

February 2006

Golfdom

www.golfdom.com

SOLUTIONS, IDEAS & OPINIONS

Four things to ask yourself
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Yardage?

Wind?

Club?

and...

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Disability *Aside*

Growing the Game [PART 1]

38

Wave of New Pesticides Ready for Market

Superintendents, in search of more efficiency, ponder post-patent offerings.

By Thomas Skernivitz

48

PETA Leader Speaks out

A player herself, wildlife biologist Stephanie Boyles lauds the golf industry to a degree while noting that superintendents could do a better job, especially when it comes to removing Canada geese.

By Geoff Shackelford

54



Down on the FarmLinks

Pursell on a "Passionate Pursuit of Excellence" to make PTI's "Experience" even better.

By Larry Aylward





cover story

BY LARRY AYLWARD

Amputees, paraplegics and others with physical impairments want to play golf and say that golf courses will only benefit by making them feel more welcome.

28

About the cover

Editor in Chief Larry Aylward photographed Bob Wilson during the National Amputee Golf Association's championship at Bethpage State Park last summer.

GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW PREVIEW

70

What's New?

You'll see for yourself when you take the exhibit floor at the Golf Industry Show.

76

When to Water

Superintendents must be cautious with their irrigation practices to avoid turf disease breakouts.

By Larry Aylward

News with a hook

14 Hughes Not Thrilled About Gulf Bill

columns

8 Pin High

Time to Address
Timeworn Topic

24 Shades of Green

Just Ask the
Superintendent

26 Designs On Golf

Life in Fast Lane
Not What It Seems

46 Turf M.D.

Putting the "S"
in Disease Control

68 Public Opinion

Golf And Its
Great Expectations

88 Out of Bounds

Ironing

departments

10 Big Picture

14 Off the Fringe

22 Hole of the Month

80 Leaders

86 Classifieds

Turfgrass Trends

This month *Golfdom's* practical research digest for turf managers discusses glyphosate runoff on fairways as well as *Typhula* blight control. See pages 57-67.


Online Exclusive




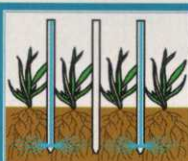
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► Oxymoron or not, Chris Dalhamer paid his dues at Pebble Beach Golf Links. He can thank the Northern California Golf Association (NCGA) for the experience.
By Thomas Skernivitz

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Late last year, when we conducted an online survey to gather information for our annual state of the industry report, we asked superintendents to list the current challenges they face at their respective golf courses. Many of their replies reflected a similar challenge — although it's more of a nagging problem than a challenge.

After reading their responses, it's evident this problem is rampant at golf courses throughout the nation — from country clubs to public tracks to municipal facilities. And the problem seems to be growing. In fact, it's turning into King Kong, and superintendents are lugging this mammoth-sized monkey of a mess around on their backs.

The problem is golfers and their impractical demands for perfect conditions. But let's allow the superintendents who responded to the survey to better define this headache.

"Demanding members that want dollar greens on a dime budget," said Robert Stringer, the certified golf course superintendent of Germantown Country Club in Germantown, Tenn.

"Giving very rich members weekend-TV-tournament-quality golf for 52 weeks of the year," said David Major, the certified superintendent and director of agronomy at Shady Canyon Golf Club in Dana Point, Calif.

Perhaps Brian Mohr, superintendent of Spencer Municipal Golf Course in Spencer, Iowa, summed up the problem best with a call for a solution. "There needs to be a huge effort in educating people that it's not possible or feasible to maintain a golf course at the level people see on television for the pro events," he said.

While this is a current problem, it has also been in reruns longer than *Leave It to Beaver*. And as the conditioning and maintenance standards continue to rise at courses that host televised professional tournaments, golfers will continue to stare in amazement at the lush green fairways and the fast, smooth greens on their TV screens and say to themselves, "That's what I want at my course!"

