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cover story

This month, Golfdom offers its annual guide on green maintenance. Our report hits on everything from the truth about frost to the benefits of verticutting.

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The best-performing golf facilities know what it is that makes them different, reports Bruce Allar in this edition of the Golfdom Business Record. Also, Heidi Voss tells how to find out what your members are thinking, and Jim Black writes on the importance of consistent communication. The section begins on PAGE 81 and runs through page 88.

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We've Got Mail

LETTERS FROM THE FIELD

Not so happy with pay

I have to admit I was a little disappointed with your story on salaries. The story was great, but it didn't deal at all with salaries other than the head superintendent. And even then it seemed slanted toward those making upper-tier money. What about the assistants, mechanics, irrigation techs and spray techs?

Although I've only been in the industry for a couple of years, it didn't take long to see that salary structures at most clubs are extremely top heavy. Kudos to those guys for negotiating a good wage, but if more of that money filtered down to the crews, it wouldn't be so hard to find and retain competent crews. How about focusing on wages for crew members in a future story?

Steve Detzel, superintendent Penn State University, Lancaster, Pa. Editor's note: Golfdom plans coverage on "other" crew members' salaries in an upcoming issue.

Not so bullish on PETA

I take exception to Geoff Shackelford's article ("PETA Leader Speaks Out") in the February issue. First, I think Shackelford's overall attempt at trying to make PETA look rational is misguided and a hindrance to the golf course maintenance profession. Second, why didn't you simply print the "Techniques for Mitigating Human/ Goose Conflicts in Urban and Suburban Environments?"

Something this important to the industry should certainly be shared, if it indeed works and is cost effective. Third, so far my attempts to verify some of the claims made by Stephanie Boyles have not been successful. However, I do know that statements such as, "a typical course uses astounding amounts of water – enough to supply a small town," and, "they

can generate more pollution from fertilizers and insecticides than a working farm," are inflammatory and used simply for their shock value. They are only true if one realizes that there are towns with a population of five (saw one such town for sale awhile back) and if you consider a backyard garden a "working farm."

My course does not take water from "natural, self-sustaining riparian ecosystems." We use a relatively small amount of untreated well water for our greens and help our city dispose of its sewage water by using it on the rest of our course. I also question Ms. Boyles' honesty even when she is trying to be a "friend" of golf courses. I would make a small wager that she did not see javelinas and more than at least 17 other animals while playing golf in Scottsdale. Or maybe she did and we have discovered the reason for slow play!

She seems to me to be simply listing her qualifications as a wildlife biologist. I'm not sure wild pigs would be hanging around with coyotes. I enjoy Golfdom and you could have been a great service to the industry by publishing costeffective, humane mitigation measures for Canada geese instead of trying to play nice with such a radical group as PETA. Alan Andreasen, CGCS Los Lagos GC, San Jose, Calif.

I must admit, I am now very confused. In the Stephanie Boyles interview, she states that golf courses "can generate more pollu-



tion from fertilizers and insecticides than a working farm." If that is truly the case, why would all the animals she later lists as

attracted to golf courses want to be there?

I am also wondering just how small is the "small town" she refers to when stating, "A typical (golf) course uses astounding amounts of water — enough to supply a small town." I don't think I could supply even a tiny, little town with the amount of water we use on my golf course, and the same goes for others I know in this industry. How many gallons qualify for the "astounding amounts" title?

How can Boyles say these things without stating even one small piece of research to support her claim? The research I've seen shows very little, if any "pollution" from fertilizer and insecticide use on turf in terms of runoff materials. Perhaps she needs to define the pollution she refers to so we can be sure we are talking about the same thing. Maybe she knows something we don't know - if so, then please support it with some hard evidence. Statements without supporting facts (otherwise known as an opinion) will not help her earn our trust. It is no small wonder superintendents she contacts are skeptical.

Ralph Kepple, CGCS East Lake GC, Atlanta

Player demands

Thanks for the pertinent article regarding golfers' demands ("Time to Address Timeworn Topic") in the February issue. Besides sometimes being our own worst enemy, golfers, especially those that have recently taken up the game, understand little of the history of the game. Too many golfers have chosen to ignore the essence of the game ... play it as it lies.

