

Construction manager Joe Voss is never short on scenery at Liberty National Golf Course, from the Statue of Liberty (above) to the Manhattan skyline (below).

man, the founder of Reebok.

"Technically, money isn't an issue here," Voss says.

Still, watching the bottom line is one of the myriad jobs Voss has as the construction manager of Liberty National.

"We have a very strict budget, so we don't want to go out and run footloose," he says. "But nobody knew what we were getting into here."

That's what happens when one of the world's richest individuals — Fireman ranks 698th, according to *Forbes* magazine — decides to build a 165-acre course along Upper New York Bay shoreline that was once occupied by rail yards, a military installation and other heavy industry. Toxins, especially chromium and hydrocarbons, had to be removed or covered by 4.5 million cubic yards of soil that on some parts of the course measure 60 feet high.

"This is the hottest part of the site," Voss says, standing on a plot where every-

thing but Jimmy Hoffa has been exhumed since June 2004. "It's an amazing amount of money we're spending here to clean this site up. And every day there's a surprise."

Perhaps the biggest shocker is that Voss, 58, has spent the last two years on the grounds of one of the most expensive courses in the world, one that will command of its members a \$500,000 initiation fee. He and his equally down-to-earth wife, Judy, haven't played in many member-guest tournaments.

"The finished thing is not our scene," Joe says.

Joe and Judy met in the early 1970s while attending Kent State University. Judy stuck around the school long enough to party with Joe Walsh and the rest of The James Gang. She witnessed the May 4, 1970, Ohio National Guard shootings that resulted in the deaths of

four KSU students.

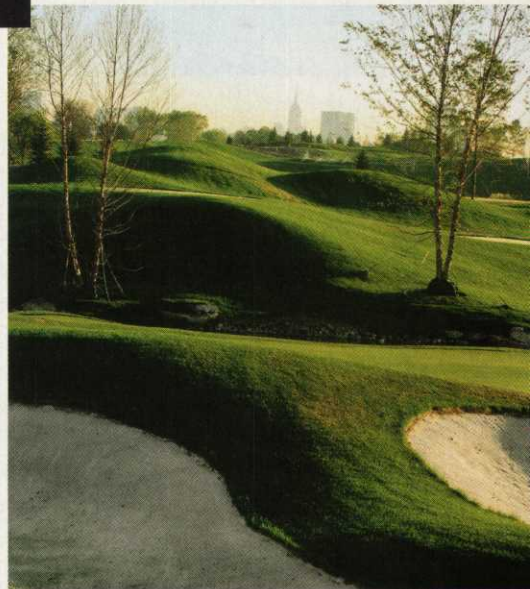
"I may have been a bit of a troublemaker when I was younger," Judy says, a bit of mischief still evident in her eyes.

Joe, meanwhile, had transferred to Humboldt College, in Arcata, Calif., where he drew the wrath of the governor.

"Ronnie Reagan put me in jail for 72 hours because I happened to have a Kent State shirt on and long hair the day of the shootings," Joe says. "I didn't even know (the shootings) had happened that day."

Not that Joe wasn't a bit rebellious while growing up in northeast Ohio. He moved out of the house at age 15. He went against the family grain and wanted no part of laboring in the steel business. And he wasn't too keen on the fact that his dad "thought Nixon was a god." He even got radical on the golf course during the Cleveland Open at Aurora Country Club.

"Early in the week I got to caddie in a group that Arnie was playing in. But for the actual tournament, they brought union caddies down. Us local guys



