

“They saved us a lot of erosion problems, *big time.*”



Cimarron Hills, a Jack Nicklaus signature golf course, was completed in April 2002. Course superintendent Kris “KD” Davis then began working to revegetate native grasses on the outer corridor, while avoiding potential erosion problems along the feathered edges of the sand-capped course.

“We tried hydroseeding some areas, but it takes so long. And yes, we could have bought sod, but it’s very very expensive – and time intensive too. So we used a rotary spreader, and put the seed out in about 1/10 of the time that it would have taken us to hydroseed it. Then we covered the seed with North American Green’s DS75 erosion control blankets. They are great because once you roll them out you just put a couple of sprinklers on and then you can basically forget about them. They held water really well and helped disburse the rain. We got the grasses we wanted, and they saved us a lot of erosion problems, *big time.*”

*Kris “KD” Davis, Cimarron Hills Course Superintendent
Georgetown TX*



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A DIVISION OF NORTH AMERICAN GREEN

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courses, including Congressional Country Club. Latshaw was the keynote speaker at an Australian Golf Course Superintendents Association meeting in the early 1990s. He invited some of the Australians, including Dempsey, to work on his crew during the 1997 U.S. Open at Congressional.

It is also volunteer Bruce Kemp's third U.S. Open. Kemp, who owns one of the few turf product distributors in Sydney, volunteered at Congressional and again at Pebble



Shinnecock Hills was a father and son reunion for Glenn (left) and Garry Dawson, who hail from Canberra, Australia. Glenn came to Shinnecock last year as an intern on the maintenance crew. Garry, who teaches in the department of horticulture at the Canberra Institute of Technology, hadn't seen his son in several months before traveling to Shinnecock to volunteer on the crew.

Beach Golf Links when the Open was there in 2000. He says the tournament has grown. "It's amazing how much bigger it is."

In his three U.S. Opens, the well-toned Kemp has rolled greens, fluffed rough and is watering rough at Shinnecock. When asked what his reaction would be if the players complain that the rough is too severe, Kemp says with a wry smile, "I'm going to enjoy that."

Speaking of players complaining, two international volunteers — Greig Barker and Nathan Strong — find themselves in the thick of controversy on the tournament's final day. The two comprise the team that must syringe the seared seventh green in front of thousands of people during the final round of play.

Barker, assistant superintendent of North Halton Golf & Country Club in Georgetown, Ontario, says he wanted to volunteer on the Shinnecock crew so he could gain big-tournament experience, but he probably never expected this.

Because he's part of the syringe team, Barker is like a doctor on call and must stay close to

the action. (In hindsight, Barker and Strong probably had the most important job of the tournament on the final day.) "I'll rest when I go home," the strapping 28-year old Barker says.

Most of the international volunteers say they want to learn the latest about turf management during their trips to Shinnecock.

Mark Parker, superintendent of Concord (Australia) Golf Club, has come to see the latest in technology. John Deere supplied support equipment for the U.S. Open — everything from mowers and bunker rakes to utility vehicles and portable power equipment — and Parker is impressed.

"The technology and research here is a few years ahead of Australia," says the 37-year-old Parker, who has worked at the 105-year-old Concord for 17 years, the last 16 as superintendent. "We have to come here to stay on top of it."

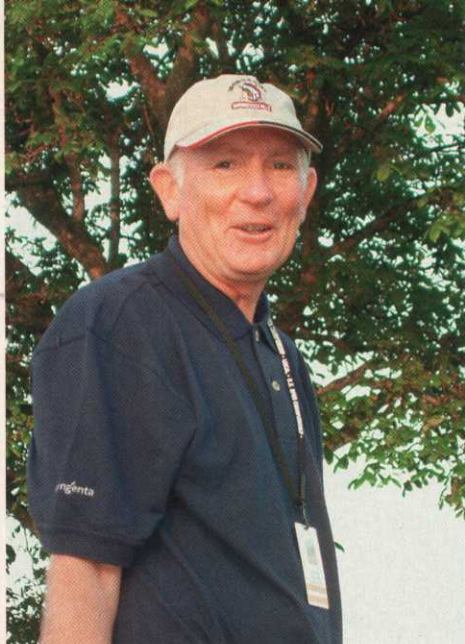
Parker has been to the United States before. In fact, he was introduced to Turf Seed's Penn A's and G's bentgrass varieties in 1995 when he came to the country on a study tour. When Concord renovated its greens in 1997, Parker chose A-4 for the regrassing. "We've had the greens now for seven years, and they've been fantastic," he says.

