

any sprinkler based off of *one* weather station. Superintendents could tweak these percentages manually, allowing for shady areas, extra dry stations, slopes or even different turf types and heights. Once these percentage values are adjusted, they will rarely need to be changed because the ratio between the ET value generated by the weather station and each sprinkler station's microclimate always remains consistent.

Another factor affecting how the user incorporates ET into his irrigation system is how rainfall is measured. Most irrigation systems only use rainfall measurements to cancel the current or next irrigation cycle because rainfall affects ET for the 24 hours when the value was calculated. Some systems, however, use the value of rainfall for up to seven days to calculate ET. This depletes the amount of rainfall from one day to the next from ET, giving a net ET value which to set the irrigation times for that night.

Another important factor in calculating ET is rainfall intensity. Occasional cloudbursts produce rain of such intensity that most of the water runs off before it can soak in. If the system counted all the rain from such an event as an aggregate, it would

ET maximizes water-distribution efficiency because of its precision.

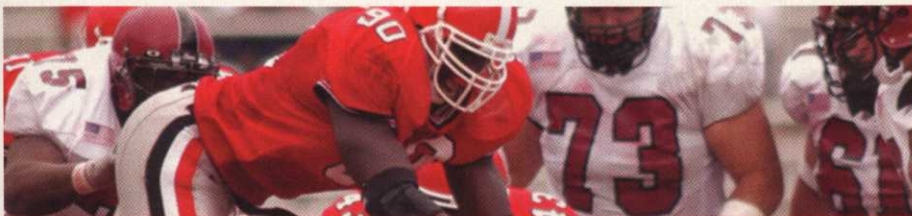
assume there is adequate soil moisture when there really isn't because so much is lost to runoff. To avoid this problem, the weather station should monitor rainfall frequently (perhaps as frequently as every hour) and then disregard any rainfall over a preset limit determined by the superintendent. Only the amount of rainfall below the limit, which should correspond to the

infiltration rate of the site's soil, would be used to calculate an ET value.

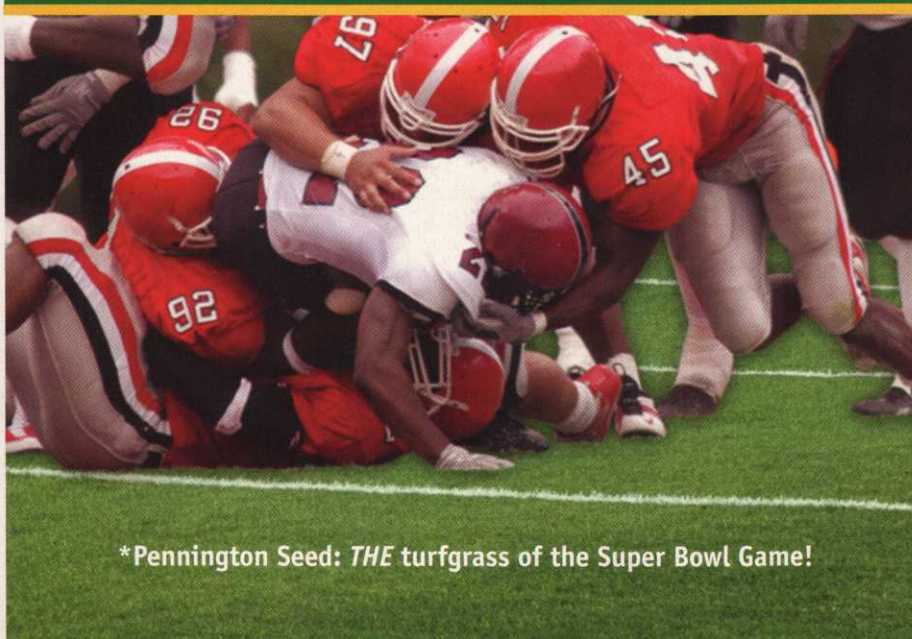
Superintendents have more control of their irrigation systems than ever before with today's computerized central-control systems. The new systems give superintendents the ability to use scientific calculations like ET rates to run times instead of using generic run times of 10, 15 and 20 minutes. In addition, today's ET-enhanced control systems operate based on climatic data derived from on-site weather stations using the system's ET calculator. With that, no single sprinkler station should overwater or underwater the turf.

