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## Off The Fringe

# Less May Be More in This Case

GRAIN COMMODITY PRICES PUSH GROWERS TO DEDICATE FEWER ACRES TO TURFGRASS SEED. BUT THOSE ACRES SHOULD YIELD BETTER PRODUCTS

By David Frabotta

Just about 30 miles from downtown Portland, Ore., wide expanses of crops and grazing cattle welcome the morning amid rooster crows and the familiar rumble of commercial tractors. Those wide expanses include turfgrass seed plants as far as the eye can see.

But unfortunately for superintendents and their respective budgets, there's a lot less turfgrass being grown today, largely because farmers are opting for heavily subsidized and more lucrative corn and soy, much of which is used for ethanol production. Wheat is in high demand as well, and canola and soy continue to quench the thirst for a healthy and reasonably priced fryer oil as more fast-food chains free themselves of trans fats. This summer's flooding in the Midwest has been a significant accelerator for food prices, too.

As farmers plant more grains to cash in on higher food prices, turfgrass acreage falls. Total bluegrass acres planted are about half of what they were five years ago, says Kevin Turner, director of seed research and production for The Scotts Co., and fine fescue acres are a tad lower than normal.

"The price of grass seed is going to change," Turner told growers in late June at the company's field day in Gervais, Ore. "We're looking at probably strong price increases in bluegrass and fine fescues, and smaller increases on ryegrasses and tall fescues."



## Quotable

**"Hey, I know I suck. But I got nice equipment."**

— Former NBA great Charles Barkley on his not-so-great golf game. Barkley was hitting three and was not yet to the women's tee when he said this. (ESPN)

That's the bad news. The good news is that the varieties being planted have characteristics selected for what superintendents need, like the ability to tolerate low mowing heights and drought. At nearby turfgrass research facilities owned by Pure Seed Testing (Hubbard, Ore.) and The Scotts Co., cultural practices and chemical regimens are monitored closely to create turfgrass varieties that perform in line with those emerging needs. Tee-2-Green also hosted a field day for growers at the Pure Seed facility.

Among the field trials at the testing and research facilities are wear-tolerant and drought-tolerant fescues, ryegrasses that need less water, bluegrass blends that grow in almost full shade or thrive despite low-mowing, and fine fescues that have been traditionally bred for glyphosate resistance.

Developed by Scotts through selective breeding, its glyphosate-tolerant fine fescue helps primarily with *Poa annua* control because it tolerates about 8 ounces of active ingredient per 1,000 acres, which isn't strong enough to kill many broadleaves but is strong enough to kill annual bluegrass. While Roundup-Ready creeping bentgrass — a transgenic turfgrass engineered by Scotts — continues to be tested by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its fine fescue is making its way onto American golf courses.

Unlike its transgenic counterpart held up in the USDA approval process, fears that the fescue's ability to tolerate glyphosate will jump into weed populations are very low because the turfgrass is naturally selected, not genetically altered.

"The opportunity for glyphosate resistance on the weeds we are trying to control are extremely low compared to many of the other products that we are using today," says Eric Nelson, Ph.D., a seed researcher for The Scotts Co.

Many of the new varieties being researched and grown for next year's seed could help superintendents tread easier on the environment, a theme commonly alluded to amid trials for drought tolerance and fewer fertility requirements. ■

**Scotts agronomist Jim Frelich explains the parameters of a partial-shade study. He says shaded turf has a better chance to thrive if it is mowed as high as possible.**

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## Off The Fringe

# Are You Stressed Yet?

SEMINARS ADDRESS SUMMER  
STRESS OF TURFGRASS AS WELL  
AS SUPERINTENDENTS

By David Frabotta

If you're not sure why your turfgrass is dying this summer, then it's probably because several factors are contributing to its decline. Poor growing environments, improper irrigation and mechanical injury are all primary causes for turf loss during

summer stress, and pathogens and chemical practices can contribute to turf loss under the right conditions.

Summer decline complex is appropriately named because a complex denotes two or more inter-related factors that contribute to a problem, which is why diagnosing maladies is so difficult amid summer stress, says Peter H. Dernoeden, professor of turfgrass management and pathology at the University of Maryland.

