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This just in: After amortization and bonuses for his staff, Santa Claus figures to earn a record net profit on this year's delivery of goods to the world's coveted 2- to 10-year-old demographic.

"Frankly, I embrace deflation," the hefty CEO said in a conference call to shareholders as he prepared for his Dec. 24 all-night journey. "We focused on harnessing efficient interfaces, engaged end-to-end paradigms and cultivated scalable synergies to not only maximize margins, but to further strengthen distribution channels into the fourth quarter of 2014 through net income distribution. Oh, and it really helped that the cost of everything went way down this fall."

News of Santa's optimistic earnings forecast sent golf courses across the land into a frenzy, with several excitedly jump-starting projects put on hold after this fall's market collapse.

Well, not yet.

When the markets took a dive, golf courses across the land joined just about every other business in deciding to put spending on hold. No winter projects. No spring projects. And likely no other infrastructure improvement work anytime soon.

Lenders also put a halt on new projects or larger-scale course redos. Architects and contractors are twiddling their thumbs, wondering how to make ends meet, with a seemingly endless trickle-down effect.

While the market reaction at the time seemed to make sense, we've since seen commodity prices plummet and those decisions to halt work look more knee-jerk than shrewd. After July's high price points for oil and other vital goods, costs for nearly everything have dropped, with economists predicting even more deflation to come in 2009.

Schedules for talented professionals have opened up and those budgets that just couldn't be justified in July now make sense to be revisited. And with play expected to be down again, what better moment than now to re-invest in your course than when fewer customers are around to be annoyed?

In other words, as Santa tells *Golfdom* in an exclusive from his North Pole headquarters, it's a great time to invest in golf course "product."

Santa Says Golf Has A Merry Future

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



THE GAME'S
FUNDAMENTALS ARE
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UNIQUE USER
EXPERIENCE

Q: There has been a reluctance to cut green fees or member initiation fees out of a fear of "devaluing" a course. What do you say to that?

SC: You build brand equity through solid maintenance and enjoyable architecture, not through price structures, no matter how much the bean counters insist. Give people a good value and they'll keep coming back. Swallow some pride, think of the long term and do what it takes to survive this downturn. The fundamentals of your game are strong.

Q: When you fly over many of the world's golf courses, do you see ways to cut costs?

SC: Absolutely. I can't believe how many acres of turf are irrigated. It's time for golf to harness more efficient leverage over the water lobby by eliminating turf under trees and in those vast areas that are not in play. Now, I know this is not easy with homeowners along the fairways not appreciating such a new crispy look, but the other option is worse: no course at all. This is why it's a great time to call an architect for advice on the best ways to disintermediate turf aggregation.

Q: Failing that?

SC: Golf needs to take a deep breath. The fundamentals are strong — no other pastime takes you outdoors and offers such a unique user experience. Growth may be down this coming year depending on how consumers spend their leisure time, but if the sport engages young users, delivers value for older customers, maintains or improves its core product via projects and in general does not panic, all will be well beyond the short term.

Ho, ho, ho, I say to that!

Geoff Shackelford can be reached at geoffshac@aol.com. He wishes you all a happy holiday season.

When you are



MAINTAINING THE GROUNDS

FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP

— it's not a matter of —

LIFE OR DEATH.



IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT.



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The term pH measures the acidity or alkalinity of a solution. More specifically it is the measure of the hydrogen ion (H⁺) concentration. Danish chemist S.P.L. Sorensen introduced the term pH for a shorter version of “power of hydrogen.”

The pH scale is 1 to 14 with 7 being neutral. At a pH of 7, the H⁺ concentration is equal to the hydroxyl (OH⁻) concentration. A pH less than 7 is considered acid (> amount of H⁺), while values higher than 7 are basic (> OH⁻). Since pH is a logarithmic scale, the H⁺ concentration difference between a pH of 5 and 6 is tenfold. Thus, moving from a pH 7 to a pH 5 is a hundredfold increase in H⁺ concentration.

