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Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Seminar Touts TifEagle as No-Till

The Georgia Seed Development Commission (GSDC) organized a daylong educational seminar recently to explore both the viability of TifEagle bermudagrass as a no-till variety and the mechanics involved with the no-till (no-dig, minimum-till) renovation process. GSDC is the state agency responsible for the licensing and marketing of TifEagle. The seminar was requested by the TifEagle Growers Association.

University of Georgia professor and TifEagle breeder Wayne Hanna, Ph.D., hosted the seminar. In a press release, Hanna admitted to being an early skeptic of no-till. "I've got to be honest. Six years ago, I stood up right here ... and said that I had serious reservations about no-till," he said. "I was worried that after a year or two you'd start to see a lot of problems on no-tilled greens, especially with off-types and possibly black layer on greens with poor drainage. I was wrong."

Guest panel member Pat O'Brien, the Southeastern director of the United States Golf Association's Green Section, said, "I've examined hundreds of renovated no-till greens over the last six years, and I've yet to come across a failure."

O'Brien provided details comparing the benefits of no-till versus conventional reconstruction. Clubs can expect to reduce their costs downward from about \$2 per square foot (and from \$4 per square foot for full-scale renovations) to only 45 cents to 50 cents for no-till, he points out. O'Brien said he thinks most bentgrass courses will convert to the ultradwarf bermudagrass varieties in the next several years.

"Low-to-mid-budget courses are already on the ultradwarf bandwagon, and the high-

Briefs continue on page 16



From Emerald Ash to Saw Dust?

BORER BLIGHT THREATENS TREE VARIETY, ALTHOUGH IT COULD BE SAVED ON GOLF COURSES

By Anthony Pioppi, Contributing Editor

Sometime in the 1990s, a freighter that sailed from Asia entered the St. Lawrence Seaway carrying a killer. It made its way west past Niagara Falls, Buffalo, N.Y., and Erie, Pa., before turning north near Toledo, Ohio, and docking most likely in Detroit, but possibly in Windsor, Ontario.

The ship's cargo had little impact compared to the stowaway lurking in storage crates. The wood had not been kiln-dried, as required by federal law of the United States and Canada. And the resulting infestation of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), a half-

inch-long metallic green beetle that bores into and lays its eggs in ash trees, has proved to be more than just a nuisance.

The larvae feasts on the wood, ultimately killing the trees in three to five years. When they emerge in the spring, adults leave a D-shaped exit hole in the bark, their malevolent calling card.

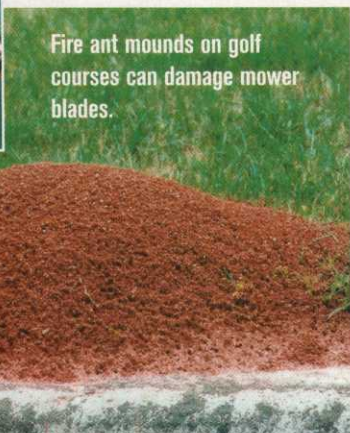
In Asia, the species of native ash have developed resistance to the bug, but here in North America there is no such defense. A blight the magnitude of the one that wiped out nearly every chestnut tree in North America is upon us and it could virtually eradicate all 16 varieties of ash that thrive here.

Thus far the beetle has killed 20 million ash trees in the United States, most in southeastern Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. There are 800 million surviving ash trees in Michigan alone. Ash makes

Continued on page 16

Extinguishing Fire Ants

CHUCK SILCOX, GLOBAL TURF AND ORNAMENTAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT MANAGER FOR DUPONT, ADDRESSES FIRE ANT CONTROL ON GOLF COURSES



Fire ant mounds on golf courses can damage mower blades.

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

Chuck Silcox knows ant control like Tony LaRussa knows baseball. Silcox, who has a Ph.D. from Rutgers University and is the global turf and ornamental product development manager for DuPont Professional Products, knows when to bring in the fire ant control products like LaRussa knows when to call in a relief pitcher.

Silcox, an industry veteran of nearly 25 years, has been at DuPont for four years and helped the company launch DuPont Ad-

vision fire ant bait and Advion mole cricket bait. He recently spent time with *Golfdom* to answer some questions about fire ant control.

In what parts of the country do fire ants pose problems on golf courses?

They extend from very southeastern Virginia through about half of North Carolina and into southern Tennessee.

The entire states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and

Florida also have fire ants. In addition, southern Arkansas, southern Oklahoma and central, southern and eastern Texas have fire ants.

On what parts of golf courses are fire ants most problematic?

What damage they can cause?

