



FCF SCHMIDT

One problem that remains, according to Randy Kane, turf pathologist for the Chicago District Golf Association, is that superintendents can't decide whether they love or hate the stuff.

He addressed this problem at a meeting late last year with assistant superintendents from northern California. He talked about how some superintendents treat *Poa* erratically. "They try and kill it in the spring and fall, and they try to keep it alive in the summer," Kane says,

Kane's advice is for superintendents to tailor their cultural practices for the benefit of *Poa*, instead of focusing just on the bentgrass.

"If it's in a mixed stand, people manage for the bent, keeping it dry and using less fertilizer," Kane says.

Also, topdressing and grooming, which are good for bent, are harmful to *Poa* and can damage leaf tissue and lead to higher incident rates of disease, Kane notes.

"If you really stress it, there's a good chance you'll lose it," Kane says.

He does suggest small-tine aerification, hand watering and spoon-feeding of nutrients. "A lot of superintendents are paying more attention to fertilization and irrigation," Kane adds.

According to Skorulski, one key to help *Poa* is to increase the nitrogen rate, which helps the shallow rooting plant establish.

Kane says research indicates some growth regulators can markedly benefit

the plant when applied at the precise time. "There is some evidence showing that *Poa* roots better and is more tolerant if it doesn't seed or flower," Kane says.

The catch is the window for the application is small and can differ on the same course because of microclimates. "It might work for one superintendent

but not for another superintendent whose course is located five miles away," Kane says.

Skorulski concurs.

"It's all timing. When you hit it right, it does extremely well," he says.

*Pioppi is a free-lance writer from Middletown, Conn.*

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## Off The Fringe

# Golfdom and Floratine to Salute 'Mentors' Again In 2004

Last year, *Golfdom* and Floratine Products partnered to recognize four of the industry's leading mentors – those special people who take the time to guide and teach young people in the profession. In 2004, the two are joining again to pay



tribute to more superintendents who exemplify this great tradition of the profession.

The 2004 "Keepers of the Green" Awards will use a nomination process guided by leading superintendents, including winners from last year, to select a group of superintendents who are continuing the heritage of mentorship that goes back to Old Tom Morris himself.

"We're looking for people who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to help young people become leaders in the golf community," said *Golfdom* Publisher Pat Jones. "We want to pay tribute to the people who mentored today's superintendents, but we also want to keep this great tradition alive for future generations as well."

Bill Byrnes, Floratine's president, said: "We feel strongly that this business is all about the great people who take the time to develop the talents of young people. We're looking for the Johnny Appleseeds who plant so future generations can harvest the fruit."

Last year's winners exemplified that spirit perfectly. They were: **Fred Biggers** of Wintergreen Resort in Wintergreen, Va.; **Brian Darrock** of Fairbanks Ranch Country Club in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.; **Kurt Thuemmel** of Walnut Hills Country Club in East Lansing, Mich.; and **Mike Wooten** of Cedar Ridge Country Club in Broken Arrow, Okla.

Winners of the 2004 Keepers of the Green Awards will be announced at the GCSAA Conference & Show in San Diego. Winners will be profiled in an upcoming issue of *Golfdom*, receive an engraved award and be featured in Floratine ads throughout the year.

Interested readers can share their ideas for possible nominations with their local Floratine distributors. To find a distributor in your area, call 901-853-2898 or e-mail [techinfo@floratine.com](mailto:techinfo@floratine.com).