Although pH of solutions in our everyday life can range along the entire scale, the common range for soils is 4 to 10. Turfgrasses vary in their adaptation or tolerance to pH. Cool-season turfgrasses tend to be more tolerant of acidic pH extremes, while warm-season turfgrasses, depending on the species, are tolerant of both acidic and basic conditions.

The greatest impact pH has on soils is nutrient availability. The pH can influence the balance of cations and the nutrient's chemical form. In addition, pH influences and alters microbial activity associated with the transformation process of nutrients like nitrogen and sulfur. Calcium availability can decrease with increasing acidity but the likelihood of a deficiency is remote.

As pH values become more acidic, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur and magnesium become potentially less available. Iron, manganese and phosphorus become less available potentially as pH becomes more alkaline.

Adjusting pH is done through liming (raising the pH) or sulfur (reducing the pH) applications. Factors that influence the amount of lime or sulfur needed to adjust the pH depend on the H⁺ concentration, and cation concentrations. For example, on calcareous soils (pH ~ 8 to 8.2), lowering the pH is extremely difficult because of the amount of — in this case — sulfur needed to neutralize

Power of Hydrogen Is a Curious Thing

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



THE GREATEST
IMPACT PH HAS ON
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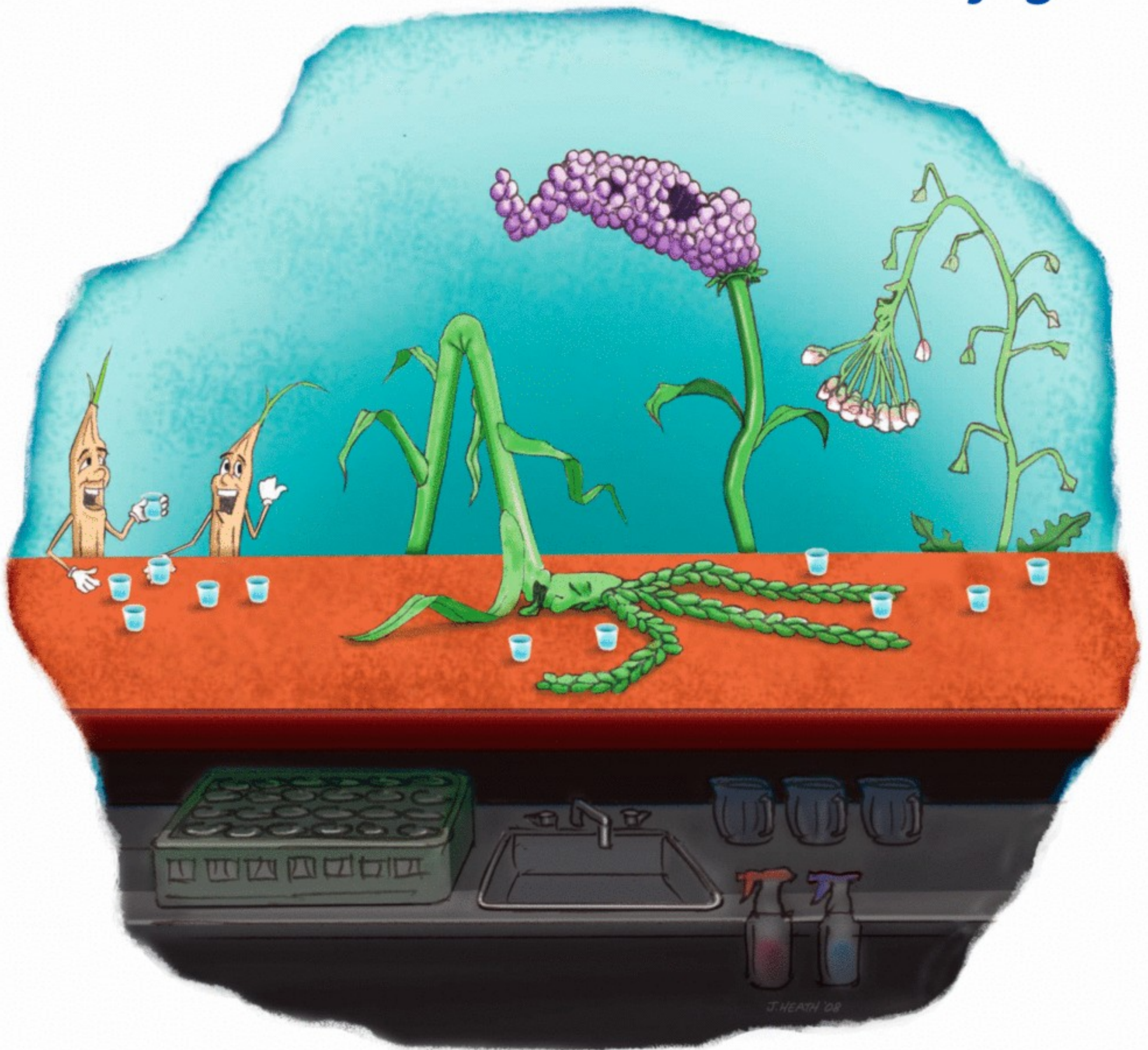
From a sampling procedure, thatch is not normally considered a soil in the sense because it is not considered in soil testing. Thatch can vary in pH and be quite different from that of the underlying soil. Thatch is more reflective of the pH of the irrigation source, rainfall and type of fertilizer used (i.e., acidifying types). Management difficulty can arise where thatch is normally excessive and not normally considered in the soil test recommendations.

