

Field of Research

BAYER'S HAS PLENTY OF ROOM FOR R&D – AND THEN SOME

By Ron Hall

Bayer hosted Green Industry editors at its Bayer Environmental Science (BES) technical research facility in Clayton, N.C., this past summer. At 281 acres, it's believed to be the largest single site in the United States devoted to developing and testing turfgrass and structural pest control products.

In addition to several acres devoted to turf plots, the site includes a two-hole golf course with bentgrass greens (three additional holes were to be added in the summer). Noticeable on the grounds was a row of shiny new

John Deere turf equipment. BES is field-testing Deere mowers and other turf maintenance units there, as well. The Deere turf business is located in nearby Raleigh.

Eventually, the golf course will have nine holes. BES plans to hire a turf manager to help manage the site.

"Any company that wants to be a major player in this business needs to have a facility like Clayton," said Don Myers, Chipco product development manager for herbicides and PGRs.

Players? That's a short list indeed. Bayer, because of consolidation within the specialty chemical business, can literally count its turf competitors on one hand. BES itself is a blend of former Bayer and Aventis business organizations.

Marketing Director Jim Fetter

acknowledged that the current economic climate could be better, but he pointed to the BES research farm as evidence of the company's long-term commitment to turf — and its conviction that the market will continue to grow.

The Clayton site will be used to test new products, but much of the activity there will also focus on finding ways to add value to the chemistry that Bayer has already developed or obtained through acquisitions.

One of the biggest challenges facing BES, he added, will be "sorting out all the brands" now under its umbrella, and finding a common voice within the turf market for them along with its strong Bayer and Chipco lines.

"Both have been around a long time," Fetter said.

Hall is editor of Landscape Management, Golfdom's sister publication.

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To borrow a line from Lennon and McCartney: "Eight days a week is not enough to show I care." To paraphrase that line with golf course maintenance in mind: Even

having eight days a week would not be enough time for many superintendents and their crews to get their golf courses in the choice conditions they desire.

That said, it's a shame that many superintendents and their crews need more time to complete their work. It's especially a bummer because many superintendents already work 12-hour shifts for six and seven days a week during the season.

They're not slow workers, nor are they perfectionists. They just need more sand to flow through the hourglass to get the work done to meet golfers' expectations for near-perfect turf.

But the \$64,000 question is where are those extra ticks of the clock going to originate? Milt Engelke, professor of turfgrass breeding, genetics and management science at Texas A&M University, believes he has the answer. It's called Chameleon.

Engelke has devised an ingenious idea of how superintendents can manufacture more time so they can do their jobs better — and not worry about being in a hurry while doing them. Who needs expensive time-management consultants and their pie-in-the-sky ideas when you have a guy like Engelke to offer advice? And here's betting superintendents may like his idea.

Chameleon, Engelke's time-management strategy, is as much about golf course design as it is about maintenance. By the way, Chameleon means "changeable," Engelke points out.

Chameleon is about building golf courses with more than 18 holes, say for example 24 holes, but keeping only 18 in play at a time. In essence, Chameleon calls for all of the holes to be rotated for play so that six of them wouldn't be in use during certain periods.

During those times, when the only traffic on those holes is the pitter-patter of wildlife, a superintendent and his crew can aerify and verticut greens, mow fairways, take care of tee boxes, maintain bunkers and do whatever else

Finding More Sand for the Hourglass

BY LARRY AYLWARD



'CHAMELEON'
COULD BE GOOD
FOR GOLFERS —
AND TIME-STARVED
SUPERINTENDENTS

they need to do to keep the holes in A-1 shape. And they don't have to do the work as fast as possible to get out of demanding golfers' ways.

Engelke speaks of courses in many major cities, which he identifies as golf factories. "They're running more than 200 rounds of golf a day for seven days a week," he says. "How do you do maintenance on a course like that and keep that kind of pace up? Give them more time by having more holes available. It's a no-brainer."