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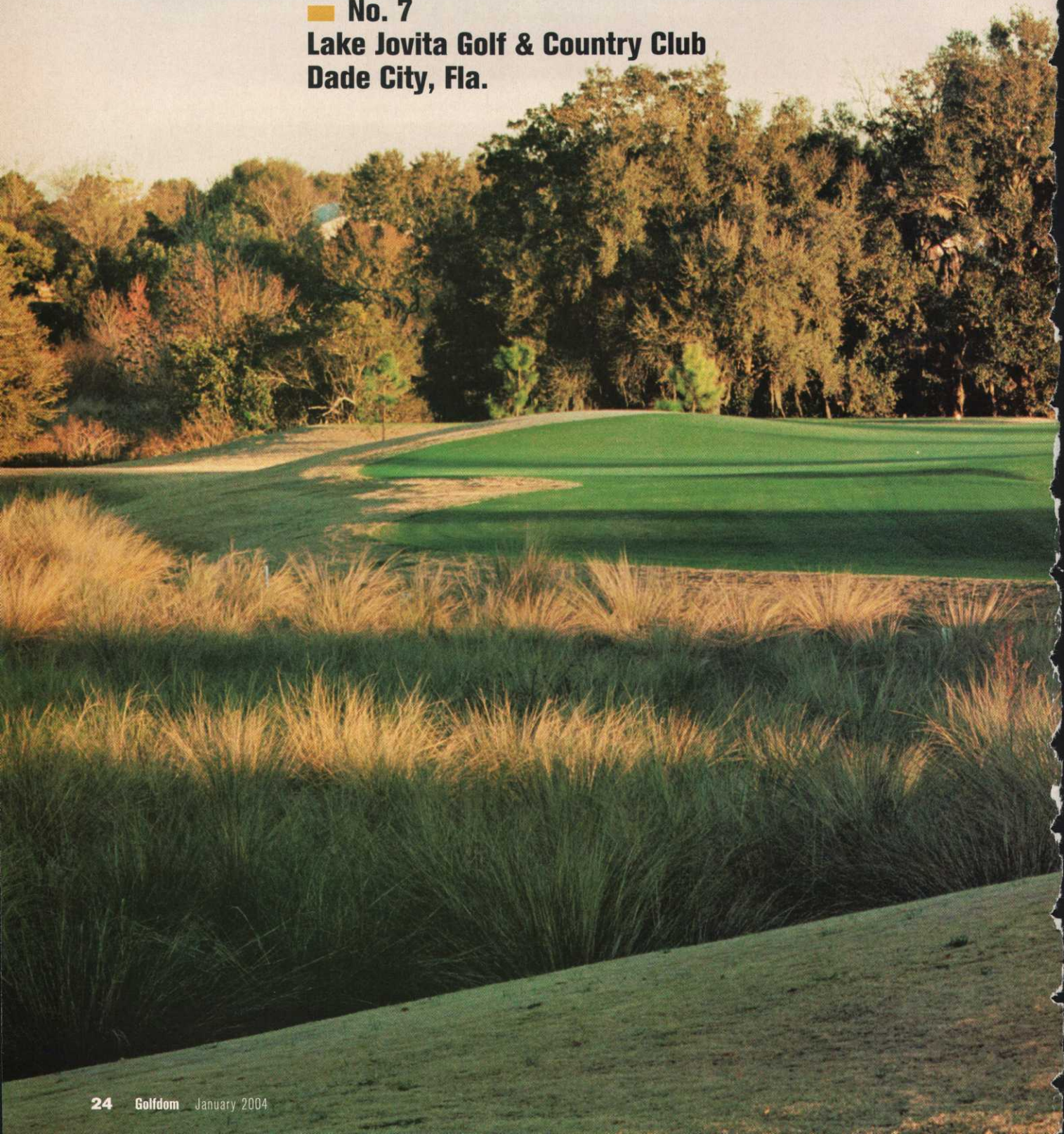
JOHN DEERE



# Hole of the

■ No. 7

**Lake Jovita Golf & Country Club  
Dade City, Fla.**





# Month

## A Hilly Course in a Flat Land

You won't think that Florida is flat after playing a round at Lake Jovita Golf & Country Club in Dade City, Fla. Lake Jovita goes against that topographical assumption of the Sunshine State. The course, designed by Kurt Sandness with assistance from PGA Tour player Tom Lehman, features 140 feet of elevation change.

"The course has a hilly terrain, which is different for Florida," says Tony Disano, certified superintendent, who has been at the course since its construction six years ago.

The par-3 No. 7 (pictured here) on the South Course is no exception. The 202-yard hole features one of the biggest greens on the course. It's adorned by a natural area on the left and trees on the right. Disano advises golfers to play to the center of the green.

That natural area and its surroundings are Disano's top maintenance challenges on the hole. "We have to work hard to keep the turf mowed around the natural area," Disano says. "We have to make sure the slopes are maintained." It's also a challenge to keep the natural area looking uniform, Disano adds, noting that he and his crew remove noxious plants from the area.