It's the first time the 47-year-old Odell, who has been superintendent at Royal Sydney for 16 years, has volunteered at an American tournament. It's also the first time he's seen fairways dragged with leaded rope to rid them of dew.

"What a great idea, and how simple," he says.



Greig Barker, an assistant superintendent from Canada, says he wanted to volunteer on the crew to gain some big-tournament experience.



"I came here with a will to learn," says Dave Crawford, who recently celebrated his 25th anniversary as superintendent at Royal Jersey Golf Club.

still experience a few communication gaffes with the Americans. While relaxing in the maintenance facility, Crawford asks a tired and sweaty Bob York, a volunteer from BASF Professional Turf, what he's drinking.

"It's Powerade," York says of the sports drink. "It refills your body's electrolytes."

A sour expression forms on Crawford's face. "You reckon I'm a battery?" he says.

Both men chuckle after realizing their misinterpretation. It's only mid-week, but it has already been the experience of a lifetime for Crawford, who recently celebrated his 25th anniversary as superintendent of Royal Jersey. Crawford is pushing 60 and retirement looms. Volunteering at the U.S. Open is something he has always wanted to do.

"I came here with a will to learn," Crawford says convincingly in his thick English accent.

He leaves Shinnecock Hills with memories to burn. ■

"I can't get over it – they're so friendly. They won't let you put your hand in your pocket."

BRUCE KEMP,
AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEER

The international volunteers say they've hit it off well with their American counterparts. They rave about the hospitality they've received.

"I can't get over it — they're so friendly," Kemp says of the other American crew workers. "It's embarrassing at times. They won't let you put your hand in your pocket."

While all of the international volunteers hail from English-speaking countries, some

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Tough Crowd

BY ANTHONY PIOPPA, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The golf course maintenance industry is taking on the appearance of a car (golfers' expectations) towing a trailer (superintendents). No matter how fast the trailer goes, it can't catch up to the car.

No matter what a superintendent does, it's just not enough. The greens may be perfect and rolling at 10 on the Stimpmeter, but nearby is a course with a green speed of 11, so 10 is deemed too slow. It's inconsequential that the course with a green speed of 11 is 2 years old with flat putting surfaces, while the one course with a green speed of 10 is 85 years old and has wilting, undulating greens that would be impossible to play at higher speeds.

Another part of the problem is also the age-old dilemma of a course trying to keep up with the Joneses even if the Joneses have the largest maintenance budget in the area and a crew the size of a cavalry division. Of course, the color television is also to blame. If only golf tournaments could be televised in black and white.

So superintendents, like the trailer, have no choice but to keep up. This brings to light a predicament that many superintendents face when forming their maintenance budgets.

A major problem with many golf courses is that budgets aren't rising at the same level as golfers' expectations for outstanding turf. So how can superintendents better communicate with golfers and members to find out the things they want and need the most? How can superintendents make it clear to golfers and members that they sometimes can't have everything they want because of budgetary limits?

No matter how tough Fred Behnke's cur-

rent bosses are now, they will never be more demanding than the golf course's previous owners. Behnke is superintendent of Mount Prospect (Ill.) Golf Club, a municipal owned by the Mount Prospect Park District. Behnke says the mob owned Mount Prospect in the 1930s and 1940s. Now that's a boss who would be tough to say "no" to.

"I keep thinking we're going to find a body or money every time we dig an irrigation trench," Behnke says with a chuckle.

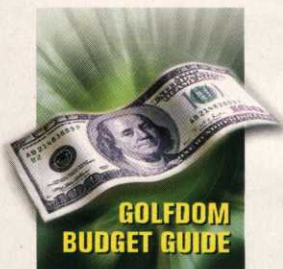
Since he has not found any cash, Behnke has to make do with the budget provided him to keep the course up to expectations, while also getting the point across to management and golfers of what's attainable and what's not.

"My boss made it clear that he's not going to tolerate what most people consider municipal conditions," Behnke says.

That's a tall order, considering that Mount Prospect's most-expensive green fees are \$46 for nonresidents on weekends. The expectations, though, are high because of so many good public layouts in the Chicago area — which Behnke says leads to an interesting phenomenon when his regulars return from one of the expensive courses. "They spent a lot more money, so they are not going to say our place is just as good," he says, even though the course just might *be* as good.