What they fail to realize, unless they're members at Augusta National or another esteemed club, is they can't have those near-perfect conditions at their courses because their courses don't

Time to Address Timeworn Topic

BY LARRY AYLWARD



WHILE IT IS A
CURRENT PROBLEM,
IT HAS ALSO BEEN IN
RERUNS LONGER
THAN *LEAVE IT TO
BEAVER*

have the bucks in their maintenance budgets to furnish them.

I realize this topic gets beaten like Tiger Woods' wedge when golf's most "explosive" player is having a bad day. But when several superintendents list it as a *present* challenge — and I'll bet a sleeve of Titleist balls that more superintendents list the same challenge in our survey next year — I'm convinced that little is being done to battle the problem.

But it's a tough case to crack. It's not like a superintendent can go to his club's members and tell them he can't provide the superb conditions they desire because he doesn't have the resources to provide them. (Memo to superintendent who tries this explanation: Sears is hiring.)

Echoing Mohr, there must be a huge effort in educating golfers to correct the problem. And that effort must begin now — not next month or next year — because the problem is growing as fast as broadleaf weeds in the spring. It's time superintendents rally together and come up with solutions to address the problem. While it's likely the problem can't be corrected entirely, it can be contained. But it will take time, effort and patience on behalf of superintendents. It will take solid organization.

Many of you know that golfers' demands for Augusta-like conditions at your courses are unreasonable. You don't deserve this undue pressure.

If you have any ideas on what to do to correct this problem, please call me or write me an e-mail to share your solutions. *Golfdom* will publish your thoughts in an upcoming issue to help superintendents share information with each other to help correct this matter. We'd like to be part of the huge effort to educate.

It's time to tell these golfers to get real.

Larry Aylward can be reached at 216-706-3737 or larylward@questex.com.

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TIDBIT OF THE MONTH

Paving Over Paradise

Owing to an overabundance of courses, with more than 100 built in the past decade, Michigan is seeing some of its golf facilities being replaced by residential and commercial developments. Although this type of conversion is happening around the United States, the

overbuilt Wolverine State, with a total of 850 courses, has been particularly active. Recently closed facilities or courses being considered for redevelopment include Veronica Valley and Mitchell Creek in the Traverse City area; Coyote Golf Club in Lyon Township; Eldorado Golf Club and Links of Pinewood in Commerce Township; Pontiac Country Club in Waterford Township; Links of Novi in Novi; Bogie Lake Golf Club in White Lake Township; and Clarkston Golf Course in Clarkston. In late November a groundbreaking ceremony was held on a portion of the former Partridge Creek Golf Club in Clinton Township for the 600,000-square-foot Partridge Creek Fashion Park. For details on these and other golf projects around the U.S., visit www.golfconstructionnews.com.

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Golf Rounds Played

The percentages below represent the difference in number of rounds played in October 2005 compared to the number of rounds played in October 2004.

REGION	OCT.	Y.T.D.
New England ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT	-28.1%	-2.0%
Middle Atlantic NY, PA, NJ	-16.2%	1.3%
East North Central MI, OH, IN, IL, WI	4.7%	0.6%
West North Central ND, MN, SD, NE, KS, IA, MO	15.9%	0.9%
South Atlantic WV, DE, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA	-8.7%	-1.6%
Florida	-14.2%	-1.4%
East South Central KY, TN, AL, MS	7.8%	-1.9%
West South Central OK, AR, LA	11.8%	2.8%
Texas	8.0%	3.2%
Mountain MT, ID, WY, NV, UT, CO, AZ, NM	7.1%	1.8%
Pacific WA, OR, AK, HI	8.1%	-1.8%
California	10.0%	-3.1%
TOTAL UNITED STATES	-0.2%	-0.1%

GOLF DATATECH

Winning the Big One

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America asked its members: Who's the best player to have never won a Major? They replied:

Sergio Garcia	25%
Darren Clarke	19%
Jay Haas	15%

Trying to be Green

Are you trying to cut back on pesticide and fertilizer use on your course to benefit the environment?

Somewhat, we're trying to find a balance 54%

Yes, we need to do our part as environmentalists 32%

No, we do what we have to do to keep the course looking good and the golfers happy 13%

No answer 1%

* Based on 379 responses

Golfdom

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