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

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**I** just completed one of my busiest years as director of communications for the Florida GCSA, and a large portion of my time and effort was spent on government-relations issues from A to W (arsenic to water).

It seemed like a lot of finger pointing and hand wringing from the environmentalists and media, which eventually filters up to the politicians and regulators for action, was generated by their continuous tunnel vision about golf courses. You know the mantra by now: big water users; runoff and pollution; rich man's game. Yada, yada, yada.

Their limited field of vision does not allow for the ebb and flow of natural forces. If something is dead or dying, man must have done something wrong, and heaven help us if a golf course is anywhere nearby.

This tunnel vision distorts their views so much they think we are sucking the aquifers dry, and spraying and fertilizing every square inch of the golf course every day. They never stop to consider that we might actually take a practical, logical, economical or environmental approach to managing our turfgrass by using alternative sources of water and applying chemicals and fertilizers only when and where needed. Will they ever see the light?

Unfortunately, tunnel vision is not limited to golf's detractors. Even the most proactive of our ranks can be just as guilty of the affliction. When the leaders, movers and shakers and visionaries dedicate themselves to Audubon's Cooperative Sanctuary Program, reams of best management practices, integrated pest-management ideas and volunteering, they end up associating with like-minded people. It is good to feed off the positive energy of all those trying to elevate our profession and the practices in the industry, but we often overlook those who don't get it, can't get it or won't get it.

And the reasons for not getting it are as varied as the duties of superintendents. You can chalk it up to the personalities of superintendents, owners and members. You can blame apathy, budgets and corporate mentality. You can blame arrogance, ignorance and intolerance. That doesn't mean that we don't have a problem right here in River City.

## Both Sides Should Take Off Blinders

BY JOEL JACKSON



WE MUST FIND A  
WAY TO GET FELLOW  
SUPERINTENDENTS  
AND OWNERS TO  
EMBRACE  
COMMON-SENSE  
STEWARDSHIP  
AT THEIR FACILITIES

While the do-gooders rightly embrace and espouse the advancements and changes to products and practices and lead the charge up Capitol Hill, there are scores of rusty weak links out in the ranks. Some of the corrosion is only on the surface, but in more cases than we'd like to admit the metal is on the verge of disintegrating and bringing us down.

In conversations with suppliers and especially superintendents turned salesmen, the stories of inadequate and disorganized pesticide storage rooms, mix/load facilities and equipment wash areas are too numerous to be acceptable. Their estimated percentage of poorly maintained facilities and lack of basic housekeeping would shock those who defend golf course operations in good faith.

We must never stop our outreach efforts and education. But we must also find a way to get fellow superintendents and owners, who ignore the sleeping giant of negative publicity, to embrace common-sense stewardship at their facilities. A broom, a can of paint and couple of bags of concrete will not bust a budget.

I want to offer my thanks to the owners who get it and understand that bad press about environmental pollution could damage their courses, reputations, pocketbooks and the game and business of golf. There are still too many owners who espouse a wait-and-see mentality and won't spend the needed dollars on infrastructure problems that continue to worsen right underneath their noses. Let's hope the light at the end of the tunnel isn't the spotlight on the six o'clock news.

---

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



# *Do Fast Greens Have You on*

The green-speed issue is spinning out of control.  
Here's what you can do to get a handle on it

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES SHEPHERD

It was lunchtime at Butler National Golf Club. Superintendent Michael Sauls sat at a dining table in the clubhouse and nibbled on his midday meal. Glancing up from his plate, Sauls saw trouble approaching him in the form of an overbearing high-handicap hacker.

"He came up to me and started complaining about the course's green speed," Sauls says. "He said, 'What's wrong with the greens? They're slow.'"

A startled Sauls stopped chewing his food. He couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"I had to do everything I could to bite my tongue," Sauls says. "Here's a 25-handicapper complaining that the greens are too slow. What do you say to guy like that?"

The scene unfolded about three years ago at the course in Oak Brook, Ill. It reaffirmed to the veteran Sauls that too many golfers are enamored with fast greens and that green speed is spinning out of control and hurting the game, not to mention stressing out superintendents.