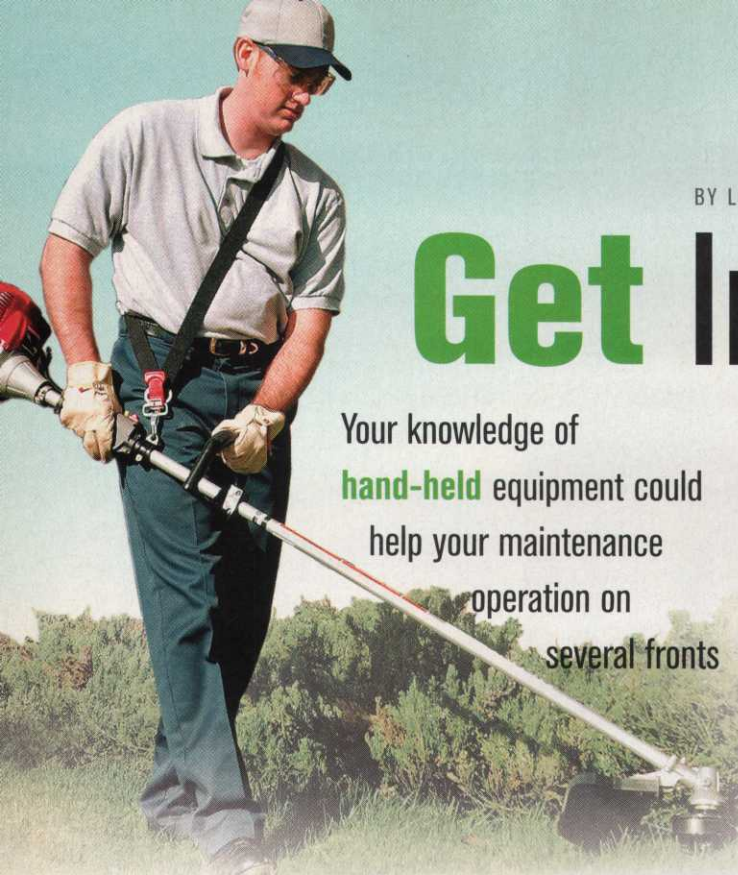
turned a few restrooms upside down as a sign of protest. It was a heckuva experience," Joe says.

"See, it's not just me," Judy laughs.

Joe eventually returned to Kent State

*Continued on page 63*





BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR IN CHIEF

# Get In the Know

Your knowledge of  
**hand-held** equipment could  
help your maintenance  
operation on  
several fronts

**W**hat do you know about outdoor power hand-held equipment?

A little? A lot? Nothing?

If you don't know much, you might want to try and educate yourself a tad on the basics of hand-held equipment, including weed eaters, blowers, chain saws and other items. What you know about hand-held equipment could help you save some money on new equipment expenditures and your overall maintenance budget, among other things.

Echo Inc.'s Andy Kuczmar recently conducted a day-long seminar with the Turf Equipment Technicians Association (TETA), an organization comprised of professional turf equipment industry technicians. What Kuczmar, Echo's senior director of product training and product support, learned from the TETA members is that golf course superintendents and their maintenance crews don't know much about hand-held

technology. "There seems to be a lot of misunderstanding out there," Kuczmar says.

The seminar focused on the latest technology in the hand-held equipment sector, including emission-certified equipment. The technicians told Kuczmar that one reason superintendents don't pay attention to what's going on with hand-held technology is because they view less-expensive items such as weed eaters and blowers as less important than more expensive items such as greens mowers and topdressers.

"But usually these golf courses will have 10 pieces to 12 pieces of hand-held equipment," Kuczmar points out. "When you add it up, that's a lot of money."

And a good reason for superintendents to care.

Being in the know is not just about economics. It's about safety, too. Superintendents and their employees should know that the lighter a hand-held product, the more safe it is.

"People get tired when they use heavy equipment," Kuczmar says. "When they get tired, they get careless and fatigued. That's when accidents happen."

Hence, manufacturers strive to make equipment that's lighter. Kuczmar says two-stroke engines are 25 percent lighter than many four-stroke engines because they don't have as many moving parts.

Safety goes hand in hand with comfortability, manufacturers agree. Jay Larsen, North American marketing manager for Shindaiwa in Tualatin, Ore., says his company emphasizes operator comfort, ergonomics and aesthetics when designing products. For instance, Larson says all Shindaiwa backpack blowers feature comfortable back pads made of "breathable" nylon, which help keep the operator cool on hot days and allows for long hours of performance with minimal fatigue.

There are environmental components associated with hand-held equipment of which superintendents should be aware. Kuczmar says it's important for superintendents to understand the difference between two-stroke and four-stroke technology especially as they relate to emissions, which is an ongoing and important environmental factor facing manufacturers and users.

Five years ago the two-stroke engines put out about 185 grams to 200 grams of emissions per horsepower hour.

Today, under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB), the emission regulations are 37 grams per horsepower hour.

