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**T**o the membership, Your green committee has taken the club's drop in the recent *Golf Digest* ranking very seriously. Since May, when the tragic news arrived notifying

us that we had fallen out of the top 10 courses in the state, the committee began conducting meetings, writing letters and interrogating our own panelist members.

This determined effort has helped us better understand what went wrong.

I'm pleased to announce that we will be holding a general membership meeting on Oct. 4 at 6 p.m. We will present our findings as well as a proactive plan we've devised to battle our way back on to the listing of the top courses in the state. And maybe, just maybe, the top 100.

Below is an agenda of speakers for the meeting, which will follow opening remarks by the green chairman and committee vice chairman, and a prayer "For Better Ranking Success," led by Pastor Stevens.

**Speaker 1:** Committee member Steve Yipford will offer a PowerPoint presentation titled "Using Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficients to Understand How Maintenance Practices Impact the Rater's Perspective." Steve has taken our tee sheet and compared it to the maintenance schedule. He has determined what course setup and grooming elements may have been lacking on the days that panelists played. You won't want to miss this compelling presentation!

**Speaker 2:** Our consulting architect, Arthur King Churchill, will fly in from England to present a PowerPoint titled "18 Ways to Improve Your Resistance to Scoring Score and Other Complete Renovation Musings." A whiff of that British accent will sooth your pain when the inevitable assessment arrives in the mail!

**Speaker 3:** Head pro Sleeve Johnson will present two PowerPoints: "Potential New Logos As Inspired By Top 100 Courses" and "Why Parking Golf Cars by the First Tee is Hurting Our Ambiance Score." Our new club logo will be chosen based on audience applause levels, so pay close attention to Sleeve's presentation!

**Speaker 4:** Pro shop buyer Cindy Anklesock will show us some gift package ideas she has put together for panelists. Cindy also wanted me to

# Let's Find Out What Went Wrong

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



MEETING WILL  
FEATURE SEVERAL  
DISCUSSIONS,  
INCLUDING 'WHY  
PARKING GOLF  
CARS BY THE FIRST  
TEE IS HURTING  
OUR AMBIANCE  
SCORE'

remind you there is currently a big sale in the shop, including 50 percent off all logoed caps featuring our old *Golf Digest* state ranking.

**Speaker 5:** Superintendent Trent Bullseye will present a PowerPoint titled "155 Reasons Why You Shouldn't Blame Me For This." He is also bringing new white bunker sand samples for you on which to vote. Those wishing to participate in this portion of the program are advised to wear sunglasses. Trent says the new sand is pretty bright. But, hey, whatever makes the panelists happy, right?

**Speaker 6:** General Manager Stan Schwensuit has prepared two PowerPoints. The first: "There's More to Lodging Than Picking the Right Mint," a symposium on proper hotelier techniques as they relate to offering the best panelist experience in our upstairs rooms. Mr. Schwensuit will also present "Choosing the Best Faux Wood for Lockers."

**Speaker 7:** Speaking of cuisine, Chef Wolfgang Schmuck has returned from Las Vegas and will PowerPoint his thoughts in "What I Learned at Shadow Creek: How We Can Gain Ambiance Points By Letting Panelists Order Anything They Want, and How Many New Freezers the Club Will Have to Buy to Pull This Off."

Chef Wolfgang will also bring food samples. This way, you have something to nibble on during the post-presentation roundtable sessions that we have planned. Members will have the opportunity to offer staff and committee members their concerns and constructive criticism.

You can bet our fine staff is quite excited about staying late into the night to hear all of your thoughts and complaints!

*Looking forward to seeing you,*

*Your Green Committee*

Contributing Editor Geoff Shackelford can be reached at [geoffshack@aol.com](mailto:geoffshack@aol.com).



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## SCALPING 2004 NTEP

1 - 9; 9 = NONE

NAME	MA1
<b>LS - 44</b>	<b>8.0</b>
Penncross	7.0
Benchmark DSR	6.0
Penn A-1	4.7
LSD Value	1.7

## Fall - % LIVING GROUND COVER

GROWN ON A GREEN  
2002 NTEP DATA

NAME	MEAN
<b>LS - 44</b>	<b>97.6</b>
Penncross	96.7
Penn A-1	96.1
Benchmark DSR	95.6
LSD Value	9.6

## QUALITY - SOIL GREEN 2004 NTEP DATA

1 - 9; 9 = IDEAL TURF

NAME	TX2	VA1
<b>LS - 44</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.0</b>
Penn A - 1	5.9	4.2
Benchmark DSR	5.5	4.1
Penncross	4.4	4.5
LSD Value	0.6	0.5

## QUALITY- SAND GREEN 2004 NTEP DATA

1 9: 9 = IDEAL TURF

NAME	AZ1	MN1
<b>LS - 44</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.7</b>
Penn A - 1	6.6	6.1
Benchmark DSR	6.3	6.3
Penncross	6.9	5.3
LSD Value	0.8	0.5

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# Budget Blight

Although soaring gas prices will certainly affect the bottom line in 2006, it's pythium right now that's sapping the coffers throughout much of the country

BY THOMAS SKERNIVITZ, MANAGING EDITOR

**D**etermined to keep their budgets balanced, superintendents are weathering the sky-high fuel prices this year. What's making them sweat, especially in the eastern half of the country, are the balanced dew points.