Calculating ET can ensure a golf course is more consistently playable and more efficient with its water use, saving your course money and producing a better golf course for your customers. ■

Alan Clark is the Great Lakes region golf manager for Rain Bird Golf.



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Living the 'Pure Life'

Some American superintendents have discovered Costa Rica to be an enchanting place to tend turf and pursue other interests **BY ANTHONY PIOPPPI, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR**

A round of golf in Costa Rica is a veritable nature tour, what with coatimundi (top) and iguana trekking on the course.

American superintendents Mark Dinan, Don Johnson, Eric Van Gorder and Jay Miller each came to Costa Rica to work but also for the opportunity to explore an exotic country in a far-off locale. While Van Gorder recently moved back to the United States, all four superintendents say the weather, people, scenery and laid-back lifestyle in Costa Rica make it a hard place to leave.

"The main reason I think people stay here for so long is that you just fall in love with this place," says Johnson, former superintendent of Garra De Leon Golf Course at Melia Playa Conchal resort on Costa Rica's central west coast. "The people are the greatest. They are so warm and friendly. You know you live in a great place, with great people who have a positive outlook on life, when the most popular saying here — and you can hear it said at least five times a day — is 'pura vida,' which means pure life."

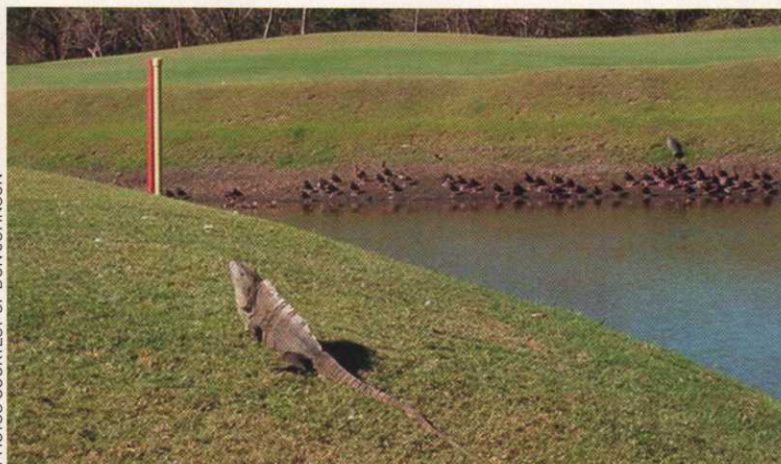
The size of West Virginia, Costa Rica makes up only .01 percent of the world's landmass, but is home to 6 percent of the world's animal and plant species. There are more varieties of moths in Costa Rica than on the entire African continent. The surfing and sport fishing are world-class.

A round of golf in Costa Rica is a veritable nature tour, with an abundance of animals from howler monkeys to iguanas to hundreds of bird species, and astounding flora and fauna on and around the layouts. For Miller, there was another reason to come to Costa Rica.

"I am and will always be a surfer," he says. "When I first got in the golf business, my goal was to have a course near good surf. I hit the jackpot here. There are three great surf breaks on the project, and I built my house on another spot, Playa Grande, that is the best in the country."

Miller has been in Costa Rica for eight years, the last four at Hacienda Pinilla, a golf resort and residential community on the Guanacaste Peninsula. He and his wife have two daughters, Malia

Continued on page 84

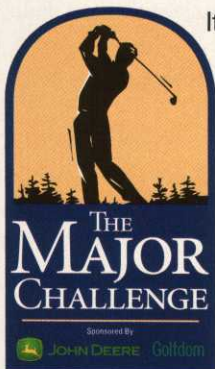


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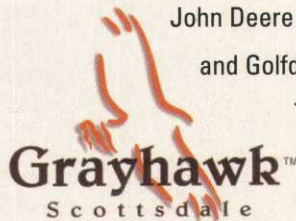


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Golfdom

Living the 'Pure Life'

Continued from page 82

and Kylee, who were both born in the country.

Miller is senior manager at Hacienda Pinilla resort. He was in charge of building the course, which he did with only his crew. No construction company was involved.

