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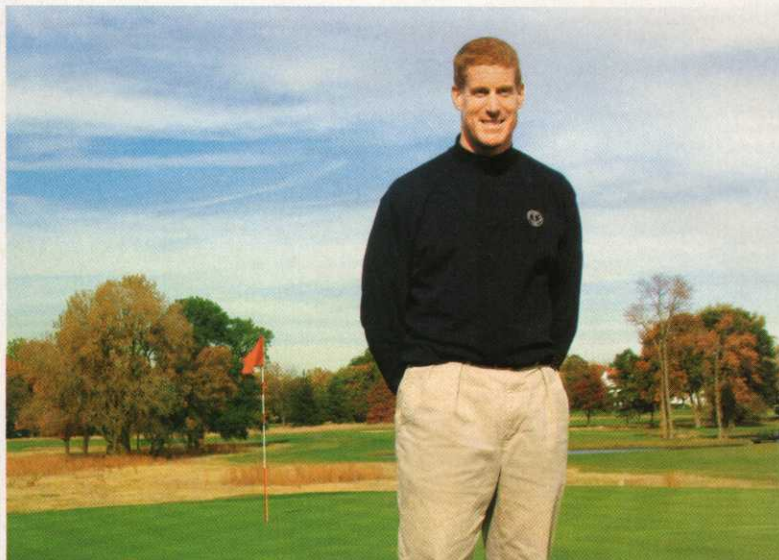
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Jon Jennings and Chicago Golf Club will host the Walker Cup in August.

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the highest standards are set and where superintendents make the most money.”

Jennings got his wish and landed the superintendent’s job in 1993 at the prestigious Patterson Club in Fairfield, Conn., a Robert Trent Jones design that was built in 1946 and had about 600 members.

“He makes a determined effort to stay three steps ahead of the membership.”

PAT SISK, MILWAUKEE COUNTRY CLUB

“I knew the pressure that was coming,” Jennings says, noting that Patterson’s play was about 28,000 rounds a year.

In his seven years there, Jennings says he was able to elevate the standard of the club by adding a new irrigation system and extensive drainage, among other things. Jennings enjoyed Patterson and things were going well there, but he wanted to fulfill his dream of working at a top classical club.

Jennings beat out two other top superintendents in the business — two men who were subsequently hired at two other classical gems — to get the post at Chicago Golf Club.

“Jon had a long- and short-term plan to

renovate the course, which was in a tired state,” Daly says. “He talked about what he was going to do, how he would do it and what resources he would need to get it done. He showed us where the course was now, and where he thought he could take it in terms of the greens and the fairways. He made quite a presentation and quite an impression.”

Jennings’ wife Susan remembers that her husband was like a kid on Christmas when he heard about the opening at Chicago Golf Club.

“He just looked at me and said, ‘That’s a dream job. That’s a golf course like almost no other in the world,’ ” Susan says. “He said, ‘I want to interview there even if it just means I get to walk the course.’ ”

When he interviewed for the job, Jennings was aware Chicago Golf Club was staging the Walker Cup this year. It wasn’t the main reason he wanted to come to the club, “but it was the icing on the cake,” he says.

Jennings has volunteered at a few major tournaments, including last year’s U.S. Open, but the Walker Cup, which pits America’s best amateur golfers against Great Britain’s and Ireland’s best, will be the first time he’s hosted a tournament of such magnitude as a superintendent.

Nobody was happier to see Jennings get the job at Chicago Golf Club than Pat Sisk, certified superintendent of Milwaukee Country Club, who grew up with Jennings in Connecticut and is his best friend. Sisk says Jennings is a perfect fit for the course for several reasons, including his love of architecture and his ability to meet members’ needs.

“Nobody will put more pressure on Jon Jennings than Jon Jennings,” Sisk says. “He makes a determined effort to stay three steps ahead of the membership. Nobody has any higher standards for the golf course.”

Chrzanowski, who broke Jennings into the business, isn’t surprised his pupil ended up at Chicago Golf Club.

“He’s about as hard a worker as I’ve seen,” says Chrzanowski, who has been at Madison for 25 years.

Jennings likes his job so much that it’s hard for him to stay away from Chicago Golf Club on his days off — and he only takes off about two days a month during the season.

“I just feel drawn here,” Jennings says softly. “It’s my love for the place and what I do. It’s a privilege and an honor to be employed here.” ■



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Hurricane Jeanne Visits The Moorings With 120mph Sustained 8 Inches of Rain and And Then It Invites The Ocean For a Party on the Course



It was a one-two punch. First Hurricane Frances in early September, and then Hurricane Jeanne three weeks later. A hellish nightmare for Moorings Club superintendent Craig Weyandt and his staff.