Given the properties of thatch — it is relatively porous and has poor nutrient retention — the ability to impact thatch pH is great, which can have a dramatic impact on turfgrass. For example, a calcareous soil that has a significant thatch layer that lowers the soil pH can result in a significant divergence in pH. If the soil tests have not accounted for thatch, lowering the pH through sulfur applications may not reflect the pH change that is occurring in thatch. In this example, repeated applications of sulfur may not lower the soil pH much, but could drastically lower the thatch pH. I have observed where the soil pH may remain relatively unchanged, but the pH of the thatch from sulfur applications is reduced into the range of 2.8.

As with any value or test, pH can serve as an indicator of healthy turfgrass by providing signs of nutrient availability and competitive ability of the turfgrass system. But like any test, you need to know how the measurement was taken and the soil conditions used in the test.

And that, my friends, is much of what you need to know about the power of hydrogen.

Karl Danneberger, Ph.D., Golfdom's science editor and a turfgrass professor from The Ohio State University, can be reached at danneberger.1@osu.



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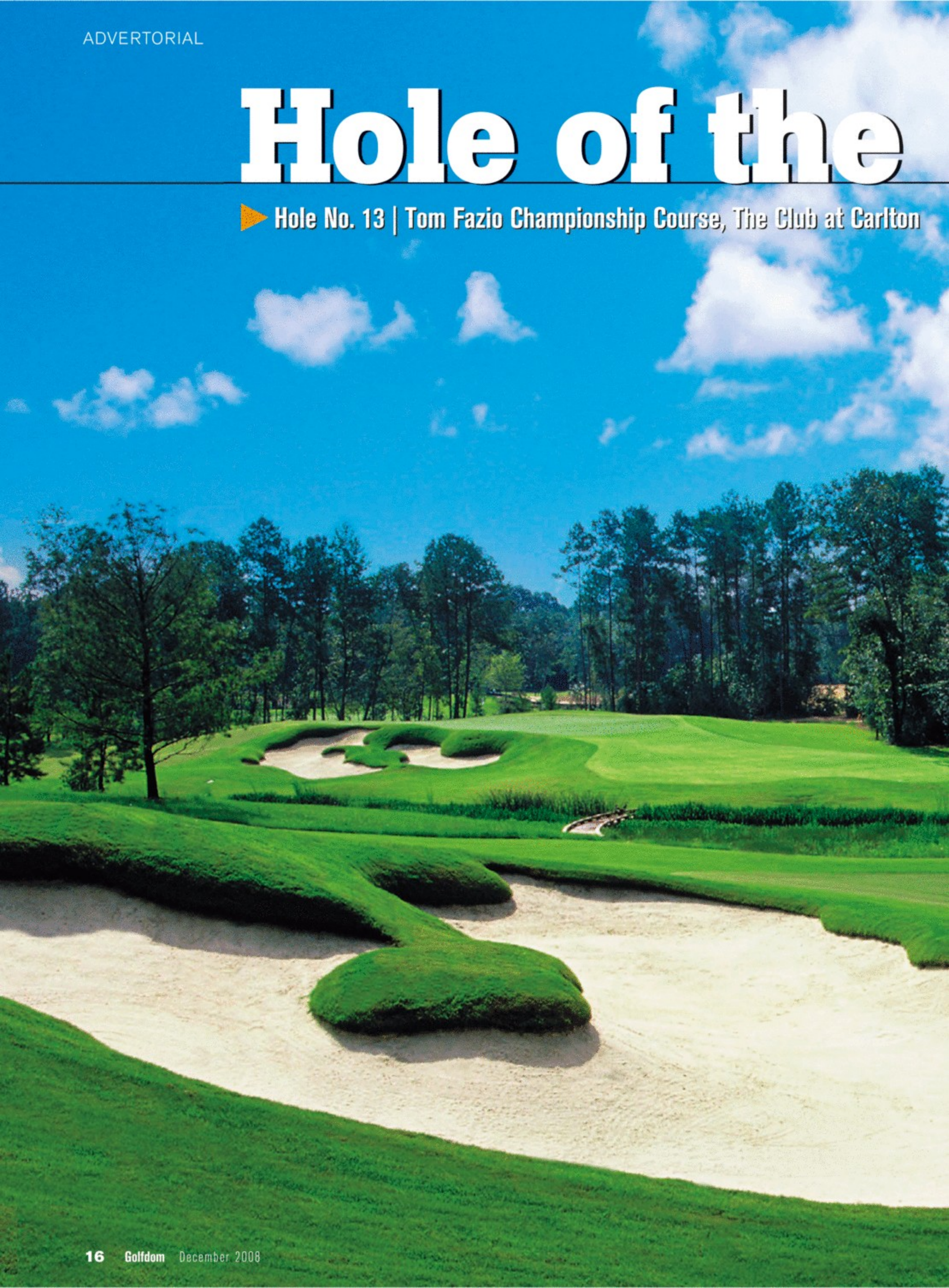
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Hole of the

▶ Hole No. 13 | Tom Fazio Championship Course, The Club at Carlton



Month

Woods | Houston, Texas

Hole Stats

Distance: 438 yards

Par 4

The Turf

Green: Zoysiagrass

Fairway: Zoysiagrass