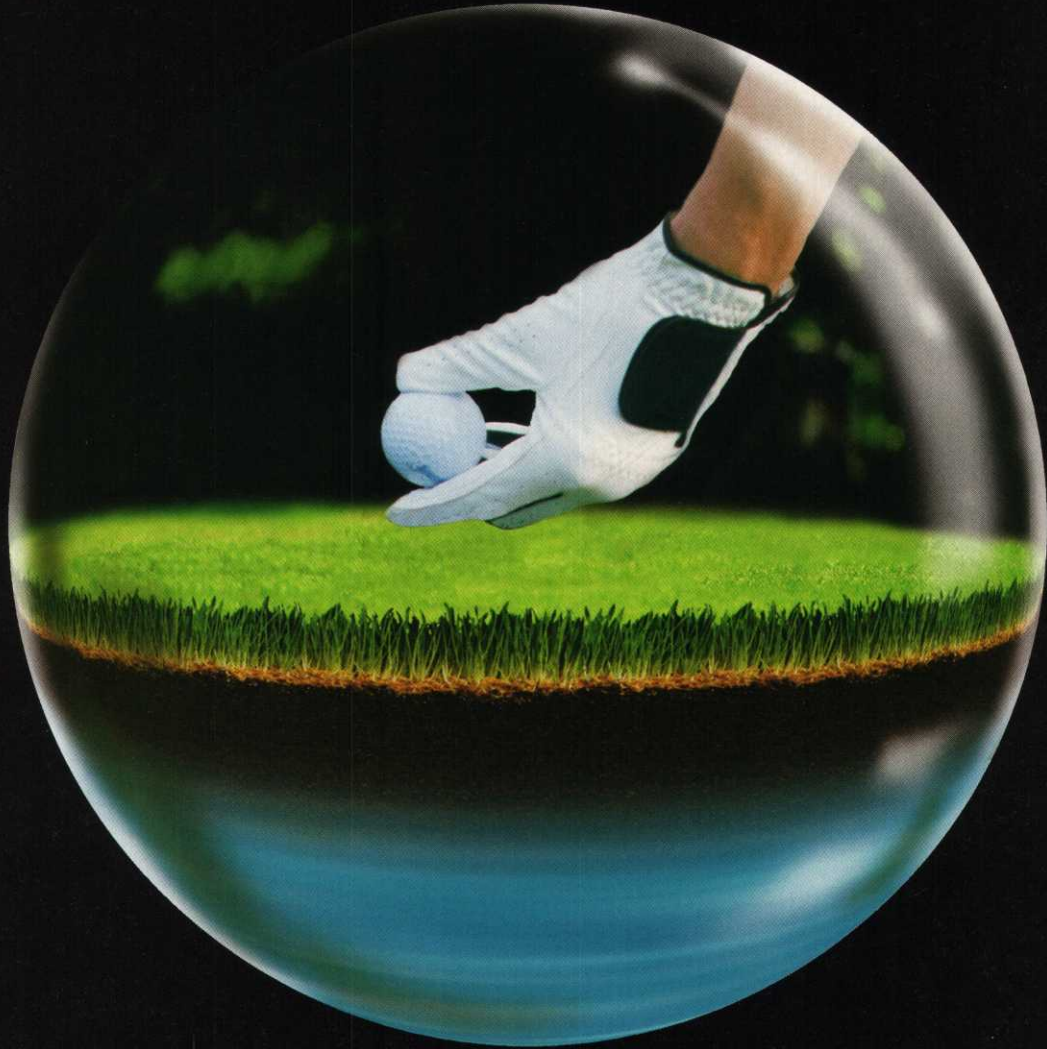
Critics contend that many courses can't be retrofitted to include new holes because they're landlocked. For that reason, Chameleon may be more applicable to new courses. In any case, creating extra holes is costly, and it takes more money to maintain them.