Whatever the conditions, length of grass, speed of greens or consistency of hazards, you play the course. It has to be a combined effort by the superintendent, pro and general manager to educate golfers to back off the idea of a meticulously manicured course. The game might be more fun for most and a lot less expensive. **Tom Johnson, superintendent New Richmond (Wis.) GC**

I remember playing the Dub's Dread Course at Cog Hill one summer shortly before the Western Open. The front nine was decent. It looked and played like the public course it is. The back nine was perfect. It had been prepared for TV exposure. It was almost like playing two different courses with regard to conditioning.

Education is the key, and perhaps a menu of choice is warranted, i.e., a description of conditions with a price tag for the different levels of quality. "If you want Augusta National conditions here is what it will cost each member annually." Daily-fee courses cannot assess membership but will need to explore other avenues involving player education. Matt Landreau, President Waterwood National Resort, Huntsville, Texas

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ew Orleans is back to life," I said to myself in an upbeat tone as I toured the Big Easy's carnival-like downtown recently on a sunny Sunday afternoon. The French Quarter's

narrow streets were bustling. Souvenir shops were crowded, and lines formed outside restaurants.

The city was also under major repair. An enormous sign outside the Super Dome proudly declared the facility was reopening in September. Sidewalks and buildings were also being renovated.

The city even displayed a sense of humor about being the target of the greatest natural disaster in U.S. history. T-shirts poked fun at the catastrophe with humorous sayings. My favorite was one that read, "Make Levees, Not War."

I laughed at the T-shirts. I felt delighted to be in New Orleans. I felt good about the city.

And then I took a drive around the city with Peter Carew, a long-time superintendent in New Orleans, who's in charge of two municipal golf courses. Carew showed me neighborhoods that were destroyed by the fierce flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina. I saw homes in rich, middleclass and poor areas. They had one thing in common: They were all reduced to ruins.

It was jaw-dropping shocking.

Carew put me within touching distance of the devastation. I didn't feel so good about New Orleans anymore.

It's been almost eight months since Katrina. The water from the flooding has receded, but the destruction remains. It's so vast and vivid that it's difficult to comprehend. It's house after house, block after block and mile after mile of gutted homes and piles of debris. It's row after row of desolation.

"I've seen the after pictures of Hiroshima," Carew says. "That's what this looks like."

It's hard for Carew, who lives on the lesswrecked west side of the Mississippi river, to come to the decimated east side. His office was here, as is one of the two golf courses he manages. But Carew can only hope that the Joseph Bartholomew Golf Course, which was under several feet of salt water for about six weeks, will reopen someday. Right now, it looks more like a

I Felt Good About New Orleans, Until...

BY LARRY AYLWARD



PETER CAREW, A LONG-TIME SUPERINTENDENT IN NEW ORLEANS, TOOK ME ON A TOUR OF THE CRESCENT CITY THAT I'LL NEVER FORGET forsaken field than a golf course. Its tees, greens and fairways are a blend of dead grass and weeds.

It's understandable that with power and water still not available in some areas, not to mention the sharp increase in the number of homeless people, that the course is not high on the city's to-do list.

After touring these parts with Carew, I realized how foolish I was to think that New Orleans was back to life. It's not. There are signs of a city on the mend, but it has a long, long way to go. And it may never get there.

Tourists head to New Orleans to revel on storm-spared Bourbon Street, an area that continues to party on despite what happened. They eat, drink and carouse, but many keep a blind eye to the destruction only a few miles away.

"They think the city's back to normal," Carew says of tourists, "because they haven't seen the outskirts."

Last summer, after Hurricane Katrina had destroyed parts of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, we were all taken aback by what happened. We wanted to do something for the people whose lives were terribly disrupted. And we did. We donated money to the Red Cross. We prayed at church.

But I must confess that three months afterward I wasn't thinking as much about New Orleans and the Gulf Coast as I was when what happened was front-page news for two weeks. I wasn't overly concerned about the hundreds of thousands of displaced people, many of whom lost everything.

But after seeing what I saw, I'm thinking about them again. And I vow not to forget them three months from now.

And I will pray and hope for them. As you go about your business at your respective golf courses, I ask that you do the same.