"About 30 percent to 40 percent of all samples are negative for a primary pathogen, and that's a conservative number," Dernoeden told superintendents and distributors during a regional Stomp Out Stress Seminar in Philadelphia hosted by Bayer Environmental Science, which conducted several of the regional events this year.

Superintendents commonly diagnose many summer stress manifestations as takeall patch, Dernoeden says. But the fungus *Gaeumannomyces in crustans* creates many of the same symptoms, and only a molecular test will diagnose its presence properly. Sometimes outbreaks could be hallmarks of underlying causes, Dernoeden says. For instance, anthracnose can be an indication of low nitrogen and mechanical injury.

If superintendents experience turfgrass loss due to any of summer's pressures, odds are good that they will be feeling the heat themselves. Managing the professional stress along with turfgrass can be a challenge, largely because stress comes from so many sources, including labor, employees, boards, committees, golfers and bosses.

Much of that stress can be alleviated if the management team is on the same page, organizational strategist Barbara Jodoin said. That might require a different organizational structure for the club, where members are the ultimate decision makers when it comes to operations instead of executive teams or boards of directors. "You need to serve the same master to operate a club successfully," says Jodoin, who is also general manager for Pinetree Country Club in Kennesaw, Ga. ■



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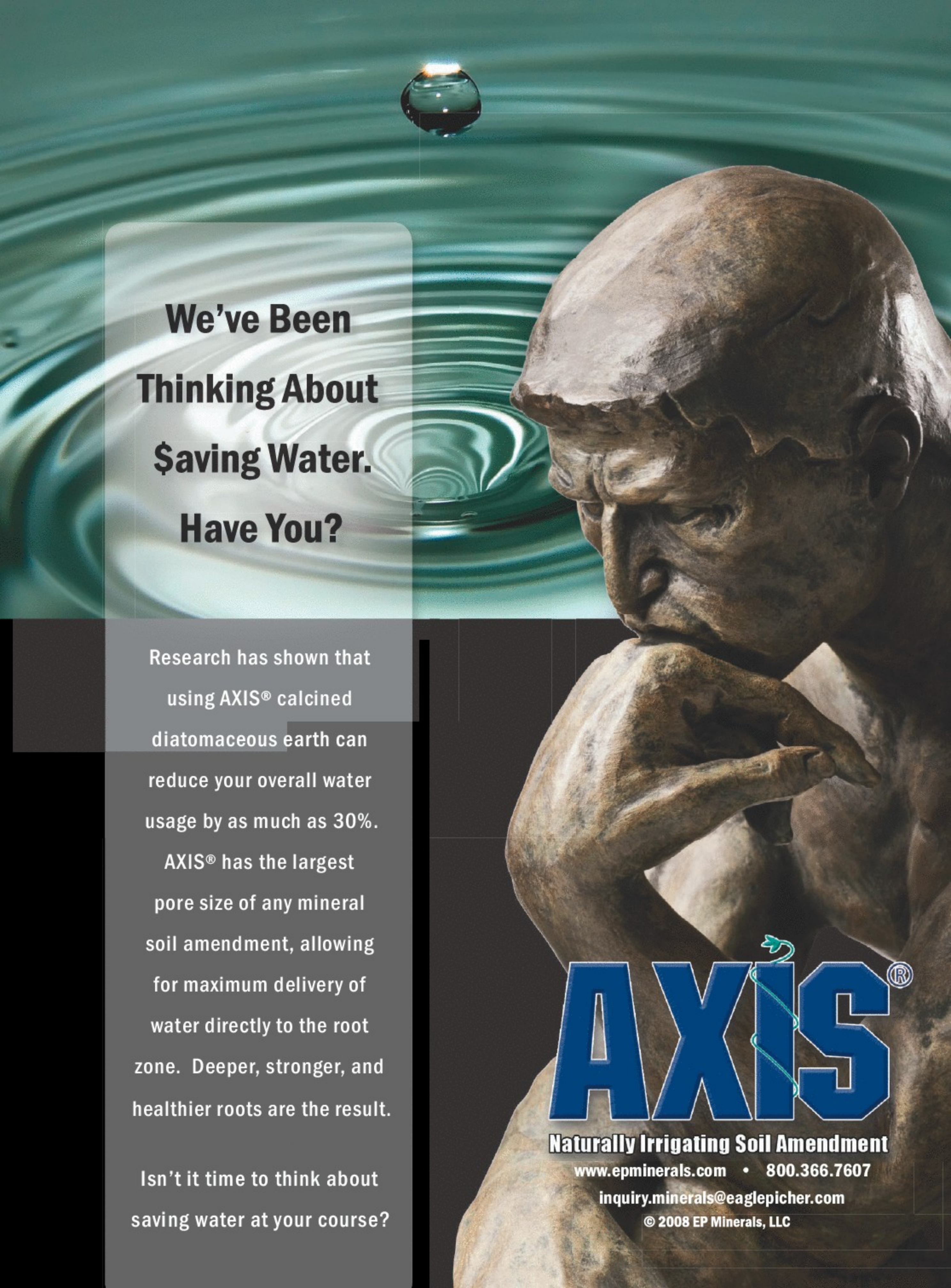
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# Off The Fringe