"The big challenge has been how to comply with emission regulations," says Tommy Tanakal, vice president of marketing for Norcross, Ga.-based Red Max, whose Strato-Charged technology is in reaction to stringent CARB and EPA emission standards.

Kuczmar says today's two-stroke engines aren't as dirty as they were six years ago. Many two-stroke engines also use less fuel. "The engines we make today vs. five years ago are 35 percent to 37 percent more fuel efficient," Kuczmar says.

Some manufacturers sell hand-held equipment powered by mini four-stroke engines. Shindaiwa offers products featuring its C4 Technology, which the company says is a cross between two-cycle and four-cycle and combines the best features of the two-cycle engine (compactness, power to weight ratio, minimum-moving parts), and the 4-cycle engine (precise metering of combustion gases). C-4 stands for compression-charged clean combustion.

Tanakal says customers continually seek products that are more productive but cost less. While end-users are demanding, manufacturers have no choice but to try and meet their needs, Tanaka adds. ■



# Business Record

## Beyond the Green

Change Is Good; Embrace It — Page 44

## Profile

Paganis Stresses Importance of Customer Service — Page 46

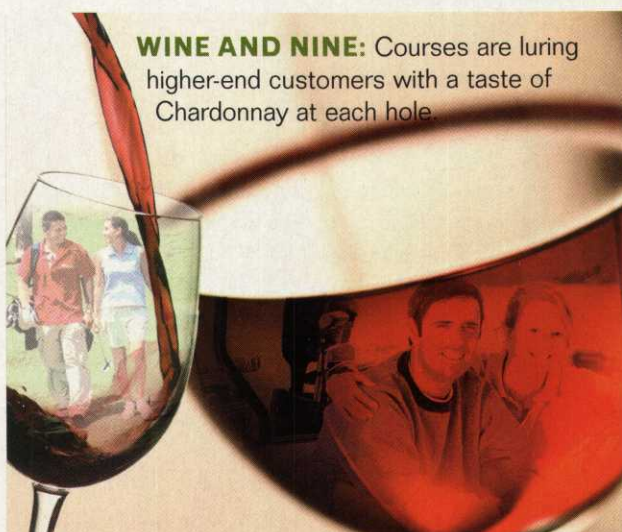
# Discouraging Discounting

There are other ways to battle overbuilt golf markets rather than just cutting prices, experts say BY ANTHONY PIOPPi, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

For the past three years, certified golf course superintendent John Miller has been reaping the unwanted penalties of the overbuilt golf market in the Toledo, Ohio, area.

Competition increased with the addition of golf courses while the number of players stayed the same. The course with which Miller is employed, The Golf Club at Yankee Trace, lowered prices to remain competitive with other layouts in the area that did the same. The result for Yankee Trace was an increase in number of rounds at the 27-hole facility but a decrease in revenue. According to Miller, the average green fee three years ago — combining 18-hole rounds, nine-hole rounds, leagues and twilight rates — was \$31. In 2005 it was \$24.56. This season the top price for 18 holes will be \$61.

"It's a golfer's market,"



**WINE AND NINE:** Courses are luring higher-end customers with a taste of Chardonnay at each hole.

Miller said. "Not too far back when the golf industry was touting the building of a course a day, this area of the country bought into the hype. We went a little overboard."

The lower revenues have forced cost cutting at courses and that means the reduction in maintenance budgets.

"We can't keep maintaining courses the way we have been with less money coming in," Miller said,

adding that many of his contemporaries have lowered their hourly wage rates for seasonal help, resulting in a poorer quality of candidates who apply for the jobs.

Mike Tinkey, the deputy executive director of the National Golf Course Owners Association, calls discounting green fees a "death spiral."

He said once a course in a crowded market cuts prices, others follow and a

cycle begins. "Owners start to see parking lots filling up, but that may not translate to the bottom line," Tinkey said.

He said that some areas of the country are reporting a glimmer of hope with play rising a small amount. Many of those courses have taken aggressive marketing approaches to bring in customers. "It's all about creating a compelling experience," Tinkey said.

For instance, to encourage beginners, children and shorter hitters to take up the game, some facilities create a short course that has tee markers in the fairways.