In some cases it depends on the level of inputs at the golf course. If you have a higher-end course that's making applications for mole cricket control, a lot of times there won't be much fire ant activity within those treated areas. But you'll still have activity around the perimeters of the fairways. You also you can't forget the clubhouse and other entry areas, such as driveways and sidewalks, where fire ants can typically be found.

There are different types of damage that fire ants can do. If you have fire ant mounds in an area that's being mowed, they can cause damage to the mower blades. Fire ants are also attracted to electrical transformers and have been known to cause damage



Chuck Silcox

with them. But I think one of the main issues on golf courses is liability, which involves people who are sensitive to fire ant stings.

How should superintendents monitor fire ant populations?

What techniques or tips you can offer them to control fire ants?

First, listen to your golfers, especially ones like me who don't hit the ball down the center of the fairway all of the time and are getting into areas that haven't been treated for fire ants. They'll let you know if they're running into fire ants.

Again, an area of concern is the clubhouse, where there are a lot of folks walking around and there's a lot of activity. It's easy to monitor fire ants in those areas. If you put out some food — a piece of a hot dog or potato chips when soil temperatures are above 60 degrees Fahrenheit and air temperatures are between 75 degrees and 90 degrees — fire ants will find it within 10 minutes if they are in the area.

Can you tell me about any new fire ant research you are involved in?

One of the things we're doing now is trying to find out how quickly we can stop fire ants from foraging, especially around areas like the clubhouse.

Editor's note: To listen to a podcast of a similar interview with Silcox, visit www.golfdom.com/online-exclusive.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington ... To Talk About Immigration.

The North Carolina-based Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform stormed Capitol Hill in May to tout short-term relief and a long-term safety net for the industry's labor supply.

"There was a clear sense that Congress is acutely aware of the need for reform. However, as we all know, the challenge is coming to a consensus," says certified superintendent Kevin Smith, vice presi-

dent agronomist for Pinnacle Golf Properties in Browns Summit, N.C.

Federal immigration legislation stalled twice in June. The first proposal fell to partisan politics, and the second failed to make its way to the Senate floor for a vote June 28, effectively tabling the issue.

Senators from both sides of the aisle said it is unlikely Congress will address the immigration issue until after the 2008 election. ■

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Business briefs

Briefs continued from page 12

end private clubs are next," he said. "Superintendents who still have Tifdwarf or 328 are also aching to upgrade. Why drive a sedan when you can get behind the wheel of a sports car? With no-till, cost simply isn't a major drawback anymore."

Bob Carrow, researcher and professor of turfgrass science with the University of Georgia, outlined some "common sense" site assessment practices for the group. He stressed how physical, chemical and biological soil conditions affect golf course greens.

"If you find problems in these areas on older greens, unless corrective action is taken those same problems are going to persist and probably get worse," he said. "Minor organic matter buildup can usually be dealt with after you no-till, but no-till is by no means a magic bullet for most problems. Beware of excessive organic matter buildup, as well as inadequate organic matter content. Look for contouring problems, poor drainage, water-logging, standing water, dry spots, soft spots, layering, diseases, pests (especially nematodes), poor air movement, excessive wear, shade issues and high salt accumulations, especially in the root zone."

Regarding Rounds, Year Begins With a Slow Start Due to Weather

Same-store rounds fell more than 15 percent in April compared to last April, according to the National Golf Foundation. The decline is attributed primarily to poor weather that blanketed much of the country with snow, sleet and rain. Rounds in the Northeast fell 38 percent, and the Midwest experienced a 24-percent plunk compared to last April.

April declines pile on the already slow start in 2007; the 9-percent fall in 2007 rounds is the worst start in three years, according to NGF. Again, the Northeast and Midwest have been hit the hardest. And rounds in the mid-Atlantic are down almost 18 percent.

On the upside, rounds in the Northwest and Southwest are up for the year 2 percent and 5 percent, respectively. Premium courses (above \$70) are down just 7.5 percent for the year compared to standard and value golf courses, which are down about 15 percent. ■

Continued from page 12
up 5 percent of all trees in the United States and 7 percent of the hardwood population.

EAB was identified in the summer of 2002, but not as early as it might have been, according to David Shetlar, extension entomologist for Ohio State University, who said many scientists assumed prevalent diseases were killing trees.

"Ashes die for other reasons. There are a couple of common diseases," he said.

Eventually, the public raised the alarm, much the same way the public alerted New York City authorities to Asian Longhorn Beetle infestation.

"It took enough people to say, 'Why are all these ash trees dying all at once,'" Shetlar said.

Unlike Dutch Elm Disease, which waits for trees to reach a certain size before infesting it, EAB has no such consideration.

