

Makes Sens-ors

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"What I believe these things do is give you information that lets you make better decisions," Emerson says.

He has 24 sensors in use at Geronimo. The diameter of each sensor is smaller than a golf hole, so Emerson moves them around using a cup cutter.

The biggest surprise Emerson says he found once the sensors were in place is how much the soil conditions of his greens evolved depending on the season.

"What I believe these things do is give you information that lets you make better decisions. ... They don't replace observation, but they give me a heads up to look for things."

SHAWN EMERSON,
DIRECTOR OF AGRONOMY,
DESERT MOUNTAIN GOLF CLUB

"It changed dramatically during the year as the sun angles and shade angles changed," Emerson says.

Walt Norley, president and CEO of AST, said this is a prime example of what sensors do — provide superintendents with knowledge they would not otherwise have.

"It's information technology," he says.

Norley points out that most courses with poor-quality effluent water flush on planned cycles without knowing how much of the impurities have built up. Because water quality vacillates, sensors let the superintendent know

when it is time or, just as important, not time to flush greens.

The technology is not just for arid areas. Manufacturers say sensors can detect if pesticides and soil surfactants are present. And in areas of the country where rain is plentiful, soil sensors can prevent superintendents from irrigating when turf contains the correct amount of moisture.

"It gives me really good information on infiltration rates and leeching," Major says.

Because the sensors do not shut off, they will also reveal when individual irrigation heads are working improperly, putting out too much or not enough water.

David Angier, marketing manager of golf irrigation for Toro, says many courses start with a three-hole package of sensors, which is recommended by all three manufacturers as a good place to begin. Once superintendents become familiar with the technology and as their maintenance budgets permit, they can add more sensors in different areas.

The majority of the courses that have purchased the sensors are high-end and have bought three- or six-hole packages. A three-hole package, including installation, costs between \$15,000 and \$20,000 depending on the manufacturer.

Sensors are most commonly used in problem greens, tees and, for layouts that host tournaments, landing areas. The manufacturers say their sensors are compatible with any irrigation system.

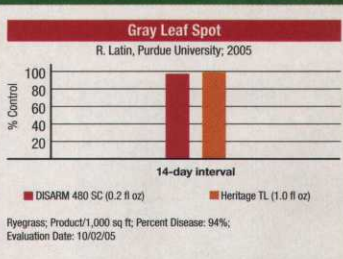
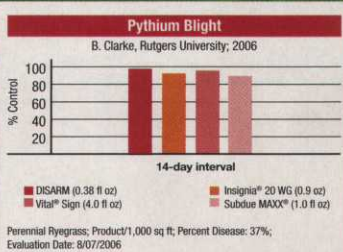
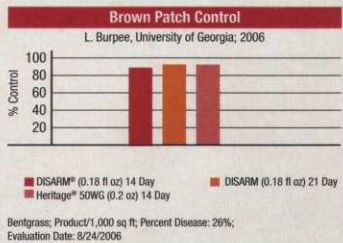
Manufacturers do warn that the sensors must be protected from aeration spikes, which would destroy the units upon contact.

As Emerson sees it, sensors are another weapon in his turf-maintenance program.

"They don't replace observation," he says, "but they give me a heads up to look for things." ■

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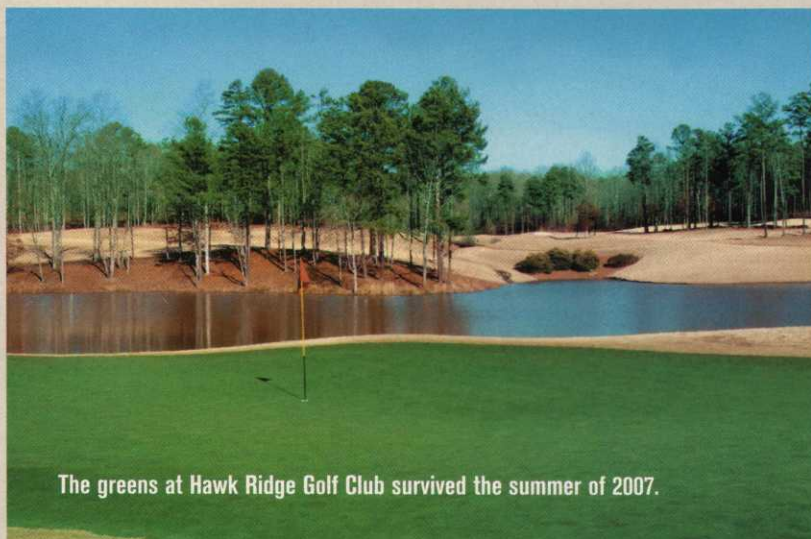


Arysta LifeScience

Harmony In Growth

One-Two Punch

Fungicide fights disease *and* energizes greens **BY LARRY AYLWARD**



The greens at Hawk Ridge Golf Club survived the summer of 2007.