Like many Gulf Coast courses, The Club at Carlton Woods was hit hard by Hurricane Ike's thrashing winds and rains. Its Tom Fazio Championship Course lost 85 trees and suffered mild turf damage. But Golf Course Superintendent Eric Bauer and his crew had the course back in play in just days by following a plan that included extra disease prevention before Ike arrived.

Bauer says experience proves that prevention — no matter the circumstances — is the best way to manage tournament-quality turf. "I have high expectations for my turf," he adds. "Since my motto for our course work is 'equal to or better than' other top-ranked courses, it's imperative that I have the right preventive products in rotation."



Bauer, who worked with Tom Fazio and his team to design the course in 2003, knew players would enjoy the feel of zoysiagrass. But he also knew the species was susceptible to routine zoysia patch pressure. And being the only course in southern Texas to feature zoysiagrass on a large scale, Bauer had few peers to turn to for advice.

After opening in 2005, Bauer sought a product that gave his course extended length of control without hamstringing his budget since all 46 acres needed treatment. In 2007, test plots revealed that Trinity® fungicide was the best zoysiagrass protector.

Bauer saw 45 days of 95 to 100 percent preventive control at a low application rate of 1 ounce per 1,000 square feet. "I'm getting three applications using less product without seeing any signs of patch diseases popping up all winter," Bauer says. "I'm saving my club nearly \$10,000 and my course is much cleaner."