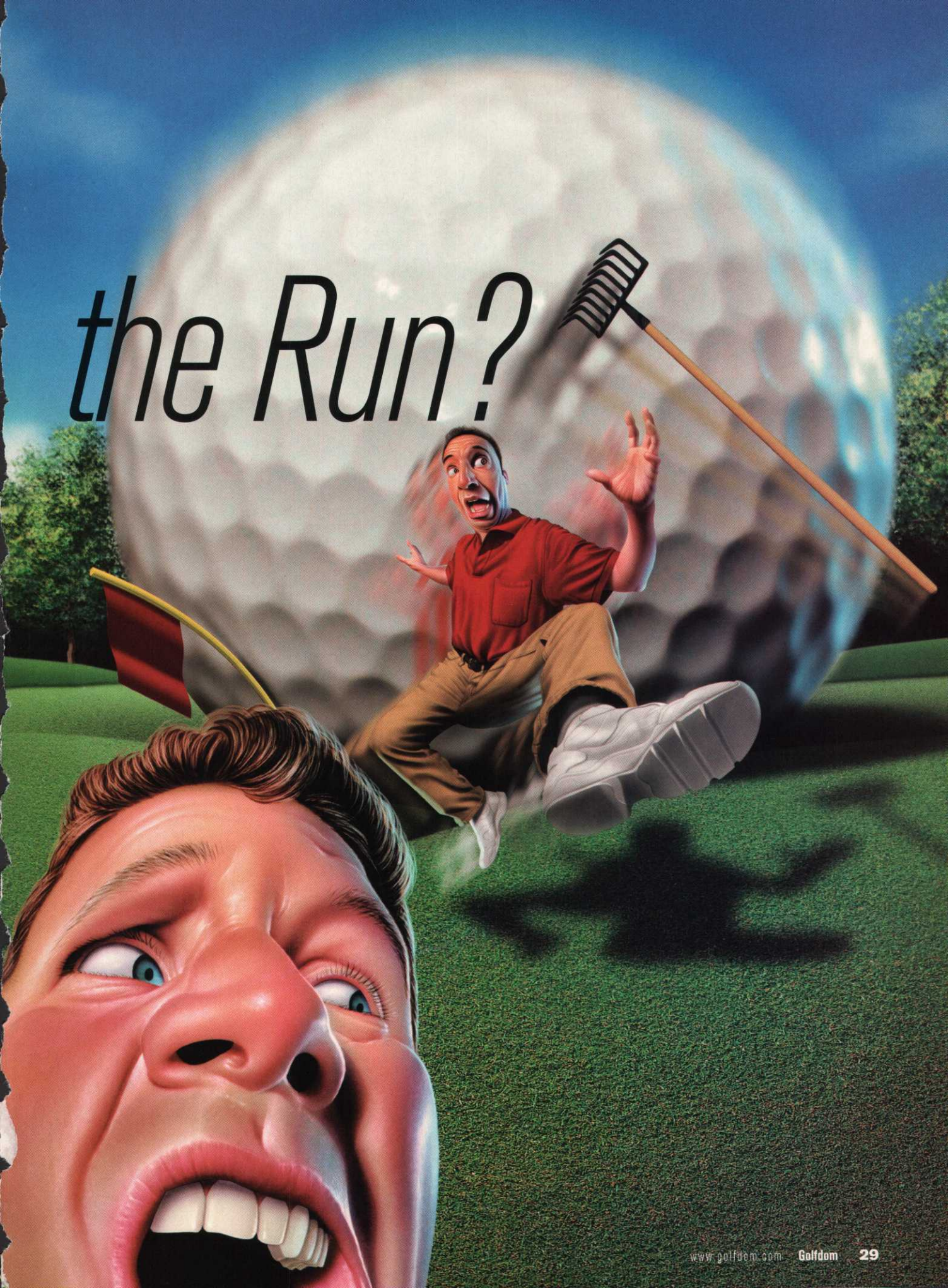
Fast greens, those running at 10 feet or higher on the Stimpmeter, are primarily a problem at private clubs, most industry insiders agree. They say the source of the problem is mainly golfers' egos. The country-club types not only like fast cars, they like fast greens.

Golfers see Augusta National's greens running lightning quick on television during Master's week, and they wonder why they can't have greens like that at their clubs. Another problem is when golfers discover that the club's greens down the street are running slightly faster than their course's. They don't hesitate to

*Continued on page 30*



*the Run?*





### Is Green Speed an Issue at Your Course?



- Somewhat **39%**
- Yes, but we have it under control **27%**
- Not at all **25%**
- Yes, so much that it has led to turf problems **9%**

\*Based on 301 responses

Golfdom

*Continued from page 28*

complain to the superintendent that their course's greens are too slow.

If fast greens didn't cause problems, superintendents surely wouldn't wince when asked by golfers to speed them up. But that's the problem: Fast greens can cause myriad problems — from damaging turf to slowing down already slow play to even getting superintendents fired. What's worse is that many golfers aren't aware of the problems, don't want to be aware of them, and wouldn't care about them even if they were aware of them.

Superintendents can lament to each other for hours on end about the headaches that fast greens have caused them, but that's not going to solve anything. At the end of the day, superintendents must let their feelings be known to golfers about the problems associated with fast greens.

The big key in that process is communicating to them that fast greens are not necessarily a good thing and shouldn't be viewed as a status symbol, industry insiders say. But insiders also point out that such a communication effort could be a long and painstaking process.

But it can work and is already showing signs of working. That's good, because no superintendent should lose his or her job over the dreaded green-speed issue — or even a night's sleep for that matter.

### A closer look

Agronomically, fast greens can stress and kill turf because it's cut too close, double mowed and topdressed regularly. Fast greens also increase maintenance budgets because the greens must be intensely managed.

Fast greens can cause many once-conventional greens, especially ones with undulations, to become unplayable. This not only causes frustration among golfers who can't make putts, but adds more time to their already-long rounds.

Fast greens can also cause superintendents to lose their jobs. A talented superintendent can get fired for refusing to speed up his course's greens at members' requests because he knows he could damage the turf. Worse, a superintendent could get fired for "mismanaging" turf because it died after he succumbed to the pressures to make the greens faster.

The green-speed issue has many superintendents in a bind, but they're not the only ones complaining about it. Architects, seed producers and others also believe that fast greens are impairing golf.

Bill Kerman, senior project designer for Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design in Columbus, Ohio, says green speed is a bigger issue than equipment, another controversial issue that's getting a lot of attention. Green speed is bigger because it affects average golfers more, Kerman stresses.

*Continued on page 32*

## Fast Greens a Slow Issue on Public Courses

Green speed is not a major issue at most public courses, industry experts say. Hence, it's easier for superintendents to regulate green speed on public tracks, says Bill Kerman, senior project designer for Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design in Columbus, Ohio.

Kerman says most golfers at public courses only care if the greens look good and are rolling smoothly. "They don't care if the greens are rolling at 9 feet or 10 feet on the Stimpmeter," Kerman adds. "They won't demand that they roll at 12."

Ron Ross is the certified superintendent of Quarry Oaks Golf Club, a 7-year-old public course located in Ashland, Neb., between Omaha and Lincoln. The green fee at Quarry Oaks, a well-respected and

popular design, is about \$65 on the weekend. Most of the golfers who play Quarry Oaks sport double-digit handicaps who could give a nine iron about fast greens, Ross says.

In fact, if Quarry Oaks' large and undulated greens were stimping at 10 feet or higher, most of the golfers would be spending a good portion of their days on the course, which would not be a good thing, Ross says.

"I've been here for seven years and these greens have never rolled more than 9 feet," Ross says.

Ross says Quarry Oaks doesn't lose customers because they're unhappy with the course's green speeds. However, some single-digit handicap players might com-

ment on Quarry Oaks' slower greens. "But I expect to hear that from them," he says.

Still, Ross says most good golfers realize the greens are slower at Quarry Oaks because they have to be — it's a public course that must serve a variety of golfer skills.

"We try to be everything to everybody, and that's hard to do," Ross says. "We're not going to have fast greens, but we're not going to have really slow greens. The course will be fair."

Ross ensures, however, that all of Quarry Oaks' greens are running at the same speed. He doesn't want to lose golfers because they're unhappy about the lack of consistency with green speed.

— Larry Aylward, Editor