

Good Show-ing



► SoloRider exhibited this prototype single-rider car dressed in red, white and blue at the show in honor of those who have served in the U.S. military.

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of Clear Communication Co. “Unfortunately, while most superintendents are good at turf, bugs and pesticides, they could do a lot better job of communicating.”

Jousan spoke on improving communication skills as part of the GCSAA educational program.

Building better communications skills is not easy, he acknowledged. “Work at it. Make it a priority. Practice it. Approach it the same way you would to improve any life skill.”

He said that too many superintendents pull back when it comes time to speak up. They make building relationships one of the last things they do — not the first, as they should, he said.

His advice is to be visible around the course and around the clubhouse. Be known and draw people to you, he said.

Of course, superintendents will encounter difficult people. Jousan said the way to handle those situations is to draw them to you.

“Don’t avoid them,” he said. “Approach them. Get to know them and get them to know you. Get them on your side by explaining what you are doing so they understand.”

Team! Team! Team!

Superintendents need to appreciate the time and effort it takes to maintain an equipment fleet in optimum condition. Technicians, on the other hand, have to have a good understanding of what the superintendent is trying to accomplish with the turf.

“Without a turf background, it can be difficult for a technician,” says John Fulling, certified superintendent at Kalamazoo (Mich.) Country Club. But if forced to make the choice, Fulling said he would take a good mechanic over someone with a turf background. “It’s easier to teach a technician about turf than vice versa,” he said.

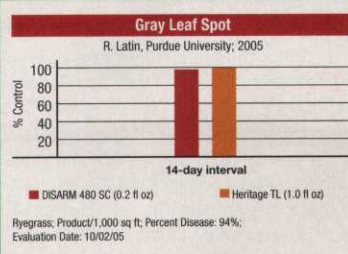
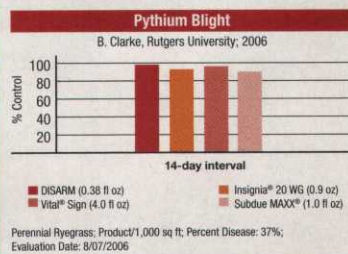
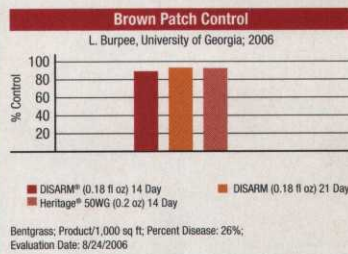
Communication is the key factor in a solid superintendent-technician rela-

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Good Show-ing

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tionship, said Henry "Skip" Heinz, the technician at Kalamazoo.

Fulling and Heinz led a free-form discussion during a seminar on improving superintendent-technician relationships. Heinz and Fulling agreed they can say just about anything about course management and operations to one another and that their open communication makes both of their lives easier and more productive.

'Customer mania'

Certified Superintendent John Miller didn't get to be the tournament agronomist for the LPGA Tour by not being a king when it comes to customer service. It's a good bet Miller knows all the tricks of solid customer service when it comes to dealing with golfers. So it made sense that Miller gave a half-day presentation, "Customer Service — A Superintendent's Perspective."

Miller says it's about having a "customer-mania" mentality. He told a hypothetical story about a superintendent who planned to spray his course one morning to get it ready for the member-guest tournament in a few

days. The day before he was to spray, the superintendent received a call from a member, who was allergic to pesticides. The member wanted to play the morning of the spraying and wondered if it would be OK. The superintendent, who had accommodated the golfer before in the same situation, was in a bit of a fix this time with having to prepare the course for the member-guest.

"What would you do if you were that superintendent?" Miller asked the audience.

Two attendees had good answers.

"Try to set up the golfer at another course nearby," one attendee said.

"Get the golfer an early tee time before the spraying," another attendee added.

Miller had made his point: Just don't tell the golfer that he can't play and be done with the matter. Explain to him the circumstances and try to take care of his needs.

Time to 'go all in' with grassroots

RISE is upping the ante 150 percent in the industry's high-stakes grassroots game.

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► The Orlando Magic cheerleaders were a big attraction at Floratine's party, which raised money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Maybe you saw them from behind the plants (see upper left of photograph).

► There's a New Prez in Town

Golfdom caught up with the new Golf Course Superintendents Association of America President David Downing II for a question-and-answer session. We set out to find out about Downing the man, not the manager.

Incidentally, Downing is a certified golf course superintendent and is vice president of operations/construction for Signature Golf Group in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Downing, an industry veteran and long-time member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, succeeds Ricky Heine, certified superintendent and general manager at The Golf Club Star Ranch in Austin, Texas, as president.



David Downing II

On to the interview:

▼ How many years have you worked in the golf industry?

A lot. I began as a summer helper in 1974. My first superintendent job was at the Williamsport (Pa.) Country Club in 1980.

▼ What's your favorite part of the job?

Solving problems and finding new ways of doing things that are better and more efficient or will return a better investment.

▼ Who has been the biggest influence on your career and why?

Wow, this could take a while. First and foremost God; we need to honor Him in all we do. After that my wife, Jo; parents; Drs. Joe Duich and Tom Watschke; Dan Fuller, greens chairman at Williamsport; Billy Buchanan, a USGA and PGA agronomist; certified superintendent Mike Smith, (my first boss and friend ever since); Dan Desmond; and Mark Kizziar. I have been blessed to have been mentored by a lot of really good people. I have also had a desire to listen, learn and then figure out how to apply what I have learned. Being able to network with people all over the country has been a terrific learning experience.

▼ What was the defining moment in your professional life?

I would not say there was a defining moment, but more a series of moments that prepared me for the next phase. All of it has helped prepare me for where I am at today with Signature Golf Group and becoming president of the GCSAA.

▼ What's the greatest invention the industry has seen?

Formalized education for the management of golf facilities. This education has driven all that is great about our business.

▼ If you could change something about the industry right now, what would you change?

More golfers playing more rounds!

▼ Describe yourself in one word?

I had to get some help with this one. My wife Jo said "grounded." My youngest son Alex said "dedicated." One of his friends said "coach." One other word I thought of was "listener."

▼ What is your favorite hobby and why?

Serving, whether it's for the GCSAA, coaching kids in baseball or basketball, or doing something for our church, I enjoy doing it and it helps refresh me. Right now GCSAA is my main hobby. It is important for people to serve each other. We've become too much of an "about me" society.

▼ What is your favorite vacation spot?

Anywhere I can enjoy time with my family. We have a very beautiful and varied country, and being able to visit different areas and enjoy what God created is great.

▼ What is your favorite golf course besides your own?

Wow, there are a lot of courses that I like. I really have had the pleasure of playing and seeing some of the best. To be honest, I do not have a favorite. But having been involved in the construction of 10 courses, I've really learned to appreciate the nuances of course design.

▼ It's your last day on Earth. What would you do?

Spend it with my wife, Jo.

▼ I hope to be remembered as:

Someone who cared.

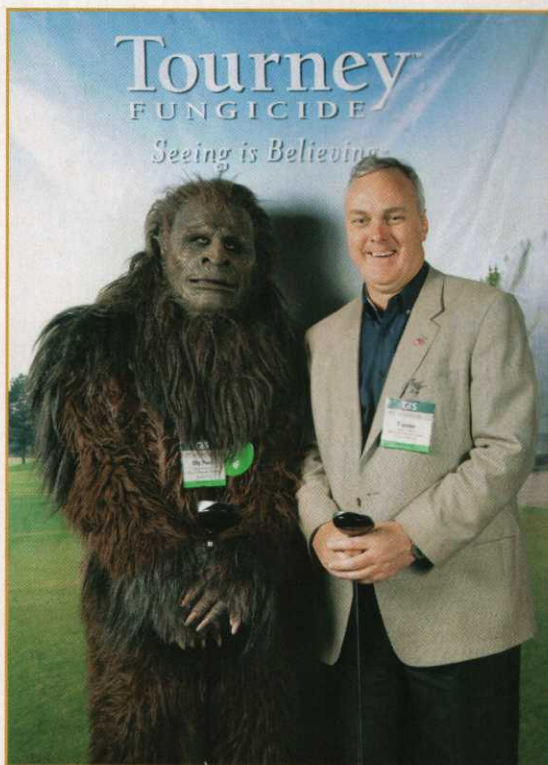


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► What, me scared? Valent Professional Products' President Trevor Thorley posed with Bigfoot, who has been the star of the company's recent ad campaign, at the company's booth. If Bigfoot is 7-foot-5 as they say, that should put Thorley about 7-foot-7, according to this picture.

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The gutsy call to action came at the organization's annual Industry Grassroots Breakfast held in conjunction with the show.

After a few years of steady growth, RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) has about 400 grassroots members. The organization is pleased with the progress, but is betting big time that the industry can add at least 600 more soldiers to its army of industry advocates working at the local, state and national levels.

"This 1,000 grassroots members by 2009 is a hard-line number," underlined Karen Reardon, RISE director of communications and grassroots, at the Jan. 31 gathering at Orlando's Rosen Centre Hotel. "Allen James (RISE president) is going to hold our feet to the fire on this one."

Josh Weeks, Bayer CropScience vice president and chairman of the RISE governing board, said the grassroots membership

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DOG OF THE YEAR



On behalf of Lebanon Turf, thank you for helping make our 2008 Dog Calendar a success. We appreciate those who stopped by our booth at the Golf Industry Show to cast their vote. While it was a close race with runner-up dog, Ryder, owed by David Phipps of Stone Creek Golf Club in Oregon City, OR, Lebanon Turf is proud to announce the 2008 Dog of the Year is Bandit, owned by Brian Minemier of Burlington County Country Club in Mt. Laurel, NJ. Bandit, our March dog, is a nine-year old yellow labrador and a constant fixture on the golf course. He enjoys long rides on the golf car and assists in geese and squirrel removal. As Dog of the Year, Bandit's owner will receive \$2,000 for his local golf course association and \$500 for Brian and Bandit to spend together. Congratulations Bandit and Brian!

Look for information in the April issue about the 2009 calendar!



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Gray Leaf Spot isn't pretty. It strikes quickly, affecting young ryegrass seedlings first with gray-to-brown lesions, often contorting tender blades into fishhook shapes. With prolonged hot, humid weather, large, mature turf areas can be lost to this dreaded disease.

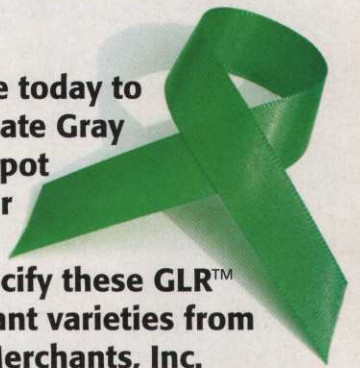
In existing, older ryegrass turfs, Gray Leaf Spot can be addressed by applying a preventive fungicide, but once the pathogen has developed, little or nothing can cure it.

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► See the smile on Steve Mona's face? The Toro folks surprised Mona with a special award for his service. That's CEO Michael Hoffman presenting it to a grinning Mona.

Good Showing

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surge is required for the industry to secure its rightful place in the growing green movement. RISE's James seconded the notion.

"We're being left behind in the green sustainability movement," James said. "In fact, we're being looked at as the demon in this one."

The shifting political landscape also has created an uphill battle, one that James expects to mount in the coming years. James noted that Republicans are down 32 representatives in the House of Representatives and have 19 seats up for grabs due to retiring representatives. The picture in the Senate isn't much better, with Democrats up two seats and 23 of the 49 Republican senators seeking re-election.

"We want all companies to feel an obligation — not just an opportunity — to step up, volunteer and join us today in our grassroots efforts," James said. "Right now, we're not getting a lot of support from either side of the House and Senate. Fewer and fewer will stand up and defend us publicly. More than ever before, we need all the help we can get."

Goodbye and good luck, Steve Mona

Next year, Steve Mona will attend the GIS as CEO of the World Golf Foundation. At the President's Reception, a "special farewell" was held to honor Mona, who served as the CEO of the GCSAA for 14 years.

"You know, you raised our boat, baby," Sean Hoolehan, who wrapped up his term on the GCSAA Board of Directors during the meeting, told Mona during his speech.

During his speech, outgoing GCSAA President Ricky Heine looked at Mona sitting in the first row and said, "Steve, you've been a rock for this foundation."

Golfdom would like to thank Mona for his help over the years and wish him the best in his new endeavor.

Word is the GCSAA has narrowed its search to four candidates to replace Mona, whose last day was Feb. 29. A decision and announcement of the new GCSAA CEO is expected in early to mid-March, but may have come by the time you read this. ■

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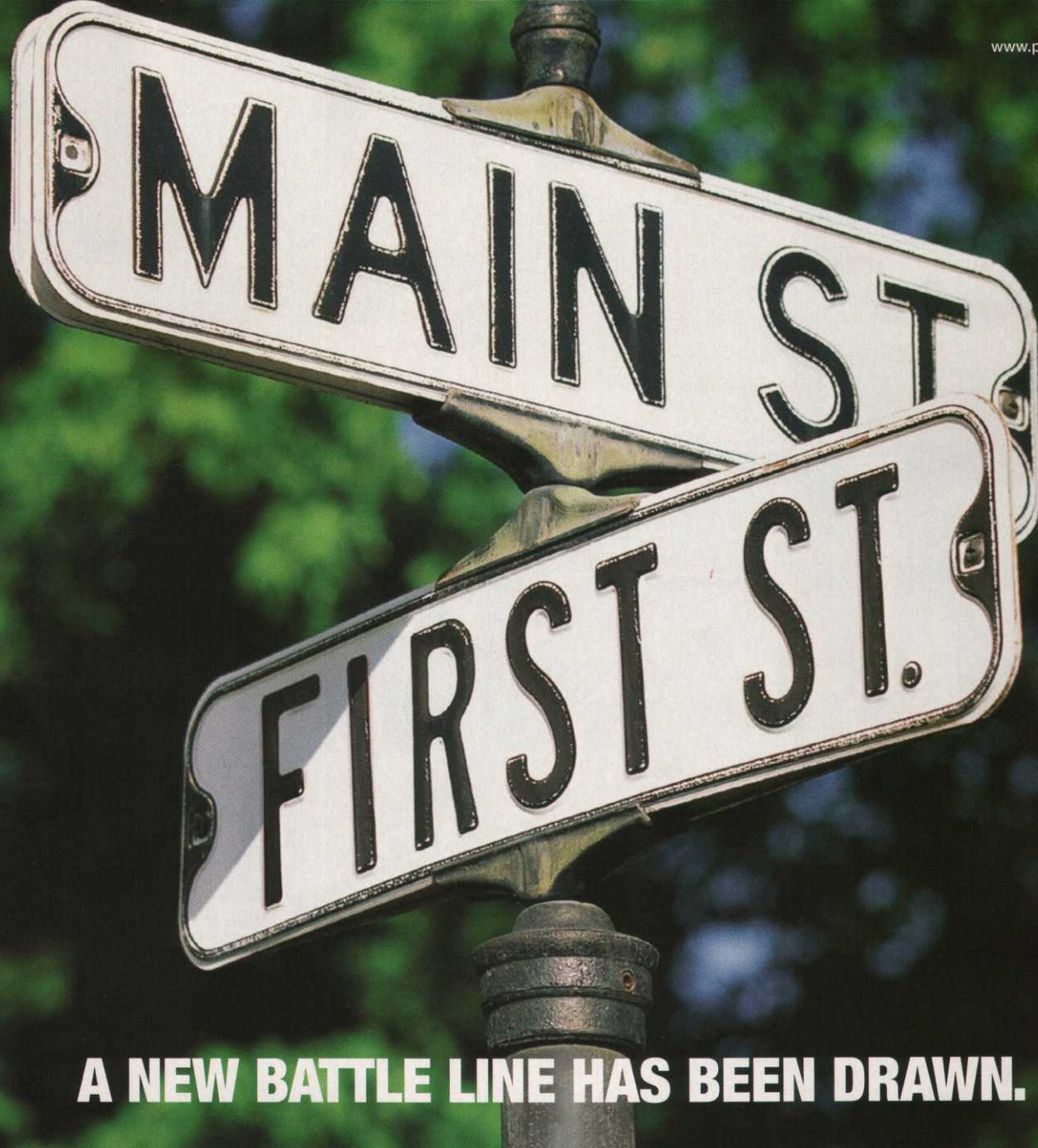
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PGRs Prevail

About three of four turfgrass managers rely on growth regulators for better conditions and labor savings

BY DAVID FRABOTTA, SENIOR EDITOR

Business for plant growth regulators is booming. Once viewed as a luxury among superintendents with large budgets less than a decade ago, the chemical innovation has offered superintendents ways to produce healthier plants, denser turfgrass, greener color and overall more consistent conditions for golfers.

Subsequently, many turfgrass managers are using PGRs more readily than they did just a few years ago.

"PGRs are really used by close to 75 percent of golf courses at least on tees and greens," says John Spaulding, product manager for PBI/Gordon. "And many are using them on roughs and other areas of the golf course."

Once relegated to a part of most herbicide budgets, they've earned their own line item in the budgeting process. Demand, in large part, is being fueled by golfer expectations. PGRs allow superintendents to maintain

shorter mowing heights on greens because they reduce plant stress. And fewer clippings in fairways means fewer clumps inhibiting a golfer's lie. Their good track record has prompted many to start using PGRs darn near wall to wall.

"Many of the courses that have a large budget are really using them on greens, fairways and also roughs," says Roger Storey, vice president of turf and ornamentals for SePRO. "Even courses with limited budgets are looking at the value they bring because of labor savings and improving the quality of turf."

The once-overlooked labor savings that facilities might realize is a key driver in widespread adoption at lower-budget courses, sources say. On greens, PGRs create more consistent conditions by regulating blade growth, thereby allowing mowers to be more efficient and perhaps reduce the need for double-cutting on some days.

Those benefits might not eliminate tasks,

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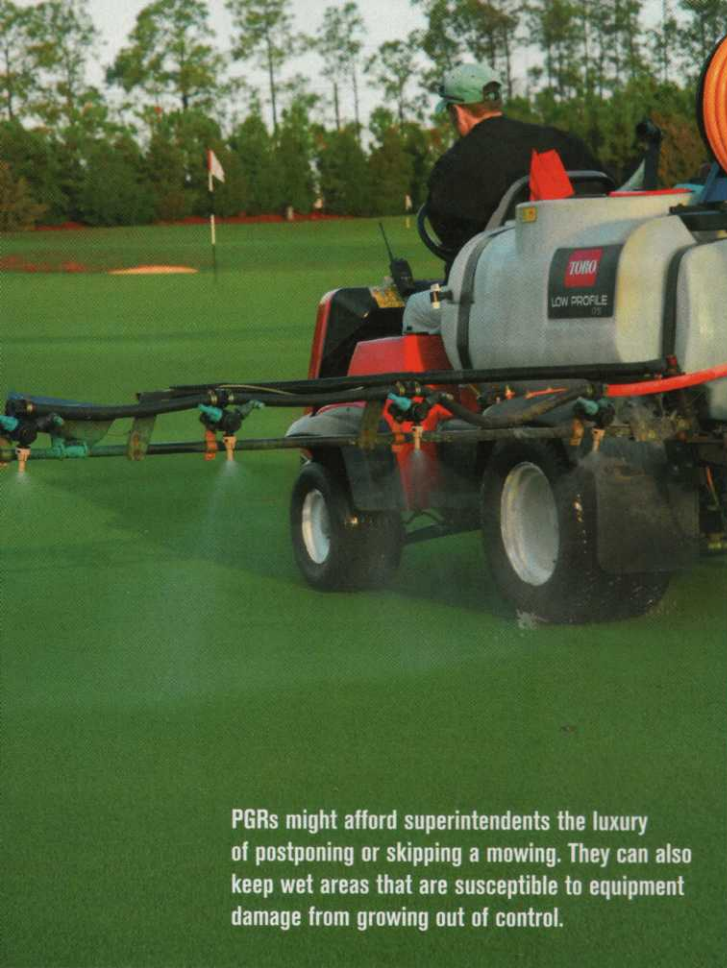
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Part of the game.



PGRs might afford superintendents the luxury of postponing or skipping a mowing. They can also keep wet areas that are susceptible to equipment damage from growing out of control.

PGRs Prevail

Continued from page 58

but they can shorten the duration needed to perform a slew of turfgrass maintenance operations. As labor-strapped superintendents increasingly are asked to improve conditioning with a modestly increasing budget, every slight time savings can result in directing more labor to high-profile areas of the golf course.

“If superintendents use PGRs, they may only need to mow every other day,” says Ben Cicora, herbicides business manager for Bayer Environmental Science. “They can then focus on other aspects of the course maintenance.”

But it’s difficult to skip mowing altogether on greens and fairways at some facilities, especially at high-end clubs that keep a tight rein on greenspeed and consistency. But that might not apply to roughs. Although it might be difficult to justify an extra expense for out-of-play areas, PGRs might afford superintendents the luxury of postponing or eliminating a scheduled mowing. Used as a preventive before a sustained rain or expected saturation, growth regulators can keep areas manageable in a wet duration when equipment might damage the turfgrass.

“Lower-end courses are realizing some labor benefits with reduced clippings and growth. A lot of times you can skip a mowing in the rough,” says Dave Ravel, golf market manager for Syngenta. “But it’s the repeated applications, as often as

With pesticide regulation and water issues cited as turfgrass managers’ most prominent challenges, PGRs provide a promising environmental message for the community.

10 to 14 days, that really makes a difference.”

Boosting application frequency could generate better results for superintendents already trying PGRs on a limited basis. They can be woven into pest management strategies as well because many PGRs provide some *Poa annua* control and seedhead suppression (visit the Journal of Applied Turfgrass Science [www.plantmanagementnetwork.org] for studies on PGRs’ efficacy of *Poa* suppression). Of course, overall healthier turf reduces disease risk and insect damage, too. With pesticide regulation and water issues cited as turf managers’ most prominent challenges, manufacturers say there is a promising environmental angle that can be communicated with members and realized in maintenance practices.

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