“Flood” — Continued from page 10

sociation has asked Gov. Culver to declare two golf holidays to spur play, not to mention the collective economic engine of the state’s golf courses.

“I have to believe there are a lot of facilities that are in major financial pain,” Wendel says. “But this is Iowa ... people will fix things and move on.”

Some Gulf Coasters might be willing to help. Wendel says the Louisiana-Mississippi GCSA contacted him to see if its members could help. The Iowa GCSA had done the same for its peer association after Katrina hit.

“The spirit is there,” Wendel says. ■

## Business briefs

Briefs continued from page 10

### Aquatrols Forms Water Impact Alliance

Paulsboro, N.J.-based Aquatrols has formed and launched the Water Impact Alliance (WIA), an organization dedicated to educating and promoting effective communications between regulators, consumers and water users in the green industries. The WIA will serve as an information and communications planning source for green industry professionals on key issues affecting water resource regulation at the federal, state and local levels, according to Aquatrols. The organization will partner with other green industry groups and provide information and unique planning tools to industry professionals, helping them to communicate as effectively as possible with regulators, consumers and other key stakeholders about water stewardship and conservation.

Leaders in the green industry are applauding the WIA, citing it as a much-needed outreach effort to ensure that green industry professionals are heard in the water regulatory debate, according to Aquatrols. Industry leaders also like that the initiative provides turf and ornamental professionals with methods of engaging consumers at the local level, to help educate the public about the ongoing water conservation practices in the industry.

“The launch of the Water Impact Alliance comes at a crucial time,” said Mark Esoda, certified golf course superintendent of the Atlanta Country Club, in a press release issued by Aquatrols. “The group gives our industry a way to perform an important public service, as well as an excellent platform for making our voices heard in the regulatory debate.”

The Water Impact Alliance was formed in part as an industry response to increasing water regulation on the federal, state and local level, according to Aquatrols. “We realized that the turf and ornamental industry has a tremendous amount of knowledge about wise water management,” says Kathy Conard, marketing manager for Aquatrols. “It’s not enough to craft and adopt best management practices — we need to communicate that to consumers and other key stakeholders, so they get the true picture of our industry’s hard work in this area.”

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# Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

**L**ast year I wrote about my cross-country drive from California to Florida via I-15 and I-70. My wife and I did it again, taking I-10 and I-40 to visit my daughter in Los Angeles.

We shuddered to think about high gas prices, so we brought along a cooler to carry food and drinks to offset some of the fuel costs. Gas ranged in price from \$3.93 in Lake City, Fla., to \$4.79 in California, but most of the way, thanks to Love's Travel Stops, the price was \$3.78, and our car averaged 35 miles per gallon.

I-40 parallels and replaces much of the famed Route 66 or the Mother Road as it was named by writer John Steinbeck in his classic "Grapes of Wrath." Like the Trans-Continental Railroad, this highway from Chicago to Los Angeles opened up America for tourism and travel, giving rise to motels, diners and long-distance family vacations.

Signs along the interstate indicate access to the scattered stretches of the old route. Detours into McClean, Texas, and Tucumcari, N.M., were like taking a time machine back to the 1950s. These remnants of that bygone era belie the bustling transportation and commerce along the former cross-country route that linked rural communities to large cities. The old road became an artifact better suited for nostalgia than expediency with the advent of the interstate system.

This was all new territory to me as we zig-zagged our way through Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas, eventually reaching I-40 in Little Rock.

It was neat to bask in the extensive fields of crops that grew along the way. It was easy to identify the fields of corn, cotton, peanuts and rice. Other expanses were more difficult to identify, and I wished there was some sort of signage along the way, especially with the golden, grassy fields in Oklahoma.

We dashed across Oklahoma and the Texas panhandle on a rainy day with amber waves of grain giving away to scrubby cattle ranges. We went from longhorns to pronghorns as we neared Tucumcari, N.M. We saw about a dozen small antelopes, and cactus plants were becoming prev-

## A Long Cruise Along the Mother Road

BY JOEL JACKSON



DRIVING ALONG THAT  
FAMOUS ROUTE GAVE  
US OUR OWN LITTLE  
PIECE OF AMERICANA  
TO CHERISH FOREVER

alent along with mountains, mesas and canyons.

Trivia fact: There are more Native American residents in Oklahoma than any other state.

We visited Santa Fe, N.M., where no one owns a lawn mower because the yards are all desert dust, junipers and sage brush. After getting our fill of art galleries, museums and adobe buildings with flat roofs, it was on to Arizona to see the Meteor Crater near Winslow. Man, that's one big divot some 50,000 years old. I hope the boys at NASA are keeping a sharp eye out for the next one. By the way, Winslow has the fastest greens in Arizona — says so on a billboard on I-40.

We headed to Phoenix by way of Sedona with its beautiful red rock formations.

More trivia: New Mexico sells more chili peppers than any other state, and Arizona has the largest number of Native American tribes.

The last leg of our six-day, 2,733-mile journey was across the Sonoran Desert on I-10. We were surprised to discover the General George Patton Museum complete with a dozen tanks at a little desert outpost in Chiriasco Summit, Calif.

Then we hit Los Angeles, where multi-colored desert mesas and towering saguaro cactus clumps gave way to civilization, and the painted deserts became concrete canyons.

Before flying back to muggy Orlando, we took a trip down the Pacific Coast Highway and enjoyed the 70-degree summer weather. I suspect new GCSAA CEO Mark Woodward will miss the climate in San Diego.

The Mother Road gave us a mother load of photographs and memories of places we've never been before. And we definitely got our kicks on that famous route immortalized by so many American writers.

---

*Certified superintendent Joel Jackson is executive director of the Florida GCSA.*

# Hole of the

▶ Hole No. 2 | Reynolds Landing | Greensboro, Ga.



PHOTO COURTESY: WWW.REYNOLDSLANDING.COM



# Month

## Hole Stats

Distance: 488 yards

Par 5

## The Turf

Green: *Tifeagle*

Fairway: *Tifway 419*  
*Bermudagrass*

Worldwide, 110 million sets of eyes were on Reynolds Landing in Greensboro, Ga., when it hosted 312 golfers competing in the 41st PGA Professional National Championship in June.

The 7,029-yard, par 72 Reynolds Landing Golf Course was designed by noted architect Bob Cupp. The natural, rolling topography surrounds Lake Oconee, the second-largest lake in Greensboro. Hole No. 2, dubbed one of the most beautiful spots on the course by players, provides the start of a spectacular downhill view of the lake.



Surrounded by a small pond to the left of the landing area, an oak tree that guards the green 40 yards out and several new bunkers, No. 2 is considered a great risk-reward hole.

Keeping No. 2 in prime playing shape — along with the rest of the course — is the job of golf course superintendent Lane Singleton. Singleton prepared for the Professional National Championship by intensifying his regular course maintenance routine, relying on Insignia® fungicide to control bermudagrass decline, as well as a number of other diseases.