But there are also good points from an economic standpoint, Engelke maintains. One has to do with conditioning, which is a marketable angle for sure. Since a superintendent takes holes out of play, he takes traffic off them and gives time to heal golfer-inflicted wounds. There's also no play on newly aerified greens and fairways because those holes are closed. Therefore, golfers are consistently playing in good conditions. Hence, they would return time and again to a Chameleon-style course, Engelke insists.

Engelke has trademarked the Chameleon name, and he's looking for an investor to pursue the concept. He's confident an investor would agree that a Chameleon course offers better quality play, which could equate to more rounds and — *cha ching* — more business.

And then time-starved superintendents wouldn't have to wish for an extra day in the week to get their work done.

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There was some interesting information in the recent National Golf Foundation's Avid Golfer survey. Overall, superintendent image and respect made gains. But the survey revealed that golfer's still have a myopic view about maintenance. The results cry out for golfer education about what we do.

Not all of the golfer responses were helpful. Some were too ambiguous to be of much help — like “playing surfaces too wet” or “too many dead or dry spots.” Superintendents definitely need more information before they can decide which of these complaints are under their control and which are not.

And now, the top 20 conditioning complaints according to the survey, along with my comments about them:

1. Unrepaired ball marks on green: This was the No. 1 complaint. I love it because golfers are essentially complaining about their inability to clean up after themselves.

2. Poor bunker/sand trap condition: It's supposed to be a hazard — get over it. Take a lesson from the pro on how to avoid them.

3. Recently aerified greens: The practice is necessary for healthy turf. If you don't like it, play another course while it heals.

4. Poorly conditioned tees: Hey geniuses, you don't need a pool table to hit a golf ball off a wooden peg.

5. Limited drinking water on course: See Maricopa (Ariz.) County's water dispenser ordinance and the club's lawyer before going down this road too far.

6. Rough cut too high: Says who? If you have a problem with rough heights, set maintenance standards so the superintendent has guidelines that will meet your (unreasonable) demands.

7. Slow green speed: Compared to what — the U. S. Open? Shut up and play the course as you find it.

8. Too many areas of dead grass and/or dead spots: This is not actionable without a context. Is the dead turf the result of poor management — or is it just too much shade from the hundreds of “memorial” trees that line each fairway and surround each green?

9. Golf course playing surface too wet: Check the weather report. Didn't it just rain this morning?

Whose Problem Is It, Anyway?

BY JOEL JACKSON



WITHOUT FURTHER
ADO, HERE ARE
THE TOP 20
CONDITIONING
COMPLAINTS FROM
“AVID” GOLFERS

10. Turf damage around the cup from foot traffic: If golfers picked up their feet, there wouldn't be turf damage around the flag.

11. Ball washer out of water: The maintenance staff checks in the morning. Maybe rangers can check them in the afternoon.

12. Golf course playing surfaces too firm: You complainers who marked No. 12, get with the folks complaining in No. 3 and straighten it out. I'm here to tell you that you can't have it both ways.

13. Golf car restrictions: Golfers drive on wet course on Monday and then complain about the mud and rut damage on Tuesday. Duh.

14. Greens watered during play on hot days: I'm thinking this must be a trick question. People who picked this as a complaint aren't playing with a full set of clubs.

15. Fairway grass too high: See No. 6.

16. Maintenance workers on course: If there were no workers, there would be no maintenance. Workers should be courteous, but these complainers should get a life.

17. Frost delays: This is another dumb complaint. If golfers played on frozen grass today, they'll complain of too much brown grass and dead spots tomorrow.

18. Temporary greens: You don't like them, we'll just close the course while we are under repair. Go play somewhere else.

19. Trash containers overfilled: See No. 11.

20. Cart paths in poor condition: Safety issues should be corrected. Edging is nice but has no bearing on playing golf. Pot holes along the edges belong to those who can't stay on the path.

Can golfer education answer all these complaints? Probably not, but maybe we can teach them to look in the mirror first before they start pointing their fingers at us.

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



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Hole of the



■ No. 17
Old North State Club
New London, N.C.