The unblemished turf at hole No. 13 is testament to well-executed preventive application plans that satisfy members. But while the hole's clustered bunkers, natural marsh and severe drop off look pretty, they don't play nice — they demand that players plan and deliver from first swing to final putt. It's all about strategy playing the turf and managing the turf.



To learn more about Trinity® and BASF visit www.betterturf.com and www.basfturftalk.com.

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





People of the Year

BY LARRY AYLWARD AND DAVID FRABOTTA, GOLFDOM STAFF

Without these folks, the golf course industry would be minus a lot of integrity and character

The golf course industry needs these people. Without them — without their get-go, their creativity, their kindness, their passion, their fortitude and their humor — the industry would be greatly diminished.

Hence, it's time for *Golfdom* to distribute its annual awards to recognize certain golf industry individuals for their achievements. These awards are not for formal accomplishments, mind you. Our "People of the Year" awards are granted to those whose actions reflect character and integrity.

So, let's get to it. Please hold your applause until all awards have been presented. Congratulations to this year's honorees!

The "Stand Up And Fight" Award

MARK ESODA
CERTIFIED SUPERINTENDENT
ATLANTA COUNTRY CLUB

Mark Esoda has been to the meetings and he has heard the grumblings of golf course superintendents complaining among themselves about their outside image as water wasters. Esoda, certified superintendent for the Atlanta Country Club, realizes that superintendents have to stop griping among themselves and go on the offensive to convey the message to the public that golf courses are responsible irrigators.

Esoda is doing his part to communicate that message. Thanks in part to him, superintendents in Georgia are considered irriga-

tion experts. Esoda spearheaded an effort by the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association to enact Best Management Practices for irrigation, a move that has benefited the golf industry's image statewide. It wasn't an easy task and it took several years to accomplish, but 246 of the 256 Georgia GCSA member properties stepped up to participate in surveys that documented their water use and irrigation-reduction practices.

Participating golf courses disclosed how they effectively used irrigation systems, new grass varieties, wetting agents and plant



growth regulators to use less water. They also documented their usage patterns and areas where they decreased irrigation during the 2007 drought in the Southeast.

The Georgia GCSA partnered with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD) in the project, and their relationship has blossomed into one of respect. "[The GEPD] has realized we were not the water abuser they thought we were," Esoda says.

Esoda and the Georgia GCSA continue to take their message to the public. Esoda says the Georgia GCSA is telling its story to water councils, environmentalists and the general public.

"We want to bring them out to golf courses to show them that we don't waste resources like water," Esoda says.

The “Never Stop Learning” Award

SHAWN EMERSON
DIRECTOR OF AGRONOMY
DESERT MOUNTAIN GOLF CLUB

You might consider him an expert in his own right. He’s the director of agronomy for six championship-caliber, Jack Nicklaus-designed



golf courses with a crew of 180, including six superintendents and 12 assistant superintendents — a couple of whom are the sons of superintendents.

“You feel pretty good about what you are doing when other superintendents send you their sons,” says Shawn Emerson, the multi-tasking turfgrass guru of Desert Mountain Golf Club in Carefree, Ariz. He’s a son of a superintendent as well.

Emerson has probably grown more turfgrass than anyone in the country, considering he has overseeded about 70 golf courses and then transitioned them back to bermudagrass. He currently maintains 2,000 acres.

Despite his success, Emerson is never satisfied. He’s always looking for better answers to questions that arise at his golf course. So who does one of the most knowledgeable agronomists in the business turn to with his turfgrass questions? He uses the guy who wrote the book on turfgrass maintenance, of course.

Actually, longtime turfgrass professor and author James Beard has written a half-dozen books on turfgrass physiology, nutrition and management practices. His “Turf Management for Golf Courses” is commonly referred to as Beard’s Bible. Emerson also courts opinions from noted turfgrass professors Fred Yelverton and Rick Brandenburg of North Carolina State University.

The amazing part of the affiliation isn’t the combined credentials of his turfgrass consultants. The remarkable part of

the relationship is the constant collaboration that the agronomists share. Let’s face it: Emerson could sail this ship without quarterly visits from his Dream Team of turf consultants, but he wants to get better and excel in his profession.