While the fungicide Macdonald used halted the pythium, it was an added ingredient in the product that caused the turf to appear so vigorous. Macdonald was using Tartan, a relatively new fungicide from Bayer Environmental Science. Tartan contains a formulation technology called StressGard, which positively affects plant physiology and helps turf manage the stresses of golf course conditions more effectively, according to Bayer. Turf treated with StressGard develops greater root mass and top growth under heat stress, the company says.

Macdonald had heard about StressGard before from his distributor, who told him about turf trials involving Tartan. He told Macdonald the turf treated without Tartan — and the StressGard — didn't have nearly the same color and texture as turf treated with it.

Macdonald says he began using Tartan in 2006 when turf disease pressure was high

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It was late August near Atlanta and as dry as the Sahara Desert. It was also feverishly hot, as it usually is that time of year in the South.

Hence, it was expected that the bentgrass greens at Hawks Ridge Golf Club in Ball Ground, Ga., would look a little toasty. But to Kyle Macdonald's surprise, the greens looked the same vibrant green in the dead of summer that they did in April.

"The color difference in the turf was amazing," says Macdonald, the club's senior assistant superintendent.

Macdonald couldn't believe that a fungicide he sprayed to control pythium could cause his course's greens to look *that* good at *that* time of the year. Incidentally, Georgia was going through one of its worst droughts ever at that time. Last year was Atlanta's second-driest year on record. The city received only 31.85 inches of rainfall. It receives 50 inches normally.



Kyle Macdonald says the greens at Hawk Ridge Golf Club looked the same vibrant green in August as they did in April.

Problem

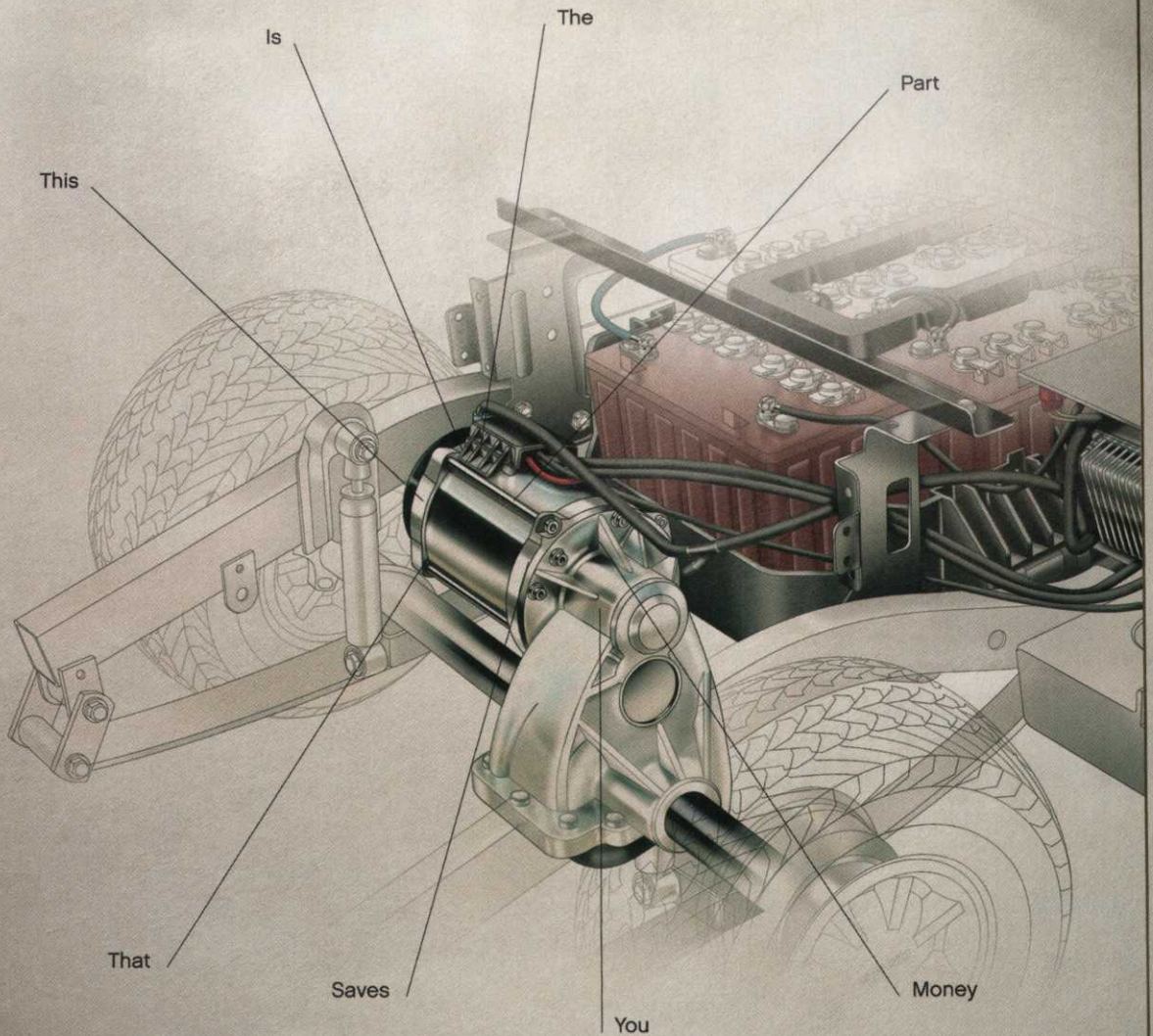
In two words: heat and dry. Kyle Macdonald was worried how the Hawks Ridge Golf Club's bentgrass greens would hold up during a long, hot summer that saw very little rain.