As Playa Grande continues to grow, with three hotels under construction and much more building planned, Miller's duties as head of grounds maintenance for the entire property increases, but that's just fine with him. "I truly feel I have the best job in the world and will be here for as long as they will have me," he says.

Dinan arrived in Costa Rica in 1997 to help build and grow in the first nine holes of Parque Valle Del Sol, just outside of the capital city of San Jose, which opened in 1998. Three years later, the second nine of the residential golf development opened under Dinan's watchful eye. He left the United States for Costa Rica after a golf course he grew in filed for bankruptcy.

"I was in the right place at the right time and the right frame of mind," Dinan says. "I arrived thinking I would be here a year at the most. I stayed because of the challenge and opportunities of trying to build golf courses in Costa Rica."

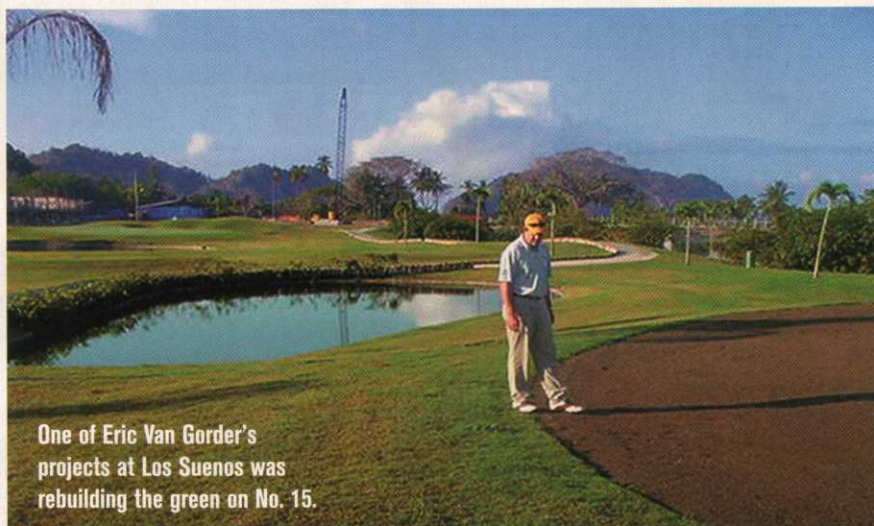
What he called "Third World delays and difficulties" forced him to improvise and to invent solutions.

"When we grew in the course, we had to use an old diesel generator for three-phase power for the pump station, and we had three people turning on sprinklers with keys during the night," he says.

Problems on his course also underscore another reason superintendents love Costa Rica. With no bermudagrass turf farms in Costa Rica, Dinan had a difficult time locating stolons for his course. As a result, the batch used for the front nine was tainted, and he has struggled to keep the grass healthy. In the United States, he invariably would have lost his job at the hands of an unforgiving course owner or membership, but here there are no such pressures — other than the pressure he puts on himself. "I'm my own worst enemy," he says.

It's clear Dinan has fallen in love with his new country. He married a native — referred to as Ticos — named Kathia. She had two sons by a previous marriage. The Dinans also have a young daughter of their own. The two met during construction of the course where Kathia worked as a secretary.

"My Spanish was very bad when I arrived," Dinan says. "I



One of Eric Van Gorder's projects at Los Suenos was rebuilding the green on No. 15.

COURTESY OF ERIC VAN GORDER

was lost without Kathia. She had to translate everything for me. She caught my attention the first day I walked in the office, and the rest is history."

Van Gorder is another fan of Costa Rica. A world traveler, Van Gorder has worked in Vietnam, Cambodia, the Cayman Islands and Belize, among other places.

Van Gorder recently resigned as superintendent from Los Suenos Marriott Ocean and Golf Resort on the northwest coast of Costa Rica to take a job in California at La Mirada Golf Course, run by American Golf Corp.

Van Gorder and his wife, Arelen, who is Nicaraguan, met while both worked in the Cayman Islands. They have two young daughters. "It was time to get back to the United States and raise [them]," Van Gorder says.

Other superintendents may get the opportunity these four have. More golf courses are planned throughout the country. Johnson, though, has a word of warning for those thinking of taking a job in Costa Rica. "Once you've been here, you don't want to leave," he says.

Johnson left Garra de Leon in April, but wants to remain in Costa Rica. He says Garra de Leon let him go for financial reasons.

Johnson and his wife, Shernaz, want to start a business in Costa Rica and raise their daughter there. "Our daughter was born here, and I would like for her to grow up here," he says.

Maybe Johnson will find another job on a golf course. At Garra de Leon, Johnson says he felt very connected to the course.

"I know most superintendents feel the same about their courses too, but to know Costa Rica and the great biodiversity it has is just amazing," Johnson says. "I wanted to be part of that and protect it." ■



KIM TRAUIM

Pioppi, a contributing editor to Golfdom, can be reached at apioppi@earthlink.net.

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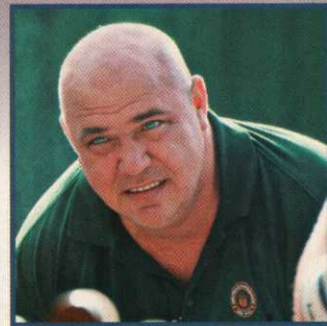
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A man was looking for a new caddy one day when his friend said "I know a great caddy - he's 90 years old but he has eyes like a hawk." "OK then," said the man, "tell him I'm playing again in a week."

The week passed and they started to play. The golfer hit a perfect drive and he said to the caddy, "did you see where it went?" The caddy then said, "Yes." "OK then, where is it?" The caddy replied, "I forgot."

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Out of Bounds

■ SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

softball



We were rained out tonight. Frighteningly, I was thrilled for

the showers. I've played organized ball since I was a wee lad of 5. First it was T-ball in a YMCA league in Salina, Kan. Then it was on to the Red Jacket Pump team in third grade in Davenport, Iowa. When I hung up the baseball spikes at 16 — I was bored, despite being a starting outfielder on a great Babe Ruth team and swinging a mean stick — I immediately started playing softball. It's a spring/summer tradition that is getting awfully close to two decades now.

Honestly, I can't ever remember wishing, really pleading and begging for a washout, for the notion goes against the ethos of the game and my own approach to athletics. The question, of course, is why I wanted it this time.

What brings a boy, who still remembers getting K'd at 13 on three straight pitches from a kid (Pat Meares) who went on to a decent Major League career, to demand precipitation on a Tuesday night in April?

Practical reasons, abound, of course. As a teacher, I'm thoroughly exhausted at this time in the school year. There are stacks of high school and college papers to grade, and

IT'S TIME TO TAKE A HEALTHIER APPROACH TO MY FAVORITE

SUMMER PASTIME — NOW THAT I'M OLDER **BY MARK LUCE**

there's never enough time to spend with my family. Also, my left hamstring still gives me trouble.

But no matter how much I tell myself those things, the real reason is much simpler. In our inaugural game of the season the previous week, I took an O-fer at the plate for the night — inexcusable for a longtime leadoff man — and got run around the outfield like a rookie. That game, more than any I've ever played, made me nervous.

I've played every position but pitcher on my long-time team, The Pigs, and I play hard and smart regardless of the score. The individual challenge of playing well, however, seems to be taking a back seat to the camaraderie of the dugout and the laughs over post-game refreshments in the parking lot.

Former pro athletes often grow angry and despondent after they leave the game, their importance diminished along with their physical skills. Obviously, I don't worry about the former, but the latter begins to gnaw at the brain.

I look at our first-baseman, a wily 57-year-old English professor, and wonder how he does it every year.

PHOTODISC

Mike was an amazing fast-pitch player, and now he toils with guys 30 to 40 years younger without any self-consciousness at all. He's made a pact with himself that he'll be out there as long as he's having fun, doesn't embarrass himself and can still actually move. He understands, though, that any season could be his last.

It's that recognition, perhaps, that I struggle with — that someday I won't play softball anymore. Once you quit just playing on instinct and start wondering whether you still have it, your game is doomed. And the rains won't come when you ask.

Maybe admitting my desire to be rained out is the first step toward a more healthy approach. I need to remember that softball is fun and recognize that when I can't play anymore, I can't play anymore. When that comes — hopefully, later rather than sooner — I will have fond, fun and friendly memories of a game that has served me well for many moons.

Mark Luce is a freelance writer based in Kansas City, Mo., where he leads off for The Pigs, arguably the most academically advanced team in their league.

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