Month

The Natural Look

You want scenic? You've come to the right place. Old North State Club in rural New London, N.C., is hailed as one of the most panoramic golf courses in the state. Here's how *North Carolina* magazine describes the Tom Fazio design, which opened in 1992. "Immaculate grounds and 18 memorable holes highlight Fazio's best work in the state, a gem set on Badin Lake in Montgomery County." The 17th hole, a par 3, does nothing to dispute the description.

Chris Chapman, superintendent of the course, says he adores the wildlife on the course. Chapman says the 5,300-acre lake, which borders the 17th green, helps define the wonderful views on the course, certified by Audubon International. The 17th hole plays straightforward, but the wind can play havoc with golfers on the tee. "The hole plays a number of ways depending on the wind," Chapman says.

There are no special maintenance challenges on the private course, Chapman says. But keeping the course looking natural is *always* at the top of his mind. After all, nature and a good view go hand in hand.

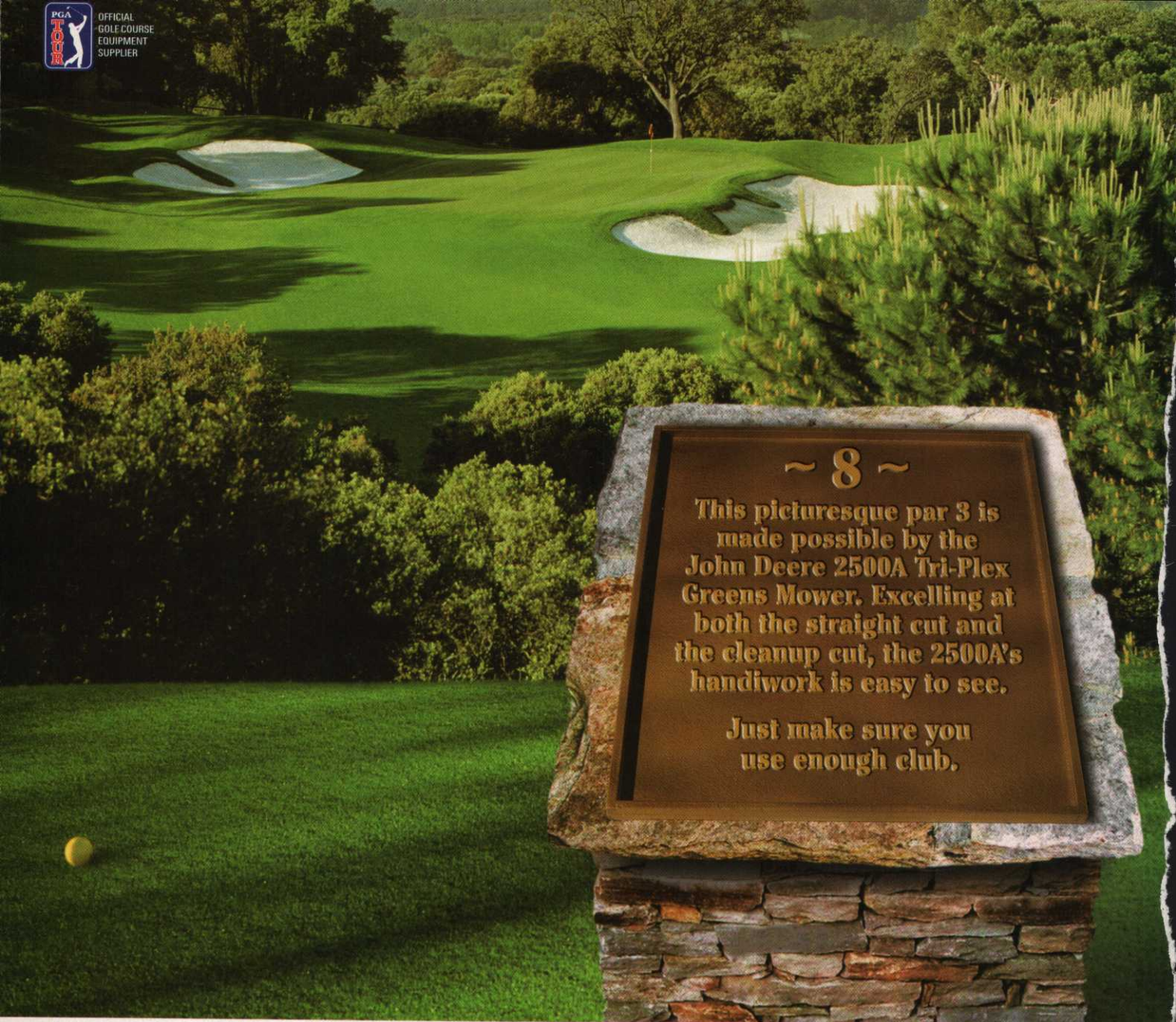
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JOHN DEERE