Solution

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Real-Life Solutions



Macdonald (left) and his crew sprayed the greens enough that they received a healthy of StressGard. The day after the sprayings, Macdonald says the greens looked like they had been fertilized.

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because of hot temperatures combined with heavy rain. He used Tartan alone and with Signature, another Bayer fungicide that also contains StressGard. Macdonald says he began using both fungicides in the same tank mix — 1.5 ounces of Tartan and 4 ounces of Signature — and spraying the greens every two weeks. Between two of those applications, he sprayed Tartan alone. Needless to say the turf was getting a healthy dose of StressGard.

Three days after the sprayings, Macdonald says the greens looked like they had been fertilized. He believes StressGard helped the turf offset heat stress.

"The past two summers, besides a stretch where we had 100-degree heat every day, were probably two of the best years we've had with bentgrass," Macdonald says of the club, a Bob Cupp design that opened in 2000. "The grass really responded well to what we were doing."

Bill Smith, superintendent of Panther Creek Country Club in Springfield, Ill., also uses Tartan and Signature and attests that it keeps turf healthy when weather conditions are rife for harming turf.

"We first used Tartan in the middle of August in 2006, soon after it came out," Smith says, noting he applied the fungicide to battle dollar spot and brown patch. "That time of year, the weather around here can be tough — 95 degrees during the day and in the 70s at night with high humidity. We face some intense disease pressure."

Smith says Tartan fought back the disease pressure, and the StressGard added more color to the greens, which were already in decent shape. Smith says he has combined Tartan with Signature for preventive control of pythium.

Panther Creek hosted an LPGA tournament last year, and Smith says he banked on Tartan to help him get his greens ready for the tournament. "We applied it to the greens one week before the tournament," he says. "I like the green color that [StressGard] provides. It's a great thing to have in a fungicide."

Macdonald agrees.

"We were just using it for disease control, but we really liked what the StressGard was doing," he says. "I'm not going to say it's a wonder drug, but it really did some neat things for us." ■



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> *Marking Our*

10th Year

> This month, as *Golfdom* continues to mark its 10th year in publishing, we revisit some of the stories we've covered in the past 10 years. Some of the stories, even though they were written several years ago, are still pertinent today. Also, we explain why we decided to introduce *TurfGrass Trends*, the *Golfdom* Report and Growing the Game into the magazine's mix.

Part one of our look back, which appeared in March, highlighted the people who have adorned *Golfdom's* covers as well as the best "Quotables" of the past decade. If you missed it, you can read it online at www.golfdom.com.

We hope you enjoy reminiscing with us. Then, it's time to move on. There's another 10 years on the horizon.

— Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

This Industry Has 'Issues'

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR IN CHIEF

The golf course maintenance industry's complexity has sparked various issues, and they have made for some good stories in the past decade.