As Weyandt recalls, "Frances was pretty awesome because it was a slow-moving storm with lots of rain. We went through two high tides with Frances, so the greens were under water for a total of about four hours during each storm surge. But the heavy rain actually worked to our advantage since it also helped carry the salts away. Not that it was a picnic. We still had lots of downed trees and damage. The clubhouse was also a mess, but looked like it could be salvaged. We were just beginning to make good progress with the renovation and repair work on the course itself, and then along came Jeanne. And we all had to leave. We were on the northern edge of the "eye," the storm's most destructive path.

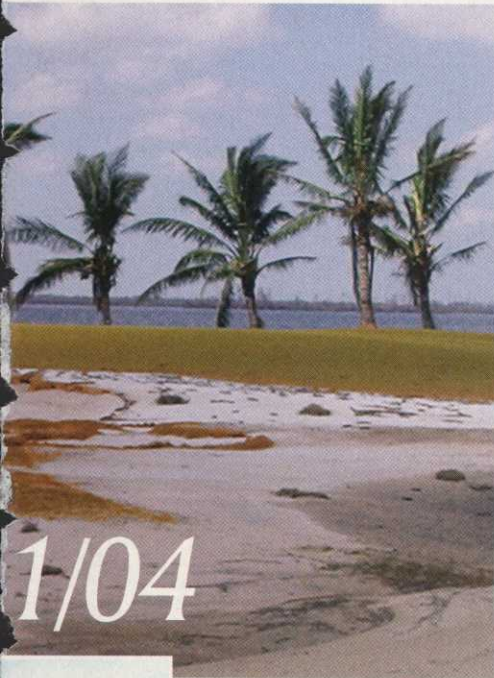
"Jeanne was a meaner, faster moving storm than Frances, and she hit us full force. That's when the

ocean came over the dunes and down the road and joined with the Indian River, which is part of the Intracoastal Waterway system. It's also the western boundary of our front nine holes.

"I'd say 70% to 75% of the entire course was submerged, and most of the front nine. We've got photos showing whitecaps breaking over our lower greens and tees. Essentially anything six feet in elevation or less was under water - very salty water. We were expecting the worst. We weren't able to get back to the club for four or five days, but we could tell from our own neighborhoods and homes how much more destructive Jeanne was. Our TifEagle greens were just sitting there baking in the sun that first week, covered with debris and downed trees. We lost over 400 trees. Oaks, sabals, green buttonwoods. The older sabal palms just snapped in half. There were also



Moorings Club at Vero Beach, Florida and Winds, 140mph Gusts, and 6 Foot Tidal Surges. Over to the Intracoastal Waterway Club's TifEagle Greens.



1/04



Weyandt
with
his staff

huge gouges in the greens from flying debris. We found copper roofing material from our clubhouse in the mangroves a half a mile out on the course. On top of that, when we did get back, there was no power for another whole week. So we couldn't even begin to irrigate to start moving the salts down through the soil profile. It was a very bad situation. Everything had gone

totally brown. Huge chunks of many greens and tees were missing. Our beautiful fairways were essentially trashed. Dozens of bunkers were destroyed. The rock revetment surrounding holes five and six was nowhere in sight. After looking around, I thought at first we were toast."

Fortunately for the Moorings Club, Craig Weyandt is an optimist at heart. He also happens to have unlimited energy, formidable skills, and a dedicated staff. Weyandt continues, "We all looked at this



11/24/04

as a personal challenge. Although Jeanne came through two months ago, we didn't actually start on our greens for almost three weeks after that. So what you see now has happened in just six short weeks. The back nine are open. Maybe they're not perfect, but they're getting there. And next week we'll open the front nine. I can't believe how strong our TifEagle has come back after what it's been through."

TifEagle proves once again that only the strong survive. We wouldn't have expected anything less. TifEagle. It's the ultimate ultradwarf bermudagrass. Hats off to Craig Weyandt and his staff for a job well done from all of the members of the TifEagle Growers Association.

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*Golfdom's annual
guide on green
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A Healthy Injection for the Greens – and the ...

Machine uses a high-speed, water-based system that is changing the way superintendents handle routine aeration.