"It will take out an inch in caliber to a full-grown tree," Shetlar said.

In 2003, a quarantine in the Detroit area was thought to have stopped the spread, but that proved false. EAB made its way south of Detroit and into Ohio and Illinois. It has also been detected in Windsor, Ontario, and it continues to spread.

It made its way into Maryland thanks to an unscrupulous Tennessee nursery. EAB was found in August 2003 by a Maryland Department of Agriculture inspector at a Prince George's County nursery.

According to the Maryland Department of Agriculture, unbeknownst to the Maryland nursery, instead of filling the order, the trees were ordered by the Tennessee nursery and direct-shipped from Michigan to Maryland. Adult beetles

emerged on site at the nursery and these beetles subsequently infested other ash trees at the nursery. Subsequently, EAB has been found in Virginia. The Tennessee nursery was fined almost \$13,000.

Researchers also believe the beetles have spread via firewood. As a result, states where EAB has been found have forbidden the importation of firewood into parks and campgrounds.

In areas of heavy devastation, some ash trees appeared to avoid the blight only to succumb later on.

**The majority of
Ash trees in
the wild likely
will succumb
to the invasion.**

The irony of this potential catastrophe is that the EAB can be thwarted with common systemic insecticides. Sadly, these insecticides cannot be applied over vast areas, so the majority of trees in the wild will most likely succumb to the invasion.

In the future, it is possible that the only living ash trees will be found on golf courses, in parks or at private residences, surviving much like an endangered animal in a zoo.

Imidacloprid found in Merit products as well as Bayer Tee and Shrub Insect Control can stave off EAB with applications no more than twice a year. Safari insecticide, with a different active ingredient, is also labeled for EAB. The process, however, must take place every year or the beetles will gain a foothold and kill the tree.

Quest Products surfactant Pentra-Bark has also shown to be effective when used with insecticides against Sudden Oak Death and can also be a weapon against EAB. Safari or any of the imidacloprid products can be used in conjunction with Pentra-Bark with the mix sprayed onto the trees. The process does not require atomiza-

Quotable

"Hi everybody! Got my first ace! Fifth hole, 135 yards, nine iron. It never left the flag ... one bounce and rolled straight in. Ta Dah!"

— *Mike Reeder, who made his amazing shot at the Forrest Crossing Golf Course, Franklin, Tenn., where he is a ranger. By the way, Reeder lost his legs in the Vietnam War.*

"Angel Cabrera's nickname is 'El Pato,' which means 'The Duck.' They way he is sucking down the cigarettes on the back nine, perhaps his nickname should be 'El Gaucho' or 'The Cowboy,' as in The Marlboro Man"

— *Dan Gigler, Pittsburgh Post Gazette sports writer, on the winner of the U.S. Open at Oakmont Country Club*

"It's almost like I've turned my hobby into my profession. I feel very fortunate."

— *Dean Graves, certified superintendent of the Chevy Chase Club, on turf maintenance as a career.*

tion and eliminates the possibility of drift. The active ingredient makes it into the entire tree within three to seven days via the lenticels, said Bill Stringfellow, managing director for Quest Products.

While those products may work, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is already preparing for the ash to be wiped out. The Rose Lake Plant Materials Centers has begun the National Ash Tree Seed Collection Initiative. Ash tree seed is being stored at the National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation in Fort Collins, Colo. The U.S. Forest Service has agreed to X-ray the collected ash seed to determine sound seed for storage. If the ash tree populations are completely decimated by the EAB, the seeds will be used as

the genetic base for work to re-establish ash trees.

The PMC is seeking volunteers to collect seed from ash trees throughout the country in the growing regions of ash trees. More information can be found at www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/pmc.

Shetlar said the entire reason for this blight and many others is the lack of adequate inspection at international ports of entry. He said a lack of funding means too few inspectors, which means insects and diseases making their way onto this continent.

"If we really follow the protocols that are set up, we wouldn't have near as many problems," Shetlar said, adding it may be too late for the ash trees of North America. "I don't see anyway out." ■

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We Need More Superintendents to Step Up at Local Levels

Editor's note: Allen James, president of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), is writing a bimonthly column for Golfdom beginning this month. RISE is the national trade association representing manufacturers, formulators, distributors and other industry leaders involved with specialty pesticide and fertilizer products. James' column will focus on legislative and regulatory issues in the industry.

By Allen James

As I write this column, we've just marked our National Grassroots Program's one-year anniversary. The golf industry was the first to step up in this campaign, which focuses on preventing local municipalities' attempts to restrict the availability of pesticide and fertilizer products used by consumers and professionals. The golf industry continues to play an essential role in grassroots issue management.