Golfdom covered the plight of management companies often during its first year of publishing. Our very first issue — January/February 1999 — went after a pertinent issue: The role of management companies in modern-day golf course maintenance. The story, headlined "The New Reality," reported on the mega-trend that management companies have become. The story surmised that although the "corporate" mentality of management companies grates on some superin-

tendents, many like the stability, mobility, benefits and opportunity for advancement the management company structure allows.

We revisited management companies in our October 1999 cover story. We did this because International Golf Maintenance, a Lakeland, Fla.-based management company, mailed pitch letters to various golf courses that stated: "We are confident our team of turf professionals can develop a maintenance program that will help you get the most out of your investment in maintenance resources — and we're prepared to bring along \$50,000 in new golf course maintenance equipment with the execution of a three-year maintenance agreement."

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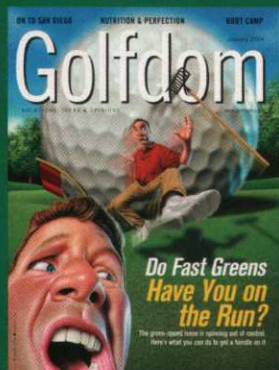
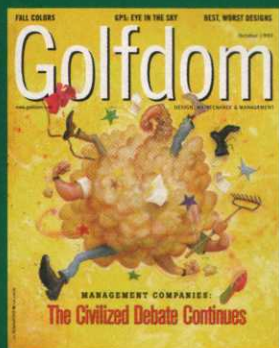
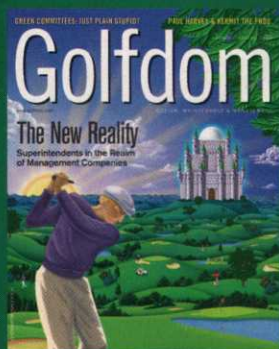
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(Top) The first issue of *Golfdom* reported on the mega-trend of management companies. (Middle) *Golfdom* has also covered the controversy surrounding some management companies. (Bottom) The problem with fast greens has also been a popular topic.

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Obviously, this rankled many superintendents employed at those courses. But *Golfdom* decided to let both sides tell their stories. We asked Greg Plotner, IGM's vice president of Florida operations, to tell us what's good about IGM and management companies in general. And we asked Mike Hamilton, the then-certified golf course superintendent at Foxfire Country Club in Naples, Fla., to tell us why he liked management companies as much as pickled herring.

The headline of that cover story read — "Management Companies: The Civilized Debate Continues." An illustration depicts a cartoon rumble going on.

Golf course maintenance and politics

I bet there aren't many superintendents who figured they would need political science degrees along with their turfgrass degrees to keep up with all the politics at their courses. It's amazing the "internal affairs" that some superintendents have to put up with at their clubs and courses. We've covered this issue throughout the years.

Green speed causes a lot of the political problems. I've heard many superintendents say they hear from golfers that the greens are too slow. Then, 10 minutes later, other golfers are telling the superintendents that the greens are too fast.

We've kept close watch of the green-speed issue over the years. In January 2004, our cover story asked: "Do Fast Greens Have You on the Run?" In the story, we provided an anecdote told to us by Michael Sauls, superintendent of Butler National Golf Club. One day, Sauls sat at a dining table in the clubhouse eating his lunch. Glancing up from his plate, Sauls saw trouble approaching him in the form of an overbearing high-handicap hacker.

"He came up to me and started complaining about the course's green speed," Sauls says. "He said, 'What's wrong with the greens? They're slow.'"

A startled Sauls almost choked on his food. "I had to do everything I could to bite my tongue," Sauls said. "Here's a 25-handicapper complaining that the greens are too slow. What do you say to guy like that?"

The scene reaffirmed to the veteran Sauls that too many golfers are enamored with fast greens, and that green speed is spinning out of control. The issue is hurting the game and stressing out superintendents.

If fast greens didn't cause problems, superintendents surely wouldn't wince when asked by golfers to speed them up. But that's the problem: Fast greens can cause myriad problems — from damaging turf to slowing down already slow play to even getting superintendents fired. What's worse is that many golfers aren't aware of the problems, don't want to be aware of them and wouldn't care even if they were aware of them.

In the story, we offered suggestions for superintendents to get a handle on the green-speed issue. It seems like many superintendents have made some headway on this political hot potato over the years, including Michael Morris, the certified golf course superintendent of Crystal Downs Country Club. Morris is on the up and up with his members with the green-speed issue. The Stimpmeter has been his most influential tool in the process.