Behnke, who has been at Mount Prospect for nearly 20 years and is president of the Chicagoland Association of Golf Course Superintendents, has found that talking to golfers individually about the course's budget is the best way to communicate with them. Then they understand better why he can spend

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Budgets aren't rising at the same level as golfers' great expectations for outstanding turf. What are superintendents to do?



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money to do some things but not some others. Behnke's point is that most people — if you talk to them alone and reasonably — will be reasonable with *you*.

Behnke says another part of his job is to “act as a filtering mechanism.” Because the county runs the course, a commission oversees its operation. That means the general public can voice concerns directly to the commission. Behnke says golfers won't go over his head if he answers their queries at the golf course.

Despite his challenges, Behnke says he might have an advantage over superintendents at upscale private courses.

“My golfers are mostly middle-class,” he says. “They have heard the word ‘no’ in their lives. The guys at private clubs have it harder because they are dealing with people not used to hearing ‘no.’”

Bob Alonzi will attest to that. The superintendent at Fenway Golf Club in White Plains, N.Y., has been a superintendent in the ultra-competitive Westchester County area for more than 30 years, including a stint at Winged Foot Golf Club. According to Alonzi, one of his biggest problems over the years has been dealing with a person in a position of power — whether it is green chairman or club president — who makes decisions on his own, foregoing the normal procedure.

“It becomes very political,” Alonzi says. “You can't run the golf course for one person.”

In these situations, people used to exercising power believe they can make changes by merely passing on the dictum without thoughts of budgets or manpower. “They want to leave their mark,” Alonzi says.

Alonzi tries to combat this problem through what he calls “familiarization,” or teaching his members without making them feel like they are being taught.

“It's really getting to know the people you work for,” he says, noting that it's about carefully explaining why their wants and desires may not be realistic. “I want to communicate what it takes to achieve X, Y and Z.”

At Barefoot Resort and Golf in North Myrtle Beach, S.C., Patrick Donelan deals with one person, the director of golf, while maintaining the Greg Norman- and Davis Love-designed courses. In his previous job, Donelan was superintendent at a private facility. Then

he used hard numbers to explain to members why certain desires could never be achieved without shattering the budget.

At one point at the private course, Donelan asked the green committee to give him a wish list of what it wanted. Then he put numbers to each item to show what each would cost.

“They just about fell off their chairs,” Donelan says of the cost for some proposed projects, such as extending irrigation into the tree lines or performing landscaping projects. “They looked at me like I was nuts.”

Often times, the members who proposed the work didn't take labor issues into consideration of the potential cost, Donelan says.

One way to avoid farfetched ideas is to indoctrinate new board members. “The older guys need to help the new guys understand the superintendent's situation,” Donelan says.

He points to the fact that most freshman green committee members are surprised by the fact that 54 percent of the budget is devoted to labor.

The rules are different at Barefoot Resort. Donelan works in conjunction with his counterpart, John Hughes, superintendent of the resort's Tom Fazio-designed public course. When budget time rolls around, Donelan and Hughes work together before submitting their numbers.

At times, cuts are needed even when it appears that the leanest numbers are not enough. Donelan says he and Hughes leave it up to their bosses to make the toughest cuts. Sometimes that means not hiring as many seasonal employees or reducing the frequency of nonessential maintenance practices.

Donelan says he understands the need to save money, although he doesn't always like the cuts that must be made. But since the superintendents of Barefoot have such a good relationship with upper management, he says he knows his bosses will take the utmost care when trimming.

Alonzi said communication between the superintendent and all involved parties is the simple and appropriate path to settle budget disputes.

“The best way is to talk it over,” he says, before offering a caution. “But you have to be extremely careful.” ■



“I want to communicate what it takes to achieve X, Y and Z.”