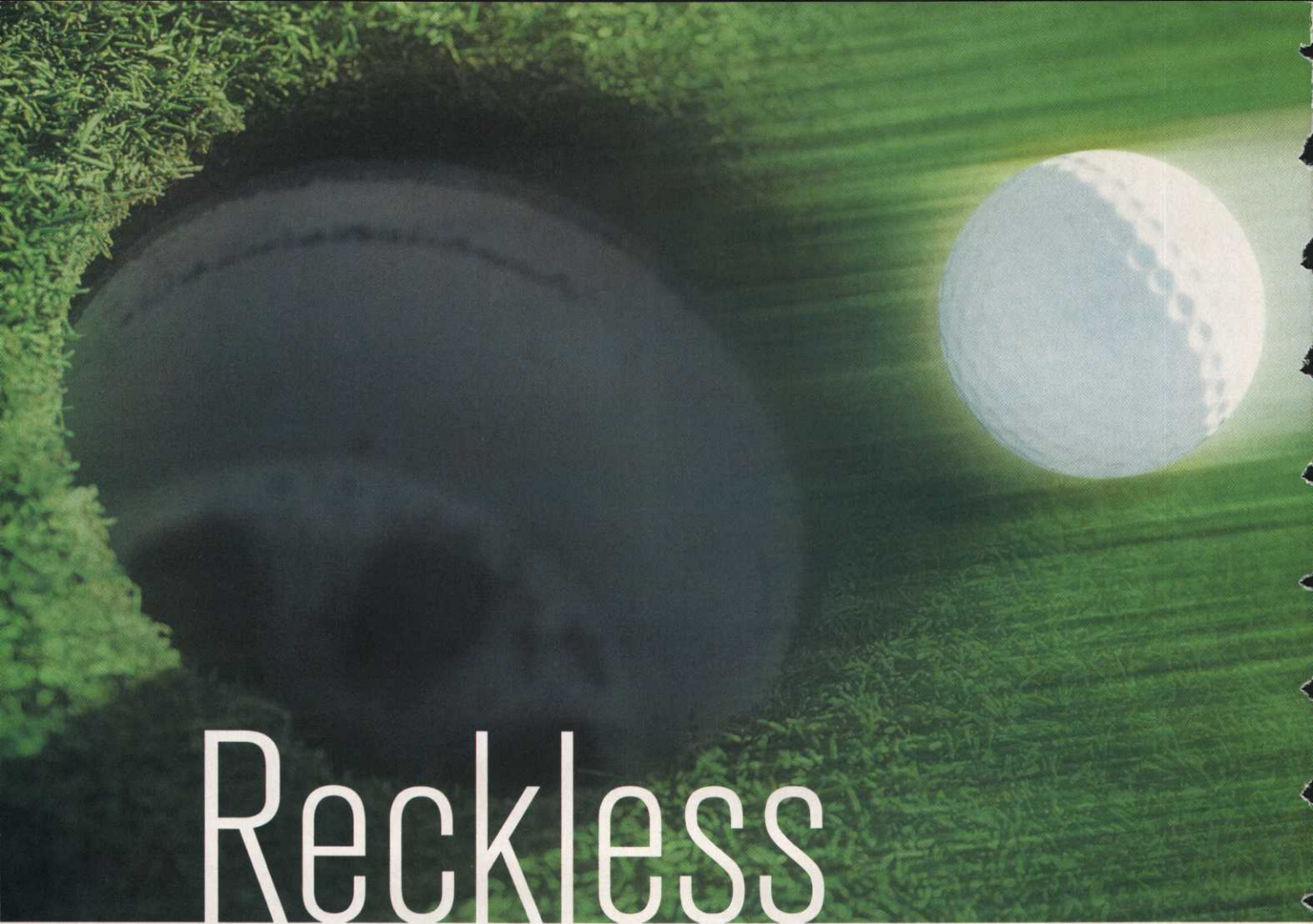
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Reckless Op?

The push to increase green speed hasn't slowed down, which could mean there's an accident waiting to happen

By Thomas Skernivitz
Managing Editor

Tom Athy, a certified superintendent with a rep for quick greens, reluctantly takes the Gale Sayers approach when admitting who exactly dictates green speed:

*The club is first.
The playing majority is second.
And I am third.*

Athy accepts this, even if it means sometimes putting aside the best interests of his 18 pampered possessions at Omaha (Neb.) Coun-

try Club. Ever the realist, he goes as far as to amend Arnold Palmer, who once said that in order to succeed in the golf business, one must identify what the majority of otherwise finicky golfers wants and provide for it.

"For the most part that is an excellent quote," Athy says. "In reality, though, you need to find the course conditions that the 'power' within the club would like to see and provide for them. Then you hope this group doesn't change too often. Otherwise you can look pretty bad."

Change is one thing. Superintendents roll with it. But when it comes to the green

When it comes to the green speed dilemma, sooner or later healthy greens — and reputations — are going to suffer.

It doesn't help that ordinary players desire pro-worthy conditions. It's gotten to the point where some are even caught packing their own Stimpometers.