Morris says he not only uses his Stimpmeter every day to make agronomic decisions, but he actually communicates his green speeds to his members — without lying about the speeds.

By Stimping his greens every day, Morris says he has found ways to actually raise his height of cut by experimenting with different practices of mowing and rolling on alternate days. By measuring the results of different practices, Morris can maintain expected green speeds by rolling his greens in lieu of mowing some days, which creates less mechanical stress, saves equipment wear and frees up valuable labor resources.

"It's a paradigm shift from the way you've normally done things," he said. "Rolling every day and skipping mowing (every other day) gave us the same result."

Water issues are also causing superintendents political headaches. In January 2002, our cover story reported on the politics of water. We asked readers, "As supplies decline, should superintendents decrease irrigation to conserve fresh water — and risk losing their jobs?"

In the story, we reported on golf course

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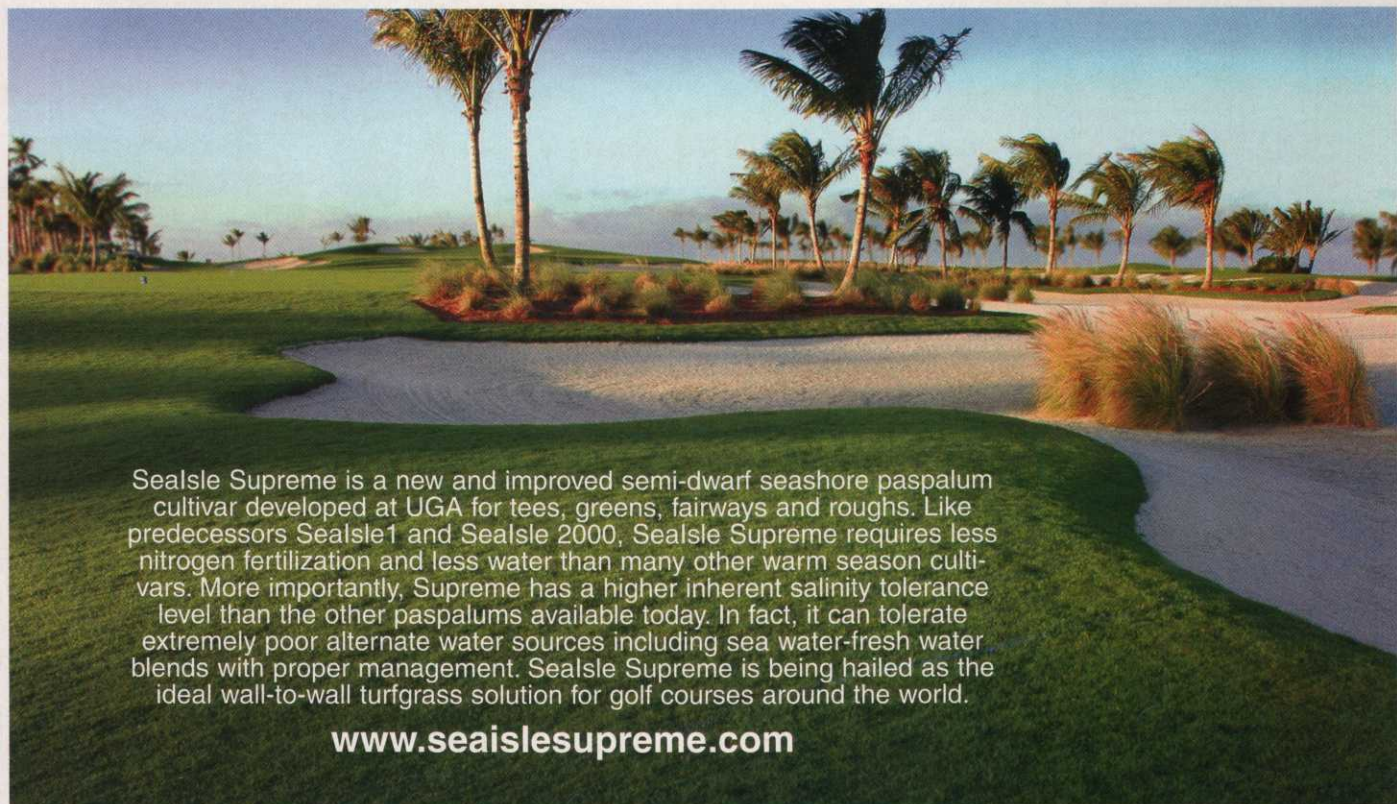