The “Ecology of Scale” Award

CHRISTOPHER S. GRAY SR.
DIRECTOR OF GOLF OPERATIONS
MARVEL GOLF CLUB

He was caring for the environment before hybrid cars and global warming became part of everyday dialogue. His story is a coup for the golf industry as it tries to reinvent its public image from polluting, resource-wasting monopolies of green space to sanctuaries for native plants, wildlife and serenity.

Golf course superintendents, like hunters and anglers, have been basking in nature for centuries — long before hippies set out for the Red Rocks of Colorado and Sedona, Ariz., and even before the transcendentalists went to the woods.

Christopher S. Gray Sr. follows in the tradition of Old Tom Morris and the many superintendents before and after him who cared for creation above the conditions of the golf course. The only difference is that now, technology enables superintendents to provide amazing conditions and still leave the world as unscathed as they found it.

In return for his stewardship, Gray, the general manager and director of golf operations at Marvel Golf Club in Benton, Ky., was recognized as the overall winner of the 2007 GCSAA/Golf Digest Environmental Leaders in Golf Award, and he’s the first superintendent to win the overall category twice (also in 2003).



His ecological hat-trick oc-

curred earlier this year when he was named the 2008 recipient of Rain Bird’s Intelligent Use of Water Award. This award is special because he competed against non-golf entities, including the Council on the Environment of New York City, a group that worked with more than 30 community garden groups in neighborhoods throughout metropolitan New York to construct rainwater-harvesting systems.

Gray also powers his diesel turf equipment with vegetable oil and discarded fryer oil, and an oil burner that burns recycled oil from equipment heats the maintenance shop in the winter.

His achievements, by the way, are earned on a budget of about \$225,000.

The “Survivor” Award

PAUL VOYKIN
RETIRED SUPERINTENDENT
BRIARWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

The tribe has spoken, and Paul Voykin has been declared a survivor in this crazy world of golf course maintenance.

Voykin retired in September at age 77 after more than 47 years in the business at the same club, the Briarwood Country Club in Deerfield, Ill. That’s nearly half a century at a private club with 200 members and probably just as many opinions on how Voykin should have done his job.

Most superintendents aren’t supposed to last that long at private clubs, especially when one member tells you that the greens are perfect and another says they stink — on the same morning. Such superintendents often get “voted off,” as the saying goes.

How did Voykin manage to stay at the same place for so long, especially a private club? How did he not wear out his welcome? How did the members not



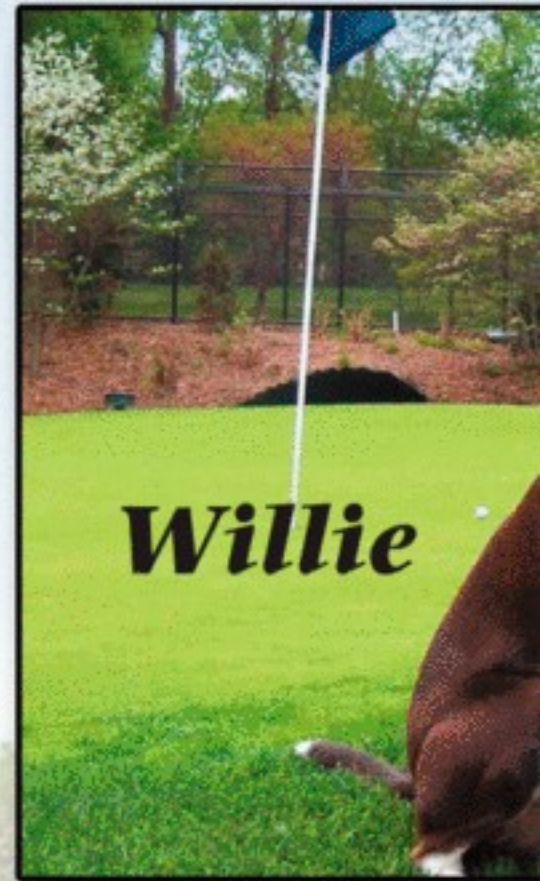
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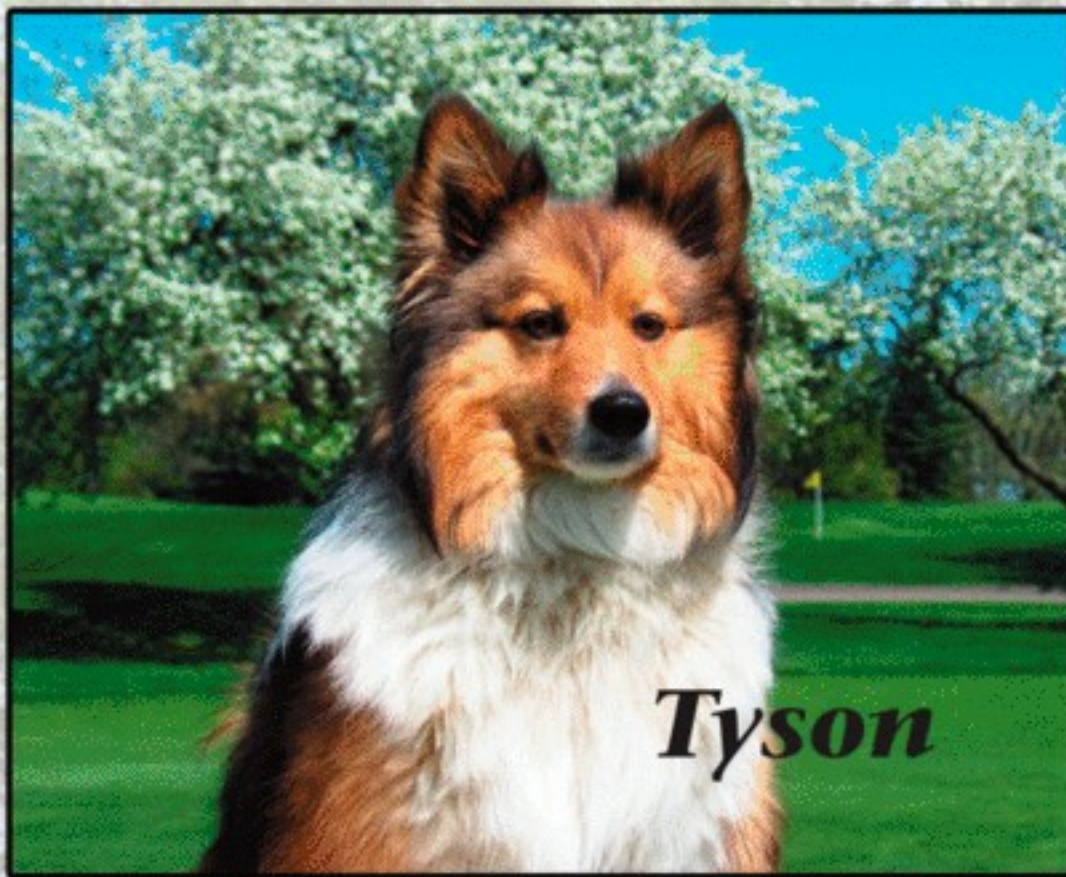
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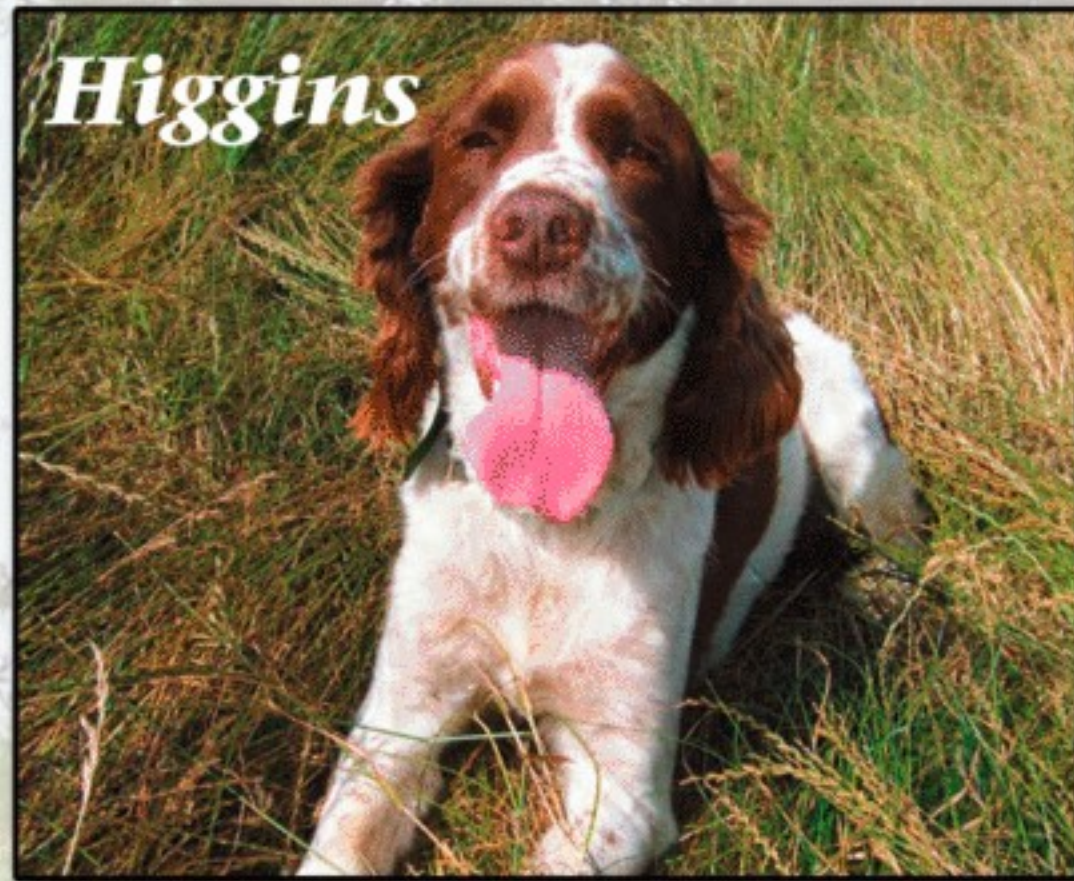
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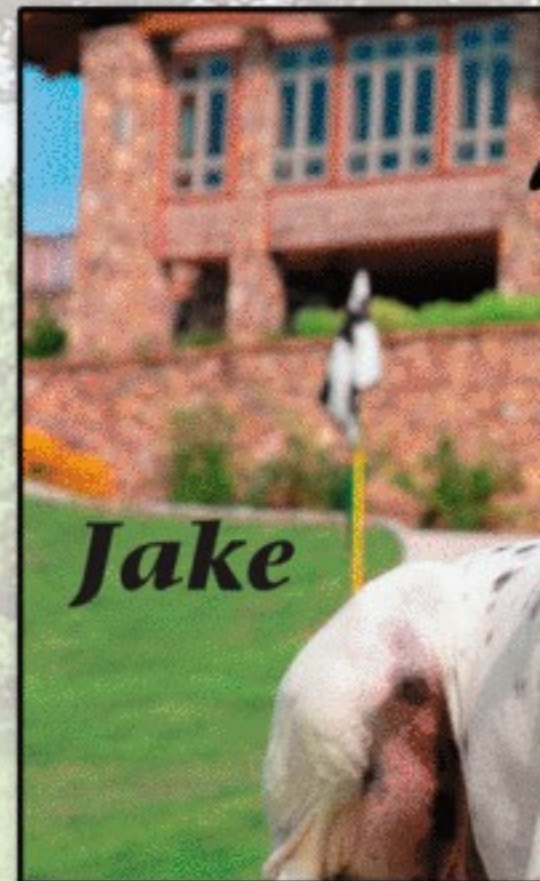
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