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Off The Fringe

One ... Make That Two ... for the Golfing Ages



Rick Miles (right) and Kevin Ritter might want to buy a few lottery tickets together. Or head to the Las Vegas casinos together. Good things happen when Miles and Ritter, who are superintendent and assistant superintendent of Westview Golf Course in Quincy, Ill., are together.

On June 30, for instance, Miles and Ritter each aced the 176-yard, seventh hole. And get this: They were playing in the same foursome and riding in the same golf car. And get this: They did it back to back!

Ritter, using a 4-iron, was the first to ace it. Miles followed with a 6-iron.

It was Ritter's first hole-in-one and it was Miles' fourth ace. Odds of this happening are reportedly 17 million to one.

"All four of us went nuts after the first one, which took about five minutes of high fives," Miles says.

After the celebrating, Miles joked to Ritter that he would follow with his own ace. And when he hit his tee shot . . .

"I knew it had a chance," he says, "and when it hit the stick and dropped in, everyone went numb. We couldn't believe what we just witnessed. I had to have Kevin pinch me to see if I was dreaming." ■

MSMA — Continued from page 10

Yelverton pointed out that research shows MSMA has low mobility and strongly absorbs into soil. "From an environmental standpoint, it's safe," he added.

Poa control was also a popular topic of discussion at the meeting. Why is *Poa annua* such a problem, asked Bert McCarty, professor of horticulture at Clemson University. "Because there are so many biotypes," he answered.

"Of course, the [superintendents] up North have pretty much given up [on controlling *Poa annua*]," McCarty said. "But down South we're still trying to fight it, whether it's in bentgrass, overseeded ryegrass or overseeded *Poa trivialis*."

In his seminar on *Poa*, Yelverton says he has found a herbicide — amicarbazone — that controls the pesky weed on bentgrass pretty darn well. "I can tell you that it's the best thing I've seen in terms of herbicides in awhile [to control *Poa*]," Yelverton said of amicarbazone, which is not currently available in the United States.

There are keys to the herbicide's success, however. It should not be applied in the late summer or early fall when bentgrass' root structure is at its weakest, Yelverton said. Yelverton tested amicarbazone on perennial *Poa annua* in the spring and results were much better because the bentgrass' root structure was much healthier and deeper. He applied amicarbazone (2.6 ounces per acre) on Crenshaw bentgrass on March 28 and April 17 on a golf course in Wilmington, N.C. "We had 100 percent perennial *Poa annua* control, and perennial *Poa annua* is the tough stuff," Yelverton said. "The superintendent at the course went nuts."

Yelverton says amicarbazone performed well on A-1, A-4 and L-93 bentgrass when applied in the spring. However, Yelverton said other tests revealed that the Penncross bentgrass variety is not tolerant to amicarbazone in the spring or fall.

"I think [amicarbazone] has potential," Yelverton concluded. "It's something to work on." ■

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Hole of the

▶ Hole No. 13 | Mira Vista Country Club | Fort Worth, Texas



Month

Hole Stats

Distance: 417 yards

Par 4

The Turf

Green: *Tifeagle*

Fairway: *Tifway 419*
Bermudagrass

The scenic 150-foot elevation changes, four gleaming lakes and Trinity River at Mira Vista Country Club are a stunning blend of course architect, Jay Morrish's, appreciation of nature's role in the game, and professional golfer Tom Weiskoph's grasp on the mental and physical skill required to beat a course.

Mira Vista provokes players through risk-reward shots and traditional challenges. "There are severely tree lined and open holes," said course superintendent, Mike Epps, who has worked at the club since 2003. "The diversity keeps players intensely engaged."

A considerable course challenge is Hole No. 13. A fairway slope helps to direct the tee shot toward aiming bunkers, whereas a second shot must travel uphill to a three-level green.

"It's a well-designed, challenging hole, but it's fair," Epps said. "It rewards thoughtful players."