Tinkey also tells owners to take part in such national programs as the PGA of America's Free Lesson Month. He said one of the most popular events for facilities looking to attract the higher-end customer is called Wine and Nine. It combines a wine tasting with nine holes of golf. Tinkey said some places do the tasting before golf, some after and others even have a

*Continued on page 47*



## We Must Embrace Change Before It's Too Late

BY HEIDI VOSS

*This column is dedicated to the late Tommy Pollard, his family and the team at The Federal Club in Glen Allen, Va.*

One of the benefits of being a consultant is that the job never

gets boring. You finish up one job and you move along to another locale and another challenge before you have the chance to become complacent. I love this.

It keeps me on my toes.

Change, however, is not always seen in a positive light in the industry. In talking with many club managers, golf professionals and superintendents, they all bring up the lack of job stability in the club industry. I once heard that general managers of member-owned clubs stay an average of 18 months at a job. I think this is a little facetious, but it could still pass as a scary urban legend.

Superintendents are often only as good as the weather permits. When there are extreme conditions, there always seems

to be a shakeup in the industry. Obviously, when all the grass in a county is dying it's probably not because of a superintendent and his staff. Somehow boards and owners seem to miss this.

Speaking of change, I recently heard that a direc-

tor of operations left his post at a club in New York to take a job at a club in Boston. Then the previous director of operations at that same Boston club

took his replacement's job in New York. Were both projects better for the change? Yes. And I say that because each person came into the new position with a fresh perspective and an attitude to make a difference. They both embraced the challenge. Both ownership groups were better for the change.

Change is often out of our control. While it can be caused by other forces, we must adapt to it.

The golf industry recently lost a great man that was living his dream by building a private Arnold Palmer Signature

course on his family's land in Virginia. This 627-acre, 27-hole course was Tommy Pollard's calling. One evening, as Pollard donned his boots to go on a walkabout of the newly shaped nine, he collapsed. Pollard died, and he won't get to see his vision completed and enjoyed by many. His partners and family can take comfort in seeing his dream become a reality, but I doubt there will be a dry eye in the house on opening day. Pollard's team, however, was forced to adapt to ensure that his legacy will live on.

**We must find ways to attract Gen Xers to the sport through gender-neutral tee times, family emphasis and time-conscious rounds.**

Many critics have called our industry stagnant and complacent. Unless our industry can change and provide something for the generation Xers, baby boomers and matures, we

will not be around long. We must embrace the challenge and realize that everyone is competing for the same dollars.

The baby boomers comprise the "me" generation, and they have a lot of money to spend. They are also the last age group that knows anything about a premier golf experience. Generation Xers are very athletic and recreationally focused, but they don't play much golf. While they are multitasking machines, golf is not at the top of their agendas. But we must find ways to attract them to the sport through gender-neutral tee times, family emphasis and time-conscious rounds.

Finally, don't let yourself fall into the rut of this being the same old season as last year. Challenge yourself and your team to try new ideas. If you close the door to change, you are opening the door to failure. ■

*Heidi Voss is the president of Bauer Voss Consulting, a club marketing consulting company. She specializes in new development, conversions from public to private and member buyouts. For more information, visit [www.bauervossconsulting.com](http://www.bauervossconsulting.com).*





# For every inch of your course.



## One Source.

Why are more and more courses in North America choosing One Source for their maintenance needs? There are plenty of good reasons:

- The ease of doing business with a single source.
- Technical support from your local distributor and their team of agronomists.
- The wide array of high quality products and services.
- The ability to finance all purchases on a single statement.

Everyday, more courses are discovering that One Source makes doing business easier and less stressful. Instead of dealing with a dozen or more suppliers, a superintendent can get answers and solve problems with one phone call. So call us today and find out what these courses already know: it's easier when it's One Source.

[www.JohnDeere.com](http://www.JohnDeere.com)



JOHN DEERE GOLF & TURF  
**ONE SOURCE**





## Stathe Paganis

**Superb customer service vital to growing the business**

**S**tathe Paganis is a member of family-run International Golf Construction Co., which has built courses throughout the northeastern United States and Canada since the 1950s. In 1998, the Massachusetts company also became a course owner with the opening of CrossWinds Golf Club, a 27-hole layout in Plymouth, Mass. Paganis serves as CrossWinds course manager, giving him unique insights to the golf industry as both a course owner and builder.

**Golfdom:** *What's the most important issue facing golf course owners today, and why is it important?*

**Paganis:** Growing their businesses despite the abundance of golf courses. Doing this requires exceeding customer expectations. Make sure every customer leaves the course satisfied with the product and service.

**Golfdom:** *What is the key to a good owner/superintendent relationship and why is that relationship important?*

**Paganis:** They must have a mutual respect for each other's position. The owner/manager must understand the responsibility of the superintendent and what is involved with providing the quality course the customer expects. The superintendent must understand the responsibility and challenges that the owner/manager faces. The owner/manager is responsible

for keeping the money flowing. Once the two understand each other's positions, then they will at least have some respect for each other's job. This will allow them to communicate effectively, even if they do not always agree. They do not need to like each other, but they must respect each other's position. They must understand they are in the same boat. Like any relationship, both sides must understand it is a partnership philosophy working toward the greater good of the operation.

**Golfdom:** *Finish this sentence: "The best thing that could happen to the golf industry would be..."*

**Paganis:** ... to grow the game to reach more first-time golfers through means such as PGA of America's "Play Golf America"

**Course owners and superintendents do not need to like each other, but they must respect each other's position.**

program. The industry has to target every age and gender.

**Golfdom:** *What is the best investment you ever made in your business?*

**Paganis:** There are two critical areas — turf quality and customer service. The best investment has to be a good superintendent to maintain the quality of the turf, with special emphasis on the greens. Equally important is a good hands-on manager with emphasis on customer service. The two work together to provide the golfer with an enjoyable "golf" experience.

After all, a good golfing experience is what the golfer expects. Playing golf is like life. It is not about where you end up. It is the journey that counts.

**Golfdom:** *What do you do in your free time?*

**Paganis:** I rarely have any free time. If I had free time, I would learn how to play golf.

**Golfdom:** *What was the last book you read?*

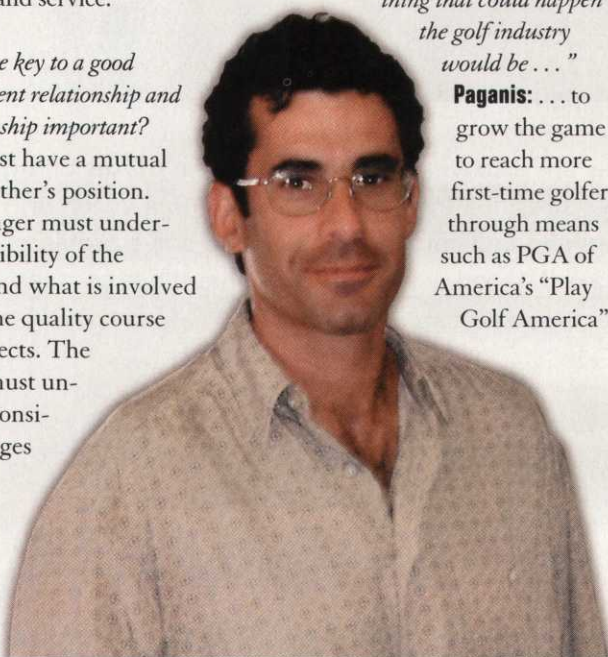
**Paganis:** I think it was the Bible.

**Golfdom:** *What is your favorite movie?*

**Paganis:** I prefer romantic comedies. "When Harry Met Sally" is one of my favorites.

**Golfdom:** *What club in your bag do you hit the best?*

**Paganis:** My lucky 7-iron. ■





## DISCOURAGING DISCOUNTING

*Continued from page 43*  
tasting on every tee.

The Web site, [www.playgolfamerica.com](http://www.playgolfamerica.com), is a good tool for courses to find ways to promote themselves, according to Tinkey.

Judy Hutt is general manager of the family-owned and -run Shadow Valley Golf Course in Boise, Idaho. She has long been against discounting, arguing that it fails to foster loyalty in golfers.

"You have to make yourself special. Don't look at what everyone else is doing, look at what they aren't doing," she said.

Shadow Valley is not a destination course, Hutt said, noting that 90 percent of its players are regulars. A year ago Shadow Valley pulled all of its print advertisement and cut back on its phonebook advertising. Those ad dollars have since been used to provide golfers with free amenities such as coffee, cider, bottled water and divot repair tools in order to create a friendlier atmosphere.