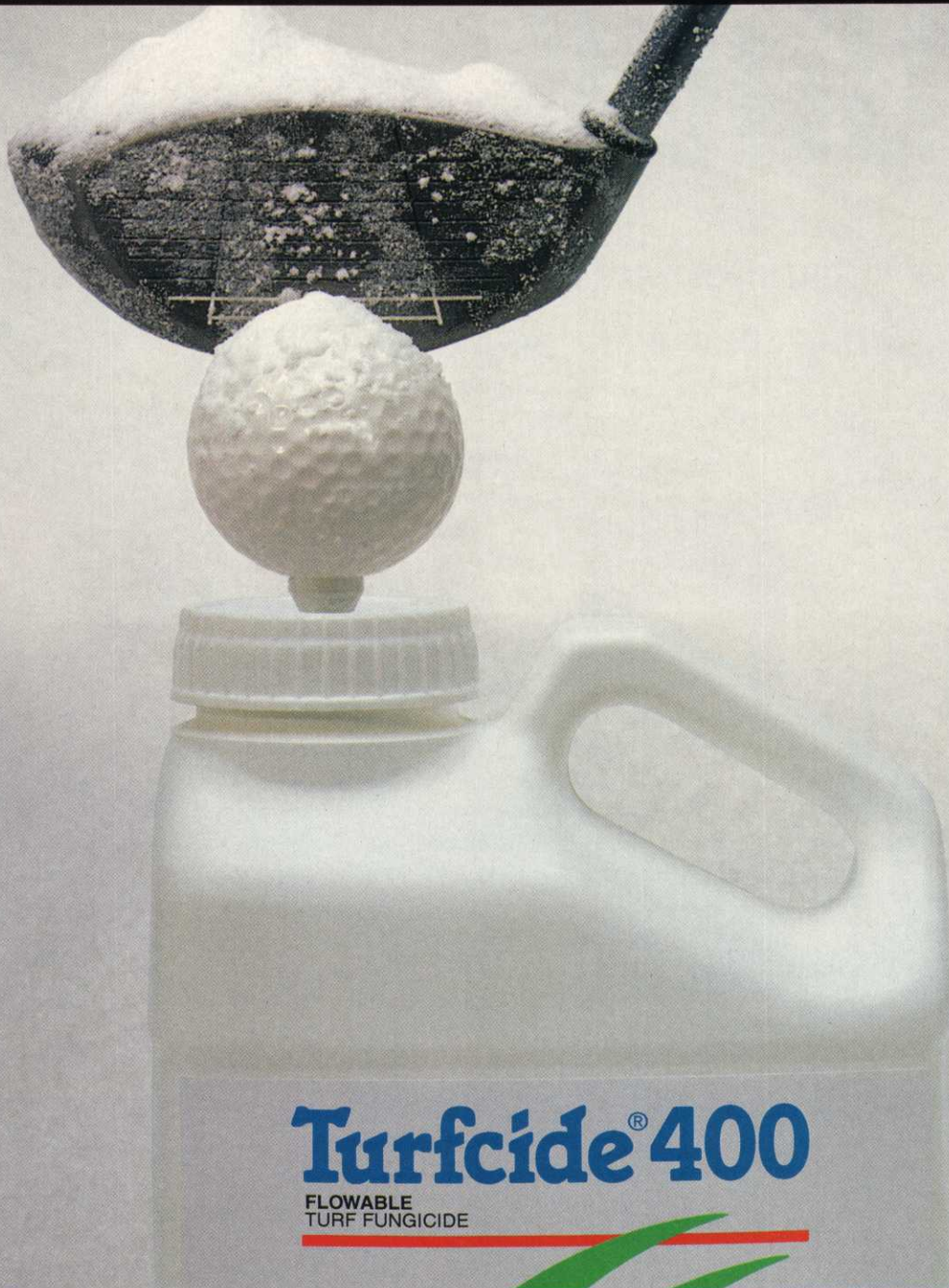
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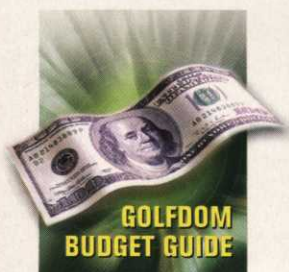
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Money 'Talks'

It's vital for superintendents to communicate effectively when negotiating their maintenance budgets

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR



Jim Cross (center), certified superintendent of Rumson Country Club, keeps his green committee members— including co-chairmen Jim Morrison (left) and Jake Gehret — abreast of how much money it takes for his crew to perform certain tasks.

The green committee members at New Jersey's upscale Rumson Country Club are well-educated and well-to-do. Many are employed as stockbrokers, bond traders and bankers in nearby New

York's financial district.

Jim Cross, certified superintendent of Rumson Country Club, knows he's up against some fiscal phenoms when it comes to talking money and configuring the golf course's annual maintenance budget. "I can't pull the wool over their eyes," Cross says with a chuckle.

A seasoned superintendent, the 50-year-old Cross realizes how important it is for superintendents to communicate effectively when negotiating their maintenance budgets, whether

it's with a course's green committee, financial committee, general manager or owner. Superintendents also need to learn proper business lingo so they can hold informed conversations with the financial know-it-alls and understand the logic behind bottom lines and profit margins.