For Epps and his maintenance crew of 28, achieving successful pest control on 22-year-old greens is crucial in helping the club attain its goal of hosting another USGA Championship in the coming decade.

"Our crew's goal is to offer quality on a daily

basis," Epps said. "For the past two years we've been able to get consistent, reliable control players need on putting surfaces using Insignia® fungicide to treat fairy ring disease."

Epps uses Insignia at 0.4 oz. per 1,000 square feet to prevent fairy ring's dark, delineating rings from appearing on greens. For breakouts, Epps turns to the label rate for curative control.

"Insignia works nicely in our spring and fall programs," said Epps. "Because of the economical application rate and price, I am able to apply it on every putting surface—I'm hooked."

Epps educates and engages members in behind-the-scenes looks at healthy turf.

"I tell members that if they ride the course with me, I'll buy the coffee," he said. "It shows them there's more to growing turf than pushing a mower—it's the people that create results."

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



Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

If I didn't know better, I'd think golf writers were stumped about what to write with Tiger on the bench the rest of the year. It's not like there's not a template: Basketball lost Michael Jordan, and NASCAR lost Dale Earnhardt. Others filled the void in no time at all.

The sports section is a lot like the entertainment section, and golf writers seem to dwell on Tiger's knee rehab and John Daly's high jinx rather than pertinent issues like water restrictions, which affect all golfers from touring professionals to the municipal hackers. So what's more important — secret random drug testing for golf pros or turning golf courses into parched deserts?

Just look at the green industry in Georgia and the two-year quagmire that the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association went through to create Water Conservation Best Management Practices. Despite its efforts, golf courses around Atlanta could only water greens and tees. Quite a severe penalty when other businesses were asked to only cut back 10 percent. Once again, the perception of golf as a rich man's game prevailed instead of considering golf as a viable sports and leisure industry that supports tourism and local business. It's hard to grow the game when you can't grow the grass.

Golf always seems to bear the brunt of water restrictions because of the old misconception that golf courses are big water users. Rather than dispel that myth, water management authorities hide from public reaction by assigning disproportionate water restrictions on our industry. Since 1995, when I began tracking golf course water use in Florida — which has more courses than any other state — golf irrigation has remained around 3 percent of the total fresh water (ground and surface) used for irrigation. In Georgia, golf water use was only .85 percent. When you force the smallest users to cut back, you don't save that much water at the pump. But it sounds good in the media.

I can't speak for all states, but here are the major water user groups in Florida: agriculture (48 percent); public supply (30 percent — half of which is estimated to be used on outdoor watering); industry, business, commercial (8

Public Opinion Still Drives Water Woes

BY JOEL JACKSON



IT'S HARD TO
GROW THE GAME
WHEN YOU CAN'T
GROW THE GRASS

percent), power generation (7 percent), and recreation (5 percent — golf use is estimated as two-thirds of recreation or 3 percent); private domestic wells (2 percent).

The lowest hanging fruit for water savings is in the outdoor watering use (15 percent) in the public supply sector, but restriction enforcement is complicated when dealing with multiple utilities and jurisdictions. We have all seen the water wasted by improper operation and maintenance of residential, commercial and municipal irrigation systems. Adding insult to injury are the wasteful and often environmentally damaging disposal practices for treated wastewater.

When it comes to water use, the golf industry applies, conserves, recycles, recharges, filters and reuses water more efficiently than most other water users. Compare the 5 million acres of lawns and landscapes with the 140,000 acres of irrigated golf turf in Florida. Then consider that golf contributes \$5 billion in economic impact to Florida's economy. Certainly that must be worth a larger slice of the irrigation pie.

Until governments and utilities invest in improvements in the infrastructure needed to recycle water for irrigation and mandate efficient landscape and irrigation designs, turning off the spigots to golf courses is not a productive solution. The water savings are small, but the effects on the local economy and related businesses can be huge.

I hope the recent National Golf Day event in Washington and organized state golf alliances will be able to generate more positive media stories about the positive economic and environmental aspects of this great game that you can play for a lifetime. Waterless golf doesn't pay off for anyone, including sports writers.