"If somebody plays the course down the street and it's at a 12 (on the Stimpometer), it kind of gets blown out of proportion that that's what its greens are rolling every day," Sutton says. "And it kind of spreads like wildfire through the golfers. They'll make claims that they just played a course and the greens were 13, so why aren't ours? Or what can you do to get them there? And the reality is most golfers can't tell the difference between a 9 and a 10 or a 10 to a 13 Stimpometer reading."

Worse yet, it's almost futile, according to Athy, to try and convince someone that speed kills.

"Good luck!" he says. "I know that, for myself and most of my colleagues at the private clubs in Nebraska, slow greens are the *fast track* to a new position."

speed issue, those powers that be have taken change to the nth degree. And sooner or later — if not already — healthy greens are going to blemish, along with the reputations of their keepers.

"I don't know if it's gotten worse in the last year, but I would say that it's still probably the biggest issue that's facing us," says Don Sutton, the certified superintendent at Kinsale Golf Club in Powell, Ohio. "I don't think it's gone away at all."

Will it ever disappear?

"You would think at some point we would have to hit a limit to where these greens are able to survive and stay healthy over a five- or 10-year period," Sutton says.

With that bar still rising (and turf heights going the other way), many superintendents are at the mercy of their managers, who often cater to the wants — realistic or not — of their customers.

"I would say in most cases it's probably from hearing the pressures from the golfers," Sutton says. "There's that fear at most courses that if they're not as fast as the neighboring courses, they're going to lose rounds of golf."

Majority rules

Michael Morris believes the paying public would be far more receptive if superintendents approached them with data. The certified superintendent at Crystal Downs Country Club in Frankfurt, Mich., performed a study in 2001-02 that helped establish the ideal green speed for his course, based on customer response. Now, when low handicappers complain about a green being too slow at the same time lesser golfers are claiming just the opposite of the same hole, Morris can turn to the study results and remind everyone of the proven consensus.

"All we have to do is show them the survey and say, 'Here's how the golfers of this club rated the green speeds.' And the problem has essentially gone away," Morris says. "Is that person happy? Probably not. But for whom do we take care of the golf course? A customer satisfaction rating of 70 percent or above is what our target is. We're not going to make everyone happy."

The problem, Morris says, is that more than 90 percent of U.S. golf courses and their

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MIKE KLEMM

Don Sutton, of Kinsale Golf Club (shown here) outside Columbus, Ohio, says the green speed issue hasn't "gone away at all."

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superintendents don't know what their customers want. "They haven't even asked them," he says. "We've left the golfer out of the equation, and we have to be a little more diplomatic."

Gone, he adds, is the day of the old "it's-my-way-or-the-highway Scottish stereotypical superintendent."

"I'm trying to serve the golfers," Morris says. "They pay a lot of money to play here. They want conditions a certain way. I need to find out what conditions they want, and I need to communicate to the powers that be the resources I need to provide those conditions. I'm trying to get our customer satisfaction rating up around 70, 80, 90 percent. This is a whole different way of looking at it."

In the end, Morris says, superintendents regain control of their greens.

"The problem doesn't go away, but we've developed a method of addressing it, and our greens are alive and well," he says. "We're given the funding we need to improve the putting green quality and we're all communicating on the issue."

"No one tells me what heights to mow. It's up to me to decide how to get the greens in

the best condition that pleases the most golfers. ... And we've actually raised our height of cut and still maintain the putting green speeds that satisfy most of our golfers."

Agronomic techniques

The last thing Morris wants to do to improve green speed is lower his mowing height. And he frowns upon depriving his greens of water for long durations. Hence, he relies on rolling, plant growth regulators and altered fertilizer practices.

"We have to look at it as an integrated approach and not just turning off the water and mowing the greens down to the dirt. Any idiot knows that those things will kill grass," he says. "We found that one of the very most important things that gave us the biggest bang for our buck was to improve our mower sharpening and grinding. And we purchased rollers. We implemented use of PGRs."

Athy's favorite techniques include regular verticutting; topdressing lightly at least every two or three weeks during the season; rolling Thursday to Sunday during a normal week and possibly the entire week for special events; spoon-feeding; and the use of PGRs and some potassium silicate formulations. The one thing he doesn't rely upon is double-cutting.

"We've left the golfer out of the equation, and we have to be a little more diplomatic."

MICHAEL MORRIS, CRYSTAL DOWNS CC

"It is a rarity anymore to double-cut greens," he says. "We have researched the increase in ball roll, double-cut vs. rolling, and have found that rolling is the equal to double-cutting and at times increases speeds even more than double-cutting. Plus, I'm not too excited about double-cutting greens every day for a week, whereas I will roll greens for a week."

Sutton topdresses about every two weeks at

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