"We get phenomenal control with Insignia — usually 28 days' worth," Singleton said. "Several comparable chemistries are on the market, but I have seen better results with Insignia than any other product."

Insignia is a staple in Singleton's fungicide rotation. With monthly applications at a rate of 0.09 ounces per 1,000 square feet, he blocks a broad spectrum of diseases.

"Insignia is an effective preventive treatment, but I have also used it to cure problems with great results," Singleton said.

To see past Holes of the Month, download a desktop image and more, visit [www.betterturf.com](http://www.betterturf.com) and [www.basfturftalk.com](http://www.basfturftalk.com).

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GOLFDOM'S HOLE OF THE MONTH IS MADE POSSIBLE BY:

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**T**he square tee replaced the free-form tee that replaced the runway tee that replaced the tiny low profile. Now the square tee is on its way out.

Sorry. I know. Just when you thought you were up on the latest fad in teeing grounds — squaring off those edges or rebuilding them entirely — it seems cutting-edge architects and course setup specialists are onto something fresh.

I'm not sad to report that the rectangular "box" tee, popularized of late as "traditional" in appearance, is headed to the trash heap. In hindsight, it never really made sense.

Box tees were annoying to mow. But even worse, on lovely and nature-inspired designs they stood out like Michael Jackson at a cotillion dance. In the last few years, the box look was installed on classic courses hosting championships. Massive in size and utterly devoid of character, they were often propped up artificially and big enough to raise a net and host a Nadal-Federer match.

Even the master minimalists Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore loved their square tees. But they started realizing that something wasn't quite right about linear objects gracing designs where every hint of a straight line was softened to look natural.

What will be replacing the square tee?

Why, the ultra-retro, low-profile, supernatural tee — along with a few small, simply shaped complementary tees for the extreme yardages.

Understand that we're not going back to the Old Course circa 1859, where you tee off next to the hole on whatever slab of turf you can find. What we have seen, however, are some masterful tee complexes constructed in recent years that still provide the level lie golfers expect. But rather than look like a propped up coffin, they present a simple, graceful walk to the tee followed by a series of gently cascading pads that meld into an existing land form.

Without question the most artistic set of tees worthy of study can be found at Ballyneal, a private club course near the Colorado-Nebraska border designed by Tom Doak and his

## Teeing Off on the Box Tee

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



ULTIMATELY, IT'S  
THE STRATEGIC  
POSSIBILITIES  
THAT WILL DRIVE  
COURSES TO BLOW  
UP THEIR TENNIS  
COURSE SQUARES

Renaissance Golf Design team. Most of the tees are subtly connected to the previous hole by simple strips of turf, helping to make for a good walk accentuated. The tee complexes are gently carved into the faces of dunes, with layers and pockets that meld beautifully, offering the superintendent myriad setup possibilities. And everything is shaped gracefully enough that a triplex mower can handle the task if necessary.

While fans of course design artistry will celebrate these meandering regions of maintained turf as a more natural approach to design, they will ultimately arrive at more courses thanks to the course setup versatility they deliver.

In the wake of the United States Golf Association's stunning success at Torrey Pines, where the simple shifting of tees created excitement and strategic controversy (Phil Mickelson leaving his driver at home), the folks handling course setup are going to start varying tees and looks as much as possible because it not only spreads out wear and tear, but also delivers more challenging and interesting golf.

As part of this strategy renaissance, we will also see the return of smaller, oddly shaped tees for those wacky back plates used by the flatbellies or those wild forward spots like we saw at Torrey Pines' 14th hole this year. I sat next to that low-to-the-ground 267-yard tee for most of the U.S. Open's final round. The intimacy of it added to the excitement as fans and playing partners were able to listen in on strategic decision making.

Ultimately, it's the strategic possibilities that will drive courses to blow up their tennis court squares and reconstruct them into meandering, flowing teeing grounds that respect the fundamental laws of nature.

*Shackelford can be reached at [geoffshac@aol.com](mailto:geoffshac@aol.com).*