Here is what golf's higher-ups have been saying this summer about distance increases and the consequences for golf. Although *Golfdom* readers may think

I'm the only one who considers this issue, here's proof there are others out there talking about it:

Bill Campbell, former USGA president: "In a nutshell, the phenomenon of this eye-catching, longer-hitting trend caused by new balls and clubs as well as stronger players, all-out swing instruction and modern agronomy is more easily corrected by just shortening the ball, i.e. putting a governor on it. Though politically challenging, this cure isn't rocket science or U.N. diplomacy. The issue cries out for concerted attention, resolve and action — all with a sense of urgency."

Wally Uhlien, CEO, Fortune Brands (Titleist): "The arrival of the power game and the distances achieved by some players are not bringing professional golf to the edge of ruin as recently expressed by a vocal minority."

Greg Norman: "Go to every manufacturer — I represent Titleist — and give them specifications of the ball that was required at Augusta National just for the Masters tournament. You say, OK, every manufacturer makes that ball. If I was a manufacturer, I would love it because I would sell more golf balls. Because amateurs would love to buy a golf ball that Tiger Woods played with the same specifications. So he's going to buy the one that did go longer and then [buy] the Augusta golf ball. I think there's a lot of merit to it, and I would support it."

David Fay, USGA executive director: "Today's golf courses are playing shorter for the best players than ever before. Whether this is a 'problem' or a natural evolution of a healthy sport depends on your point of view — and quite often, your age."

Frank Hannigan, former USGA executive director: "More distance results from changes made to drivers and, more recently, to balls that are designed to react with clubs by departing at a higher launch angle, and with less spin."

Prepare to Go The Distance

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



ALTHOUGH
GOLFDOM READERS
MAY THINK I'M
THE ONLY ONE
WHO CONSIDERS
THIS ISSUE, HERE'S
PROOF THERE
ARE OTHERS
OUT THERE

Ironically, the technological changes do nothing for the average golfer. To take full advantage of equipment innovations, a player must be exceptionally consistent — close to a scratch player. When the average golfer hits a ball in the center of a club, it's an accident. Distance leads to greater expense, to slower golf, and robs us of the meditative pleasure of comparison."

Tom Fazio, architect: "I think it's been exciting for golf. I think the public coming out here and watching those players on that practice tee and hitting those golf balls 280, 300 yards in the air, I think it's great for golf."

