with the consequences of the combined effects of the dot-com bust, 9/11, Wall Street scandals and a stubbornly soft economy. Too many "ego courses" were built in the '90s, and they'll be sold or contracted out for pennies on the dollar over the next couple of years.

It's a buyer's market for those who have the financing to actually do the deals. But only a handful of companies and banks have the confidence or capital to pull it off, so it just isn't likely we'll see the same growth as a decade ago.

Nonetheless, corporately managed golf courses are here to stay, and superintendents need to deal with it. That's the basis for this month's cover story and I can guarantee you that *Golfdom* will revisit the topic again (and again and again and ...).

Pat Jones is the publisher/editorial director of Golfdom. He can be reached at 440-891-3126 or pjones@advanstar.com