In particular, we would like to rec-

ognize the leadership of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and Carrie Riordan, the GCSAA's director of information and public policy.

Without the help of Riordan and her members, we would have been in tough shape with needless and emotionally based anti-pesticide and anti-fertilizer ordinances going unchallenged, especially in Westchester County, N.Y.

In one Westchester public hearing, we relied upon a local golf course superintendent to defend pesticide use — not on golf courses — but on homeowners' properties. The superintendent did so with professionalism and dedication.

During the past year we've seen many local policy proposals impacting homeowner use of pesticides and fertil-



Allen James

We are seeing an alarming trend of regulation at the local level.

izers. However, we have also seen proposals impacting golf — back to New York where one locality has passed a law requiring a permit for every pesticide application by any user, including farmers, homeowners, pest control and golf courses.

You are probably also aware that local boards increasingly challenge new golf course permits with emotional and unsupported assertions about how pesticides and fertilizers used on courses impact water quality. As with homeowner use, there are many suburban

myths about the golf course environment, even though science shows the water coming out of most golf courses is cleaner than when it went in.

We need everyone in the golf industry, especially given the highly visible

Golfdom's Blog of the Month



Is Golf a Sport?

Chalk one up for the ... well ... out-of-shape people in this world.

Angel Cabrera's U.S. Open win over Tiger Woods Sunday was a victory for all of us who aren't in fine fettle.

There was the beefy, cigarette-sucking Cabrera hoisting the 2007 U.S. Open trophy on national TV after defeating the sculpted and sinewy Woods by one stroke at Oakmont Country Club to win the nation's cham-

ampionship. It was kind of like Luciano Pavarotti putting the hurt on Hulk Hogan in a steel-cage match.

Seriously, though, what does Cabrera's win over Woods say for the argument that golfers don't have to be athletic to succeed? With that question asked, it brings up the age-old question: Is golf a sport or a skill?

We want to know what you think.

E-mail your thoughts to Larry Aylward at larryward@questex.com.

syngenta Business Tip of the Month

community profile and professionalism of superintendents, speaking up about the benefits of healthy turf and the products necessary for its growth.

Often, it is this segment of our RISE members' customers who are most comfortable in public meetings and are well acquainted with their local elected officials — a first line of facts and relationships that are essential to maintaining product choice.

We are witnessing an alarming trend at the local level, particularly in Florida, Wisconsin, New York and most of New England, with local policymakers dismissing the life's work of our nation's leading and most distinguished turf researchers as being irrelevant to local policy making. Some localities are even choosing to ignore current, state-of-the-art research in favor of outdated information because it supports bad laws.

Where do we turn when seemingly unassailable science and common sense are not allowed to inform public debate? We turn to grassroots — to product users of all stripes to show up and defend the necessity and benefits of product choice. Recently, our first grassroots manager Stacey Pine left RISE for a new career as a federal lobbyist. This change gave us the opportunity to tap two industry veterans, Karen Reardon, who now takes on grassroots and communications duties for RISE, and Elizabeth Lawder Grotos, who helped me grow the RISE organization for nine years and is now our grassroots consultant. For those who are not members of GCSAA, please contact Elizabeth at egrotos@dclrs.com or 202-872-8440 with information about local action or for more information about our program's resources.

Meanwhile, we'll continue our partnership with GCSAA and continue to count on superintendents when and where we need them. ■

Secrets to Success in Public Speaking

Bruce Williams is a veteran superintendent who knows a thing or two about agronomy. And over the years, Williams, the director of golf and grounds for the Los Angeles Country Club, has learned a few things about making presentations to boards, green committees and other golf course decision makers. In fact, Williams presents a seminar at the Golf Industry show entitled "Mastering Your Communication Skills."

Williams says it's vital to know your audience before presenting. Presentations to community groups are different than those to green committees or the maintenance staff. Consider the audience's knowledge base and primary interests so you can find the common denominator between speaker and audience and speak on the same wavelength as the recipient of the message.

Superintendents also must prepare differently for presentations, whether they be motivational, educational or for marketing purposes. For example, when seeking approval for something, ask for it at the end. Otherwise the audience might mistake the presentation as simply an informational session.

No matter the presentation, it should have an introduction, body and conclusion, Williams says. And he advises presenters to know the subject better than anyone in the audience. For example, if the presentation concerns budgeting, know the numbers backwards and forwards, he says.

It's also important to be aware of the time allocated for a presentation. If a green committee meeting convenes for an hour and the superintendent is allotted 20 minutes, then people will generally stop listening after 20 minutes. The audience is generally happier when a speaker finishes early, Williams points out.

Williams advises presenters to practice. Novice speakers can rehearse with staff, at home and elsewhere. No one is a natural-born speaker, but practice improves ability.

And bring notes if needed. It is better to see a person with notes who knows the material rather than someone who stumbles over key points, Williams says.

One final tip: Avoid caffeine before the presentation, Williams suggests. Coffee and carbonated beverages will only make you more stressed.

The "Tip of the Month" is provided by Syngenta to support superintendents in their agronomic, business and professional development. To comment on this column, submit a lesson from your own experience, or suggest a topic to be covered in a future issue, please visit www.golfbusinesstips.com.

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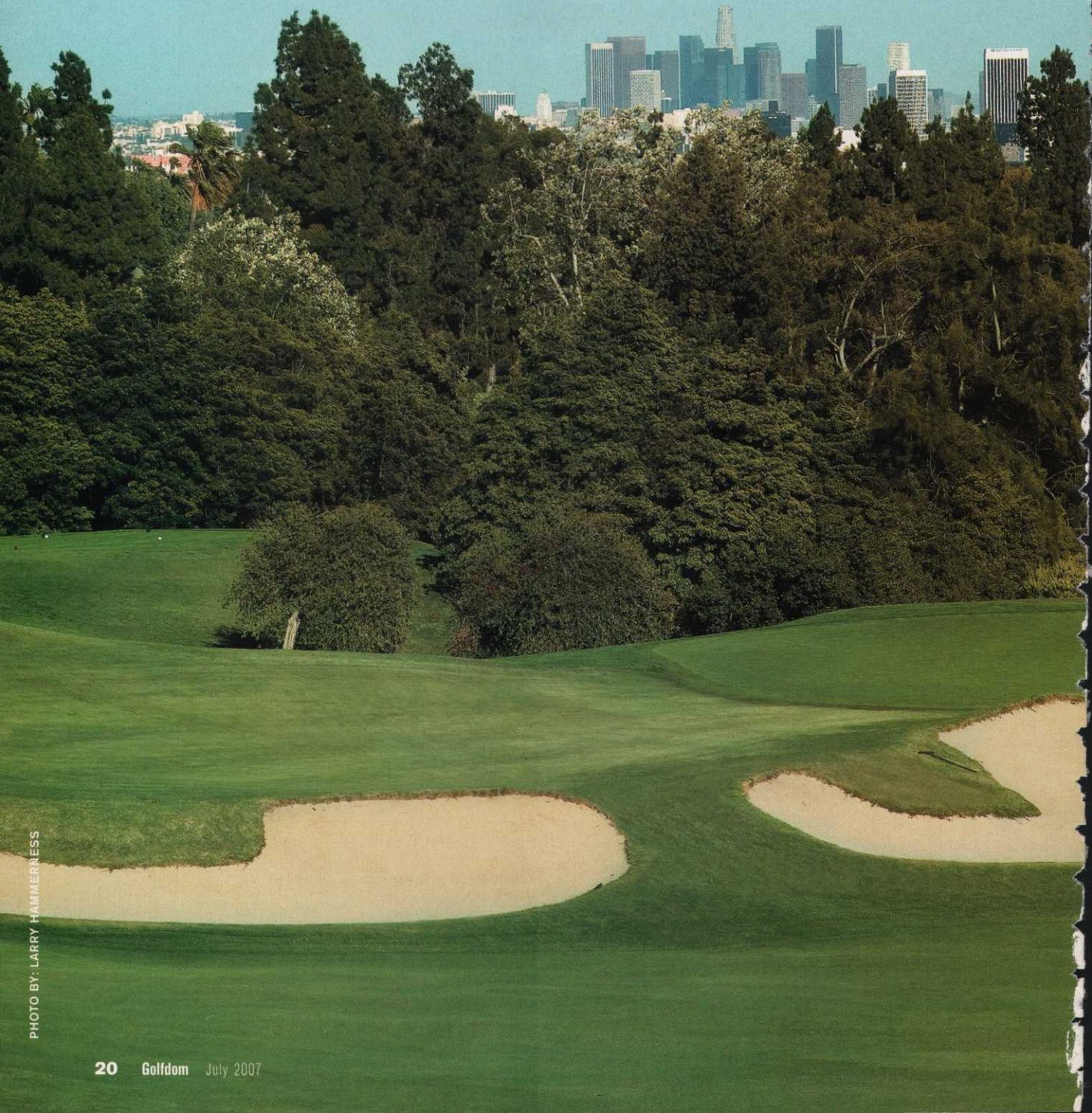


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