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Golfdom

DECEMBER 2008 • VOLUME 63 • NO. 12

The people and events that helped shape 2008.

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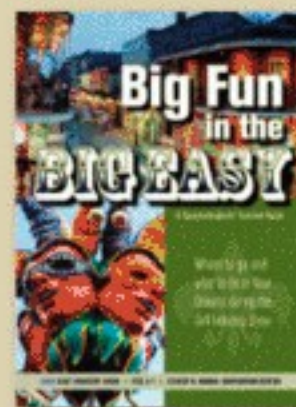
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Art Director Kristen Morabito found this classy image from iStock International Inc. to illustrate our year-end theme.

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By Larry Aylward and Anthony Pioppi



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07-204a-Dec

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More guests visit around the holidays, and they add to the noise, confusion and stress to your dog, who will be out of his routine. Dogs can be stepped on, or unsupervised children can injure them. Dogs can escape when visitors come and go, too. Guests are more likely to feed your dog and "just a little bite" can add up to a lot of food. Always advise your guests not to feed your dog. Your dog should also try to sleep in his regular spot. If he's in a spot where he might feel distressed, move him to a quiet place where he will be comfortable.

Julia. Her owner is Scott Gallup, the golf course superintendent at Capital Hills at Albany in Albany, N.Y. (Photo by: Scott Gallup)



Improving the Way Professionals Care for Turf

Golfdom

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CHECK OUT OUR PODCASTS. You Just Might Find the Answers to Some of Your Turf Industry Questions.

Here are some, but not all of the podcasts posted at www.golfdom.com

Pesticides And Democrats

Neil Cleveland, director of the U.S. Green Business for Bayer Environmental Science, talks about what the future holds for pesticides in a Democrat-dominated government.

Reving Up for Biodiesel Technology

Steve Wood, manager of The Toro Co.'s commercial test engineering department, discusses the company's role in implementing biodiesel technology.

Taking Care of a Precious Resource

Dave Johnson, Rain Bird's director of corporate marketing and marketing manager, talks about the golf industry's role in the intelligent use of water.

Navigating Product Evolution and Confusion

Many superintendents have a difficult time correctly identifying a chemical's brand with its manufacturer. Toni Bucci, the business manager of BASF Professional Turf & Ornamentals, discusses what can be done to diminish product confusion.



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In the spirit of the season, I want to share a story about a man who received a special gift a little more than a year ago. The gift was not a flashy watch or a spiffy sport jacket. In fact, the gift was something intangible. The man was given the gift of a chance to do something he had always wanted to do.

It was a gift the man will never forget and always appreciate — especially around this time of year when all of us should count our blessings.

Dieumerite Etienne, the man who received the gift, is 38 years old and hails from Haiti. Etienne entered the United States as an illegal alien in 1986 when he was a teenager.

Etienne's mother, realizing her smartest of five children would have a better chance of living a more fruitful life in America, put Etienne on a boat headed for the land of hope and dreams. Etienne, whose father had died a few years before, had a relative in Florida who put him up in his house.

Etienne was only 17 at the time. He didn't speak English. His new world was a lost world. He struggled. He scraped. But he persevered.

Etienne landed a job with a local landscaper. He worked hard and learned the craft. He was promoted to foreman. Etienne made \$5 an hour and sent much of his money back home to his mother and siblings.

Etienne kept very busy, wanting badly to make something of himself. He went to school every day after work to learn English. He stayed out of trouble.

In 1987, Etienne took a job on the golf course maintenance crew at the Broken Sound Club, a 36-hole country in Boca Raton, Fla. Having learned English — and being the only one who could translate what the large Haitian crew at the club was saying — Etienne was a valuable employee.

He was promoted at the club — first to crew leader and then to irrigation tech, making \$7 an hour in the latter position. Etienne enjoyed the golf maintenance field. He became an expert in irrigation. He fancied thoughts of one day becoming a golf course superintendent.

For years, Etienne watched superintendents and assistant superintendents come and go

Getting the Gift of Opportunity

BY LARRY AYLWARD



ETIENNE WAS AS
THANKFUL AS A KID
WHO FOUND A NEW
TRAIN SET UNDER
HIS TREE ON
CHRISTMAS MORNING

from Broken Sound. And he watched them be replaced by others. It was disappointing to be passed over time and again, but Etienne kept his composure — hopeful that his time would come ... someday, somewhere.

In 2004, Joe Hubbard was hired at the Broken Sound Club as director of golf course maintenance overseeing the club's two tracks — the Club Course and the Old Course. Hubbard, seeing the time that Etienne had put in at Broken Sound, quickly promoted him to assistant superintendent of the Club Course.

And then in the fall of 2007, the superintendent of the Old Course left Broken Sound and the superintendent of the Club Course was named to replace him, leaving an opening for superintendent at the Club Course. It was then that Hubbard called Etienne into his office and gave him the gift — the promotion to superintendent of the Club Course.

Etienne was as thankful as a kid who found a new train set — the present he most wanted — under his tree on Christmas morning.

It has been more than a year, and Etienne remains gracious to Hubbard for giving him a chance. Hubbard says the gift was well deserved.

Yes, Etienne struggled in his first year and learned how stressful it can be as the top dog at a private course. Most every superintendent experiences those high and lows.

"It has been a tough year," Etienne admits. "But I made it. And I look forward to making it another year, another year and another year."

Etienne reminds us all how we should appreciate the real gifts in our lives. The gift of work. The gift of getting the chance to make a difference.

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Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

There's a nip in the air here at the Lake Omigosh Golf Club in central Florida, but it's not as cold as the economy.

Our superintendent Duffy McDuffy is learning how to maintain the course with five fewer crew members, thanks to an economy that went from bedrock to quicksand during this past fall. Leaves weren't the only things in red that were falling in September and October.

And the fairways and roughs aren't so dark green anymore. They're more often greenish-yellow thanks to high fertilizer costs and budget cuts. Some club members still don't understand why things have changed. There will be less overseeding this year thanks to the fear of watering restrictions and the economy.

Greens and tees are still being overseeded in central Florida and through the transition zone to prevent wearing out the dormant or semi-dormant bermudagrass. But further south in the semi-tropics, they hope the winter is another mild one so they can skate through with no major cold spells to send the turfgrass an off-color. Members just can't seem to adjust to the color purple in Florida.

It's a tough spot for a lot of superintendents who must cut staff and somehow try to get the same amount of work done. Some senior superintendents find themselves on the chopping block and being replaced by those making smaller salaries. Longevity and loyalty become expendable as the club ponders shrinking income and rising costs.

The ripple effect of the economic meltdown obviously is being felt far and wide. After valiantly trying to overcome the stigma of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath and helping out New Orleans, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America faces a very real possibility of a downturn in attendance as tightening purse strings strangle travel budgets for superintendents. Hopefully, a post-election rebound will be enough to propel GIS attendance. However, I don't think this will be a record-setting year.

I've heard comments from superintendents who are revamping their fertility programs and switching to less-expensive products to save

Get Ready For Some Big Changes

BY JOEL JACKSON



WHEN THE GOING
GETS TOUGH,
THE TOUGH ADAPT
AND SURVIVE
THE BEST THEY CAN

money, and others are converting to biodiesel for some of their mowing equipment. When the going gets tough, the tough adapt and survive the best they can.

It seems obvious to me that our industry is headed for some of its biggest changes in recent memory. Turf management is going to be different very soon. I'm not preaching gloom and doom, but we will need to be more creative to meet expectations.

Between water availability, conservation, water-quality issues and irrigation technology, we will be required to show more water savings than ever before, and we should expect some of that forced conservation to be written into new permits and permit-renewal language.

We are losing the battle with the Environmental Protection Agency on soil fumigants and other products. And while I want to remain cautiously optimistic, I think the days of preserving certified turfgrass varieties are on the way out. We will plant new grasses into unfumigated ground and try to grow in new or renovated courses in competition with the indigenous weed/grass seed bank, disease spores, insect larvae and nematodes.

There will be less incentive to switch to new grasses requiring fewer inputs if the prospect of contaminated turf is the outcome. We will likely end up having to use more fertilizers, water and conventional pesticides in the grow-in process and run a greater risk of runoff and leaching. That's ironic because the Environmental "Protection" Agency is forcing the issue.

The days of a pristine monostand of turfgrass may well be over, and that will be a change that will take golfers some time getting used to.

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