Shadow Valley has also successfully courted the corporate outing market.

Hutt said the change in strategy for the 33-year-old course came after a building boom in which six courses were added to the Boise area since 2000, the same year Hutt was last a member of the National Golf Foundation (NGF). It was about that time the NGF was calling for the

construction industry to build a course a day. Hutt said that attitude could have ended up putting her out of business. As it looks now, Shadow Valley, thanks to its special attention to its customers, will most likely survive. Others that have done nothing more than lower prices to attract golfers may not.

Hutt is baffled by the errors her competitors have made. "I've seen people trip over dollars trying to save a penny," she said.

Innovative methods to get and keep golfers aren't just the purview of the daily-fee courses. Private facilities are also finding ways to be successful in the competitive market.

At Rolling Hills Country Club in Newburgh, Ind., near Evansville, general manager Michael Bastin said the club has become proactive. "We're looking to create more opportunities by emphasizing the programs we have," Bastin said of the club that also has tennis, swimming and a restaurant for its 570 members.

One method is the recruitment of former members called the Old Buddy plan. They are allowed to rejoin without paying an initiation fee; an amnesty program, as Bastin termed it.

When he arrived 15 months ago the club did not have a legacy program; it does now. In an innovative foray, club members invited



**DON'T DISCOUNT:** Judy Hutt says she has seen people trip over dollars to try and save a penny.

local real estate agents for a group lunch and tour of the facilities. In a follow-up, agents and prospective home buyers in the area were treated to complimentary lunch and given a tour. Members are encouraged to remain at the club through various enticements. On Kids Night, babysitters and entertainment for children are provided in one room while parents dine in peace in another.

"You have to change with the flow and go with the flow," Bastin said.

On the east coast of Florida, Weston Hills Country Club is doing its best to keep up membership. According to general manager Robert Holzman, the club isn't in competition with other courses but rather other outlets for disposable income such as a new swimming pool. "Our approach has been we are trying to provide entertainment for all members of the family," Holzman said. "Trying to sign daddy up for golf isn't enough."

The 36-hole Weston Hills has hosted the PGA Tour's Honda Classic and the LPGA's Chrysler Tour-

namment of Champions. There are 750 golfing members and 1,400 total members, including tennis, executive (weekday golf privileges only) and social memberships.

To help new members with the financial burden, Weston Hills works with a company that lends money to those wishing to join a country club but can't come up with the entire initiation fee, in this case about \$30,000. Those taking part must put down 25 percent of the total. Much like new car dealers, the club can buy down the points on the loan so the interest rate for the member can be zero percent.

"That's an expense we're willing to bear," Holzman said.

Another new way for clubs to protect themselves is to take out insurance against members leaving. Once a member is vested, the club would be reimbursed for the initiation fee if the member moved beyond a set distance from the club such as 100 miles.

"You've got to be more aware of everything you're doing," Holzman said. ■



**I**f the question was asked, "If you could fertilize only once during the year, when would it be?" I suspect the majority of cool-season golf course superintendents would answer, "In the late season."

Defined here as applying nitrogen in late fall when the turf is still green but no shoot growth is occurring, late-season fertilization (LSF) is the most important nitrogen application of the year. Interestingly, as widespread as LSF is used throughout the United States, it is not as common globally.

Historically, light frequent fertilization was practiced during the fall. The rationale was to apply nitrogen to match the shoot growth rate potential of the turf. That changed with the first research studies that reported the benefits of LSF (Powell, Blaser, and Schmidt, 1967). Given that the common LSF application rate is normally between 1 pound and 1.5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, the benefits associated with LSF could not be matched with light frequent fall applications.

The major reported advantages of late-season nitrogen fertilization include:

- extending the greening period later into fall;
- initiating spring greenup as much as a month sooner;
- increasing stand density late into the fall and thus reducing weed pressure; and
- increasing root growth.

Metabolically, LSF is associated with increased carbohydrate levels. Normally, carbohydrate levels increase in stems and roots during the winter months, with decreasing levels occurring in shoots. The real benefit of LSF in carbohydrate metabolism is the lack of excessive carbohydrate use in response to early spring fertilization.