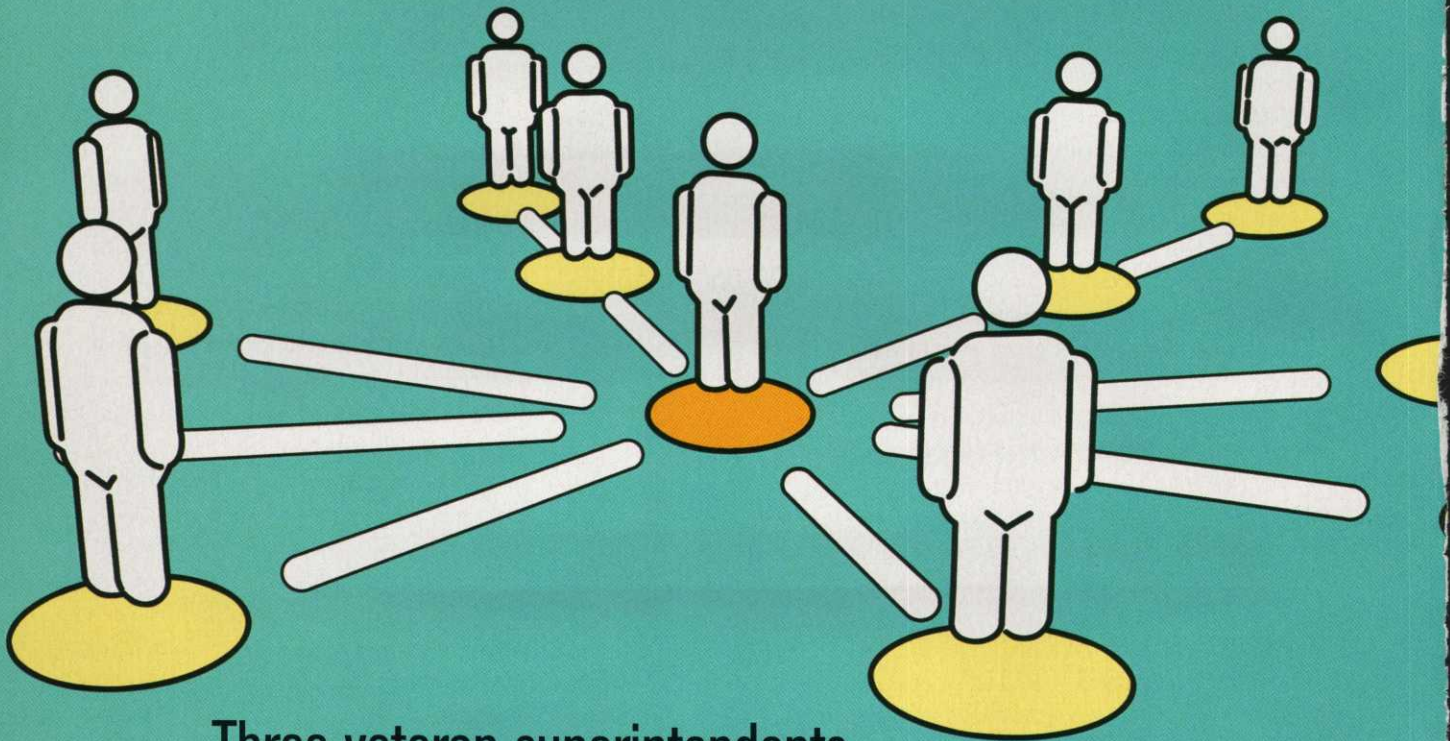
Jack Vickers, founder of The International and Castle Pines: "The lively golf ball is killing the game of golf. We're going to ruin this game if we don't do something. We need to make the game competitive again. The other day I saw a golfer hit a five-iron 278 yards to a green. How crazy are we getting? It's going to be a pitch-and-putt game, and it won't be golf as we once knew it. The USGA has not taken the steps it should have taken. They've let this thing go way beyond where it should have gone."

Rich Beem, golfer: "I think any limitation on golf balls is a terrible idea. We're hitting the ball farther because we're better athletes. It's not just the equipment. If we limit ourselves, we'll regress."

Gary Player: "I can tell you right now this ball thing is coming to an end. Otherwise it'll be the demise of golf courses. I guarantee, as sure as I'm sitting here, that the USGA has not had the leadership to do it, and I'm an admirer of the USGA. Something's going to be done in the future, but by whom, I'm not sure."

Geoff Shackelford can be reached at geoffshac@aol.com.

Rally the Crew



Three veteran superintendents
offer tips on how to motivate employees
to be better and more satisfied workers

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR