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# Golfdom

APRIL 2008 • VOLUME 64 • NO. 4

## Golfdom's Annual Guide On

# Green Maintenance



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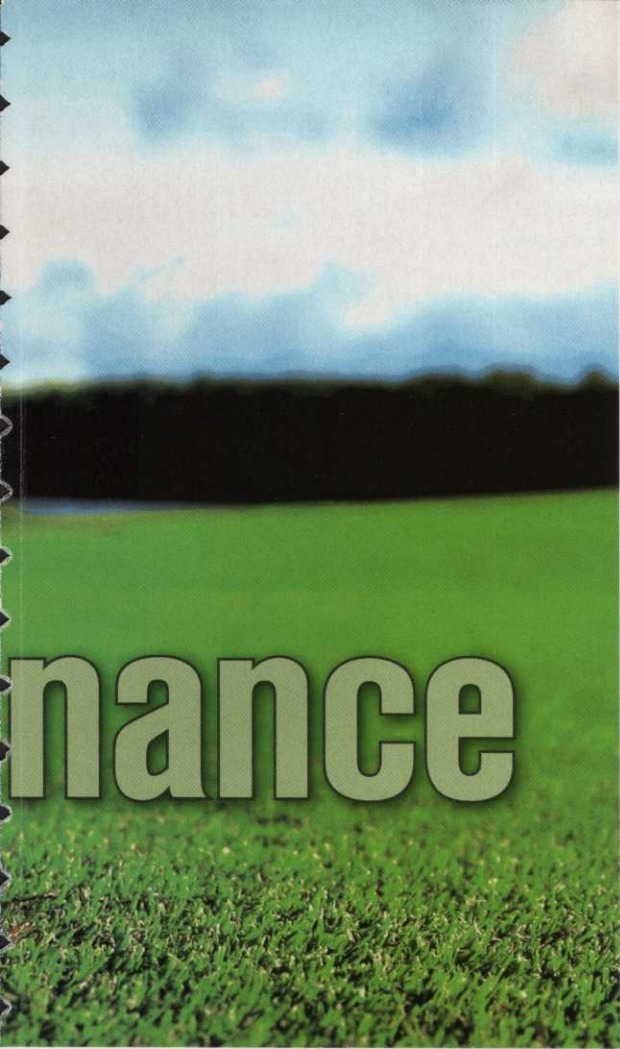
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*Golfdom* Art Director Kristen Morabito used a series of special effects on this photograph from iStock International to add some perspective to our cover.

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### Turfgrass Trends

This month, *Golfdom's* practical research digest for turf managers discusses how preventive annual bluegrass weevil programs can encourage resistance.  
See pages 79-93.

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**Bailey.** Her owner is Michael Cooper, the assistant superintendent at Grand National Golf Course in Auburn, Ala. (Photo by: Kim Lumpkin)



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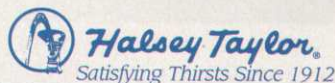


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# We've Got Mail

■ LETTERS FROM THE FIELD

## New Blood Welcome

Recently, much as been said and written about former Golf Course Superintendents Association of America CEO Steve Mona and his legacy, most of which falls into the category of politically correct. Without a doubt, the golf course superintendent profession has taken great strides in the past decade. However, much of the recognition must also go to the group of GCSAA members who originally identified that our membership would benefit from having a CEO lead our association and promote us as professionals.

Certainly being CEO of the GCSAA is a challenging position, and Mona did his best. It was evident that he feels deeply about this association when he had to choke back tears when saying his farewell to the membership in Orlando. I also believe he is sincere when saying that he will always be an advocate for golf course superintendents.

However, to truly evaluate anyone's tenure as a leader, failures must be taken into consideration along with the accomplishments. It was not long ago, when Mona was spearheading the Professional Development Initiative and the relocation of GCSAA headquarters to Florida, that our membership was more fractured, with more infighting than I have ever seen in it. The reality is that these two issues, regardless of the outcome, were expensive and extremely divisive. Perhaps the best result from this time period was the decision to finally include Class

A members in the group of professionals that the GCSAA promotes to the public.

I, for one, feel the association was overdue for a change in perspective. I look forward to a fresh outlook and approach, and in time, I think the change will be healthy for the GCSAA. Perhaps the truth lies in the answer to a question that a wise old man once asked of me, "Does the man make the institution, or does the institution make the man?"

**Rick Slattery, Superintendent**  
**Locust Hill Country Club, Rochester, N.Y.**

## Who Set That Pin?

We've all heard the question after the high-profile tournaments at our clubs. Local knowledge and eyeballing work most of the time for setting holes. But as conditions change on our greens, last week's pin location might evolve into this week's unplayable hole.

What is fair? According to the United States Golf Association, anywhere on the green is permissible, but it might not be fair. Players don't expect an uphill putt to return to them if it lags within 3 feet of a cup. Tournament golfers understand that being above a hole is their mistake, so the ability to stop a downhill putt near the cup shouldn't be a concern.

I've used the "Rule of 3s" to test tournament hole locations for a number of years as a rules official. Recently, I demonstrated and discussed this with an experienced golf course superintendent who liked its effectiveness and simplicity.

He remarked that he was going to teach it to his staff, so I thought I'd share it with you.

Here's the test:

- 1) Select a potential hole location, and place a coin or a tee on the spot.
- 2) Drop a golf ball from 3 feet (waist high) about 3 feet below the spot.
- 3) If the ball rolls more than 3 feet from where it hit the green, then the slope is too severe for the conditions.

An appropriate spot might only be 1 foot away. This method works because it involves all the factors that affect a putt. Green speed, as we know, is influenced by wind speed, slope, grain, irrigation practices (or lack of), height of cut and myriad other cultural practices, including rolling frequency, chemical usage (plant growth regulators) and topdressing practices.

The weather creates additional variables. If the weather is hot and breezy, then the test can be implemented conservatively, like allowing only 2 feet of roll. Conversely, the test can be employed more liberally if conditions are wet and slow. Test this method with some of your current hole locations, and compare the results to the complaints you typically receive around the golf course. Then you can try to curtail those complaints by pre-testing future hole locations.

You might not eliminate every complaint, but the Rule of 3s will ensure that pin placements are consistently fair and appropriately challenging.

**Alan F. Pritchard, M.D.**  
**Rochester District Golf Association, Sodus, N.Y.**

## Golfdom's Blog of the Month



### Pollution Is a Sin. But What Kind of Pollution?

The Vatican didn't do the golf course maintenance industry any

favors recently when it announced that pollution is a sin. But the announcement surely had left-leaning environmentalists smiling sinisterly.

The Vatican's No. 2 man, Archbishop Gianfranco Girotti, told the media that "ecological" offenses now account as sins. An

offense against God "is not only stealing or coveting another man's wife, it is also destroying the environment," Girotti said.

We know what constitutes stealing and coveting another man's wife. Those sins are very clear. But "destroying the environment" is not so obvious. And, unfortunately, the Vatican's murkiness regarding this measure doesn't bode well for industries like the golf course maintenance industry.

Environmentalists could spin the Vatican's message to say that they now have

God on their side in their efforts to ban the use of pesticides and other chemicals on green spaces, including golf courses.

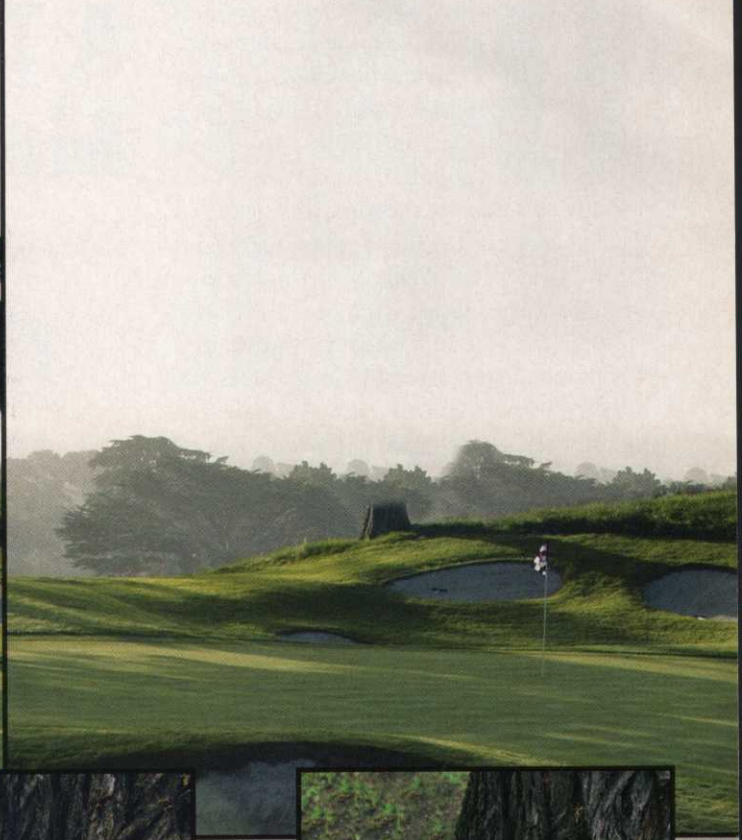
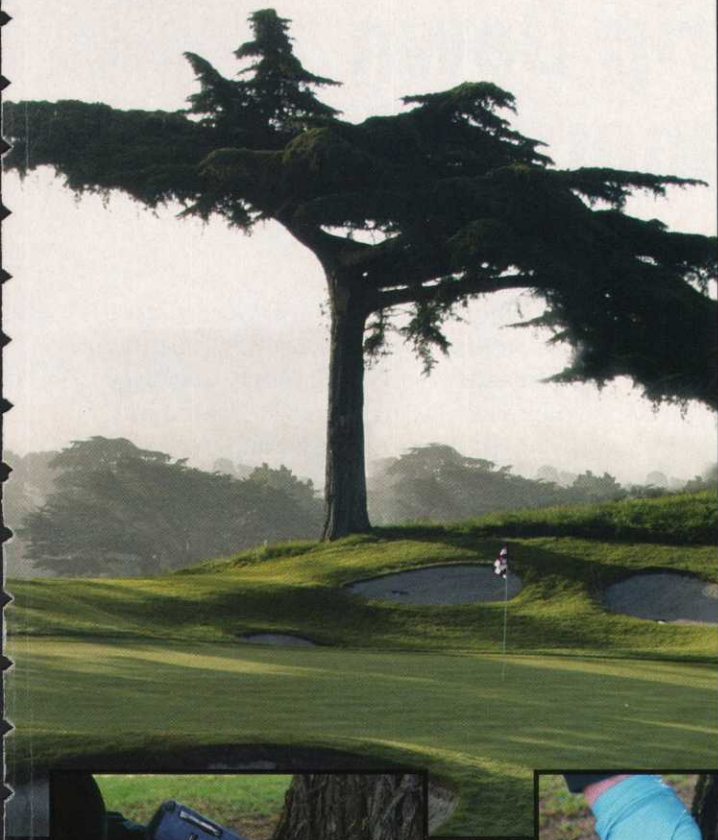
This is not good news for the golf course superintendents who apply pesticides and fertilizers responsibly to manage turf. It is not good news for the companies who manufacture and market such chemicals responsibly.

We want to know what you think. E-mail your thoughts to Larry Aylward at [lailward@questex.com](mailto:lailward@questex.com).

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**B**eing *Golfdom's* 10th year of publishing, I decided to take a trip down memory fairway to revisit some of the people, places and things I've written about in this space.

My golf game was the topic for one of the first columns I wrote for the magazine in 1999. It was titled, "What Will You Do to Bring Back the Hacks?"

While the column was about my game, it was also about a lot of people's lousy games. And my aim in the column was to stress that the golf industry needs us hacks to create more rounds in a flat market. Problem is, while we love the game, we sometimes tend to hide our clubs and rebuff the game rather than play. Alas, the challenge for golf owners and operators is to make us feel welcome at their golf courses because they need duffers like me.

It was one of the few times I've written about myself in this space. Often, I like to reserve it for you.

In August 2006, I wrote about Bruce Williams, who was glad to get back to his stressful job as certified superintendent of the Los Angeles Country Club after undergoing a seven-way heart bypass operation (yes, seven) a year before. When I heard Williams had the bypass, I figured the stress of this pressure-packed profession had caught up to him. But, boy, was I wrong. In fact, Williams says he felt more relaxed to get back to work than he felt during the six weeks — the minimum time required by his doctor — he took off to rest after the surgery.

"It was a lot more relaxing for me to be back to see my golf courses and push through the paperwork that had piled up," he said.

Williams loves to work and thrives on the stress his job brings. Nothing wrong with that.

I profiled another superintendent in this space a few months later. He was from Augusta, but not the Augusta you're thinking. Larry Guy is the superintendent of Augusta Municipal Golf Course, a city course located in a city made famous by that other course.

While Augusta Municipal doesn't flaunt flawless-looking fairways or boast perfectly manicured greens, it's *not* a golf course with an

## A Trip Down Memory Fairway

BY LARRY AYLWARD



MY GOLF GAME WAS  
THE TOPIC FOR ONE  
OF THE FIRST  
COLUMNS I WROTE  
FOR THE MAGAZINE  
IN 1999. IT WAS  
TITLED, "WHAT WILL  
YOU DO TO BRING  
BACK THE HACKS?"

identity problem. This Augusta knows what it is, it's proud of what it does, and its superintendent seems as passionate about what he does as any superintendent in the business. "I just love it," Guy said. "I plan to stay here until I retire."

Back to the other Augusta. I've wanted to interview its superintendent Brad Owen for years. But my requests have been dismissed several times because of Augusta's "long-standing policy to not give interviews" to the press.

I wrote a column about this in July 2003. I pleaded with Augusta's communications director that all I wanted to do was talk turfgrass maintenance with Owen. I wanted to ask him about what it's like to tend turf at such a revered track. I wanted him to wax about his agronomic challenges on the course. I wanted our readers to learn from his responses. We're a business magazine, for cryin' out loud, not *The National Enquirer!* But, still, I wasn't allowed to talk to Owen. What a crock.

One of the classiest guys I wrote about in this space was Danny Quast, back in May 2004. Quast, who spent 12 years at the Medinah Country Club, received the GCSAA's 2004 Distinguished Service Award. During his three-minute acceptance speech for the award, Quast didn't talk about the 12 years he spent at one of the nation's great courses. He talked about his mom, Hazel, who had died weeks before. "She was the most influential person in my life," Quast said.

He said his mother lived a noble life without much recognition. So Quast made his time in the spotlight his mother's time. His action said a lot about how he was raised.

I hope there are more Danny Quasts to write about in the next 10 years. It has been my pleasure.

*Aylward can be reached at [larryward@questex.com](mailto:larryward@questex.com).*