Increased shoot density and root growth is demonstrated indirectly from one of the by-products of LSF — thatch. Although increased thatch layers are detrimental to turf health, thatch accumulation does provide insight into the dynamics of LSF. Thatch is composed of dead and living stems (rhizomes, stolons), crowns, leaves and roots between the zone of green vegetation and the soil surface. Living and dead roots comprise the greatest percentage. For example, 61 percent

## Fall Fertilization Is Fundamental

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



IN THE CASE OF LSF,  
ESPECIALLY ON  
COOL-SEASON  
TURFGRASSES,  
THE POSITIVES  
GREATLY OUTWEIGH  
THE NEGATIVES

of a Baron Kentucky bluegrass thatch layer was comprised of roots (Koski, 1986). Most likely LSF favors root growth during the spring and early summer, while early spring nitrogen applications discourage root development. In Koski's study, the relative percentages of roots, stems and tillers did not vary between treatments. Thus, the associated increase in thatch also meant an increase in tiller and rhizome development.

A disadvantage to LSF is the potential for increased winter disease injury. The primary winter disease associated with LSF is microdochium patch, also known as pink snow mold and fusarium patch. Its threat is highest when the fall nitrogen applications are made while shoot growth is still occurring. Succulent, rapidly growing turfgrass plants going into the winter would be more susceptible. But correctly timed LSF actually reduces the severity of other spring and summertime diseases.

Although the benefits of LSF are primarily associated with nitrogen, potassium is an element commonly applied during late season. Fall applications of potassium are associated with winter hardening. Conflicting reports exist, but potassium is associated with winter hardening of warm-season turfgrasses including bermudagrass. On cool-season turfgrasses, the benefits of exogenous applications of potassium when soil levels are adequate have not been reported.

With any turfgrass management practices the advantages need to be weighed against the disadvantages. In the case of LSF, especially on cool-season turfgrasses, the positives greatly outweigh the negatives. As late fall approaches, do not miss this window of opportunity.

---

Contact Karl Danneberger, Ph.D., *Golfdom's* science editor and a turfgrass professor from The Ohio State University, at [danneberger.1@osu.edu](mailto:danneberger.1@osu.edu).



syngenta

24 hr. support • 1-866-SYNGENTA  
syngentaprofessionalproducts.com



Conditions worthy of devotion.

Introducing Headway,<sup>™</sup> a new fungicide solution for fairways. With a dual mode of systemic action, Headway provides broad-spectrum control at low rates — including outstanding protection against both brown patch and dollar spot. Headway continues the tradition of innovative formulations development and disease control from Syngenta.

To a golfer, dedication is being the first out each morning. To Syngenta, dedication is creating conditions that make that commitment worthwhile.



Important: Always read and follow label instructions before buying or using this product. ©2006 Syngenta. Syngenta Professional Products, Greensboro, NC 27419. Headway<sup>™</sup> and the Syngenta logo are trademarks of a Syngenta Group Company.



**MORE  
CHOICES**

**MORE  
FLEXIBILITY**

**MORE  
CONTROL**

When evaluating your bunker maintenance routines, consider the performance and product options Sandtrapper delivers. With more choices, flexibility, and control, course professionals get the results they need.

Now available in four distinct styles, Sandtrapper gives you maximum performance at every price level. Also available in both 56" and 90" roll widths, Sandtrapper helps you get the most out of your renovation and construction budget.

Contact IVI-GOLF to learn more about this technology and we'll send you our new 2006 Product Information Guide.



**888-970-5111**  
[www.sandtrapper.com](http://www.sandtrapper.com)

## SANDTRAPPER II



The best product on the market, this premium performer remains the only option where performance is critical. For use in extreme applications, Sandtrapper II gives you confidence and reliability over the long haul.

## SANDTRAPPER MD



The newest addition to the Sandtrapper line-up, MD raises the bar on performance and value. Best for use in moderate to extreme applications where budgets are of paramount concern.

## SANDTRAPPER I



Designed as a reliable, low cost option for moderate applications, Sandtrapper I works effectively in bunkers without high flashing. Great for use in bunker bases or shallow, flat designs.

## SANDTRAPPER GEO



The contamination-only choice, GEO is designed to prevent contaminants from creeping into expensive bunker sand. Can also be incorporated in hybrid designs with other Sandtrapper styles.