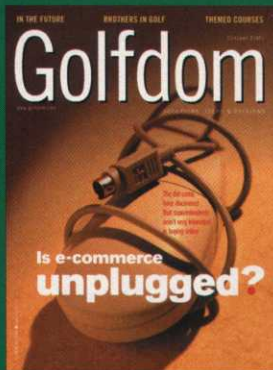
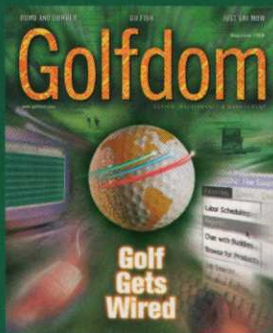
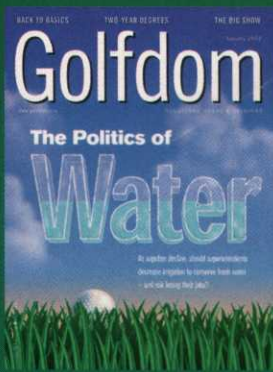
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(Top) Water issues has caused superintendents some headaches. (Middle and bottom) Golf has gotten wired, but e-commerce sure bombed.

Continued from page 68

irrigation and the fact that golfers have come to expect the most vibrant color of green on their golf courses. Problem is, the world is running low on freshwater. And while superintendents have heard the claims of a potential and critical freshwater shortage, some ignore the issue because of pressure from golfers, greens committees and owners to keep courses in choice condition. These superintendents are worried that if they cut back on water use — and allow their courses to turn brown — they'll be fired for their ineptitude.

In the story, Mark Clark, the certified superintendent of Troon Golf & Country Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., predicts politicians will debate water issues for years to come. "This will make oil look like nothing," he said.

Superintendents and others insist golfers must be taught that brown grass in late July is acceptable, especially so golf courses can conserve water. The problem, of course, is getting a golfer to believe that after he has paid \$150 to play a round.

We'll keep reporting on this issue. It will be interesting to see what we're writing about in 10 more years, when the freshwater issue is bound to be even more intense.

E-bust

While some issues — like green speed and water — have been mainstays over the years, others have fizzled. Take electronic commerce, for instance.

Earlier in this decade, e-commerce — purchasing golf course equipment and supplies online — was all the rage. Well, at least that's what some people were saying.

The headline of our May/June 1999 cover story read, "Golf Gets Wired." An article on "point, click and spend" reported that e-commerce's success hinged on whether superintendents wanted to buy from a mortal or through a machine.

In April 2000, we reported on Golfsat, an aggressive e-commerce company with a bold marketing plan. Golfsat had a solid concept and the capital to roll out a serious e-commerce initiative.

If superintendents signed up with Golfsat,

the company offered new members a new Pentium III computer, a 19-inch monitor and broadband Internet access for just \$29.99 a month. Then members could surf Golfsat's search engine for the products of their choice. Golfsat made its money by getting transaction fees from suppliers listing products in its search engine.

There was also greentrac.com and golfsolutions.com. The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America even explored e-commerce. But e-commerce bombed like a bad American Idol contestant. In our October 2001 issue, we asked the question: "Is E-commerce Unplugged?" In the accompanying story, we wrote: "The e-commerce companies counted on superintendents to purchase equipment, chemicals and other goods from the industry suppliers they featured on their sites so they could garner 3 percent to 5 percent transaction fees on the sales.

"... but most superintendents, whether they're from the computer generation or not,

Continued on page 72

We're Riding on the Growing-the-Game Bandwagon

In one short decade, the words "growing the game" evolved from marketing mumbo jumbo to a synonym for the survival of golf.

Golfdom has brought the industry a continuing series on strategies on how to increase rounds and generate additional revenue, including initiatives to court women, minorities, disabled people, baby boomers and junior golfers.

Strategies of note: Some golf industry manufacturers, notably Club Car, have developed employee incentives to make the game more accessible among their employees and in their respective communities, showing the rest of the industry that some lessons must begin at home.

We've also explored emerging golf concepts that address time scarcity, such as three-hole, five-hole and six-hole layouts. Most recently, ClubCorp unveiled its Short-Course Initiative, which will implement far-forward tees for juniors, beginners, families or traditional golfers looking for an hour-long round. The company is also flirting with alternative routings at its courses. ■