On too many mornings this summer, superintendents have gotten up on the wrong side of the heat index. When temperatures rocketed in June, July and early August, the dew points were never far behind. That type of humidity triggered disease — especially pythium — and necessitated control measures that tend to bust budgets as well as blight.

"I would wake up in the morning and the temperature was 74 degrees and the dew point was 74 degrees," Rick Slattery, the superintendent at Locust Hill Country Club, outside Rochester, N.Y., says. "When you get that kind of weather persistently, the disease pressure has really, really been heavy."

The chemical tabs have been just as profound, especially at transition-zone courses, where pythium can blow up overnight when the soil warms. Slattery is spending \$200 per acre to treat his greens and tees with Terrazole and \$174 per acre to treat his fairways and first cut of rough with Subdue Maxx.

"I'm going to assume that probably everybody is going to have trouble staying within their fungicide budgets this year," Slattery says.

Most superintendents have no choice; the alternative is dead turf and unhappy players. In Slattery's case, he's had to make three wall-to-wall applications against pythium in addition to an extra two broad-spectrum fungicide applications.

"I've been (at Locust Hill) 11 years, and I've been a superintendent for 35 years, and I haven't had this kind of problem in my career," he says.

Compounding matters, rainfall, which often dictates spray schedules, has been unpredictable. Reliable storm fronts have rarely appeared; instead, isolated shower cells have come and gone without warning. Too often an unexpected drenching has washed away a recently applied agent.

"Usually you get 21 days of control with most of the fungicides, but I'm noticing I'm getting seven, eight or nine days of control and then disease pressure again," Slattery says. "So I'm not only applying more fungicides because we're getting a lot of disease, I'm not even getting the length of control out of the products."

Slattery's annual pesticide budget, which also covers dollar spot, brown patch and anthracnose, is around \$32,000. About one-sixth of that total is dedicated to pythium control, although that allotment accounts for only spot applications or one full application to the greens, tees and fairways. As of Aug. 8, he was expecting to spend closer to \$45,000 on pesticides this year.

"We're probably a good \$10,000 to \$12,000 over budget with just pythium control, and we'll probably be another \$4,000 to \$5,000 over with other products because I'm not getting the length of control that I normally get," Slattery says. "That's a lot of money. And I know a lot of supers that are stressed out over that."

Slattery empathizes with the superintendent who doesn't enjoy a large budget or management team that is willing to bend financially in order to save the turf.

"We just had a greens committee meeting, and its basic approach was obviously they don't want dead grass on the course for any reason," Slattery says. "Some golf courses don't have that choice. They just don't have \$15,000 or \$20,000 extra to put into fungicide. They don't really have any choice at all but to hope things get better with the weather."

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**Pythium blight has run rampant across courses in much of the United States, thanks to high humidity.**

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Scott Brickley has a slightly smaller budget — \$419,000, including wages. But the superintendent at Bunker Hill Golf Course, a public facility in Medina, Ohio, also has an owner, Todd Ingraham, who fully grasps the “pay me now or pay me later” dictum when it comes to erasing disease.

Were Brickley to leave his course untreated in favor of the budget, he says he would essentially be adhering to the “old public course theory” — keep the greens and tees in the best shape possible and ignore the fairways. But in turn, the fairways would likely die and have to be reseeded and fertilized.

“Now you’ve got a whole other handful of expenses that are going to affect your budget,” Brickley says.

So they’ve forsaken the budget at Bunker Hill and attacked the pythium from tee to green every 10 to 14 days. Through July, the course’s annual fungicide budget — much like Slattery’s — was \$12,000 over, with 90 percent of that overrun specific to pythium control, Brickley says.

“I just stated to Todd that it’s all about pythium out there. So you gotta do it. You gotta protect yourself,” Brickley says.

At Rainier Golf and Country Club in Seattle, superintendent Sam Sprague enjoys many of the same luxuries afforded to Slattery, including a total budget of \$865,000 and an understanding membership. Through June it was irrelevant that he had slightly overspent on fuel (\$700), chemicals (\$1,500) and fertilization (\$5,000).

“The members are happy, and that’s the bottom line,” he says. “As long as my overall budget isn’t too out of whack, they don’t concern themselves about the categories unless there are special issues.”

Gas isn’t one of those issues, even if it is headline news across the country. Sprague’s fuel allotment is \$15,000, or less than 2 percent of his total budget. “It’s not a huge budget category,” he says.

In addition, the effects of higher fuel prices have been delayed at many courses because of early-order programs. In those cases, fertilizer — comprised largely of natural gas — had been ordered two or three months before fuel costs started to rise in January.

“Buying your fertilizer in November or December and having it delivered in the spring gives you two advantages,” Slattery says. “You’re taking advantage of last year’s prices, and you have (the fertilizer) on site and don’t have to wait for delivery. And a third advantage is you get little bit of a price reduction because you’re buying it in bulk.”

Of course, whatever hazards were postponed this year will eventually surface. And as 2006 budgets start to take shape this month,

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