W. Davis Folsom, a professor of marketing and economics at the University of South Carolina, guesses most superintendents never took accounting in college. While they don't need to understand economics with the intensity of Alan Greenspan, superintendents do need to understand the basics of business — and then some.

"Superintendents aren't dealing with revenue, but they're dealing with cost," Folsom says. "They have to know the difference between a capital expenditure and expensing an item."

Rick Slattery, superintendent of Locust Hill Country Club in Rochester, N.Y., says it's more imperative than ever — in a stagnant economic environment — that superintendents know finance.

"It's not only for your own survival, but also for your club's survival," Slattery says. "Everyone is in this together."

Learning the lingo

Communication between superintendents and their courses' financial experts must be two-way for it to be effective. However, superin-

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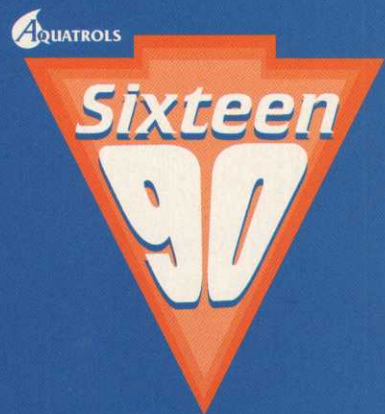
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tendents are the catalysts for that communication on both ends.

Superintendents must understand the language spoken by the business-savvy people they deal with. On the flip side, superintendents must ensure those same people understand what they're talking about when superintendents speak to them about agronomics.

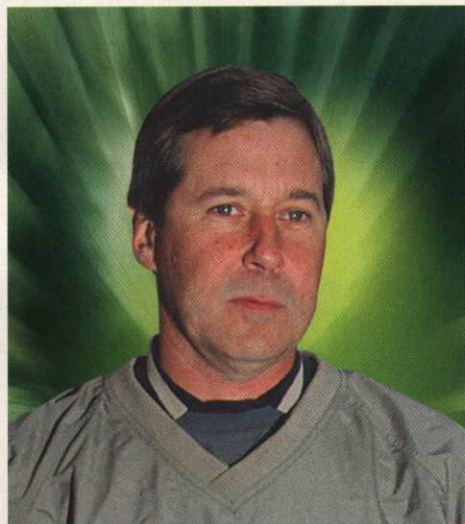
For example, a club's green committee member who's employed as a financial analyst on Wall Street expects a superintendent to understand the business language he's speaking. However, he'll also expect the superintendent to talk in novice terms when discussing the implications of insect damage if turf is not treated with an application of imidacloprid.

"You have to understand that they don't know your lingo and probably won't make an attempt to learn it," Slattery says.

But it often takes time and patience for superintendents to learn their lingo.

Joe Boe, superintendent of Coral Oaks Golf Course, a municipal course in Cape Coral, Fla., meets a few times a year with the city's finance department to discuss his course's budget and financial state. Boe admits "number crunchers" intimidated him when he began working at Coral Oaks about nine years ago.

Boe says the city's financial wizards are detailed in their approach — they seek precise figures on how much it costs to operate the course per hour and per acre. But after a few rounds of dealings with the finance department, Boe says he had a clearer picture of his



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RICK SLATTERY
LOCUST HILL COUNTRY CLUB

A Good 'Business' Man

Jim Cross is all business when it comes time to present his budget to the green committee. Cross, certified superintendent of Rumson Country Club, offers these tips:

- **Give a complete presentation.** "Use spreadsheets and include supporting statements for both maintenance and capital requests," Cross says. "This should be in the form of text, graphs and literature."
- **Look professional.** "Wear a coat and tie, and speak clearly and concisely," Cross says. "Package the budget neatly in a binder with cover page, index and dividers so the information is easy to read and find."
- **Provide copies of the budget to everyone and personalize them if possible.** "The more involved everyone is in the process, the more likely they are to take ownership of and support the cause," Cross says.

course's economics. "You have to get it down to an exact science to know exactly where the money is," he adds.

Boe says it's important for superintendents to understand specific statistics such as cost per acre. Then they will understand why — or why not — they're granted certain funds at budget time.

Cross, who has been at Rumson for 15 years, says he's doesn't get jumpy when he discusses financial matters with his club's green committee. That's because Cross is no dummy when it comes to numbers. He originally attended college to study business and accounting, and what he learned has helped him in his business dealings with the green committee.

If superintendents don't have a handle on

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