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

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When Performance Matters.TM

Working with behavioral scientists at the University of Phoenix, I have devised a series of carefully crafted questions that will help determine whether you should be seeking employment elsewhere.

For anyone in the golf industry who has disavowed the use of astrologers or psychics in favor of gut instincts, this exam provides a fast and simple way to determine if the new boss is going to make your life hell. While the test is about green chairmen this time, the scientists see this exam as a practical application for better understanding superiors in all fields of golf course maintenance and design.

Here's how it works.

If the answer to any of the following questions is "yes," expect possible conflict. Two "yes" answers, and resume refreshing is recommended. Three "yes" answers should compel you to start scouring job listings immediately, while four or more "yes" replies suggest that you start cleaning out your desk ASAP.

Good luck!

Question 1: Does your new boss speak of wanting to play a pro-am round with Phil Mickelson? If the answer is an enthusiastic "yes" and he mentions Phil's devotion to family and Exxon-Mobil, count it as three "yes" votes.

Question 2: Does the new man in charge either A) smoke cigars in your presence, B) spit regularly, C) try in any way to act like a cowboy while either, 1) wearing a \$150 golf shirt 2) typing on a Blackberry or 3) driving a car valued at more than \$75,000? ("Yes" to any combination counts as one "yes.")

Question 3: Has the new man in charge called more than two times on a non-emergency basis in the same day?

Question 4: Does he only take a golf car when he plays golf? (Medical exemptions are accepted only in the event of lost limbs or having been operated on more than three times.)

Question 5: Is the new boss either, A)

Answer 'Yes' and You're in Trouble

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



HAS YOUR NEW
BOSS EVER ASKED
WHERE HE COULD
BUY HIS OWN
STIMPMETER?

retired, B) working from home near the course or, C) in-between jobs? ("Yes" to more than two counts as five.)

Question 6: Does the new chairman speak of his love for Harley Davidson motorcycles only to reveal that he has a bike shipped to Sturgis, S.D., for the annual rally? (If he ships the bike, that counts as six "yes" answers.)

Question 7: Has the new man in charge ever looked at your retro half-and-half fairway cut style and asked why mowers missed part of the hole?

Question 8: Has he ever asked where he could buy, A) his own Stimpmeter or, B) his own TruFirm green firmness measuring device, the relatively new gadget developed by the USGA's Matt Pringle for use at major championships but not yet available on the market? One "yes" for the Stimpmeter request, four "yeses" if he asks about TruFirm.

Question 9: Does he claim to be a vegetarian out of protest for animal cruelty while wearing alligator-skin Footjoys or driving a car with leather seats?

Question 10: Has he ever admitted to reading golf magazine instruction? (Worth one "yes.") If he's rumored to have a collection of all of Golf Magazine's tips filed in orderly fashion, that's the equivalent of five "yes" replies.

Question 11: Have you ever heard the new honcho reveal the exact number of golf architecture books he owns or has read?

Question 12: Does his spouse, partner, girlfriend, life partner or beloved niece play golf? If so, that's worth six "yes" answers. If she beats him regularly or has a lower handicap than him, then put down your pen immediately and flee the building.

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I don't need to tell anyone what the impact of rising oil prices is having on the golf business in general and specifically on maintenance budgets. I don't pretend to be an expert on predicting where the business of golf is going, but I do know that the business faces a challenging time. However, there will be no shortage of simplistic answers to these challenges that will be based on the "good old days."

We will be faced with ideas such as, "We need to maintain all of our golf courses like the old links courses," or "I remember when we mowed greens at above one-fourth of an inch three times a week and the golfers were happy" (they were also happy to pay only \$2.50 for a round of golf).

Given my short, oversimplified diatribe, I have decided to share my new simple idea, although in reality it is an old idea for building a new type of green. I'm talking about a sand green. I came across the idea when I was in Dubai last fall, where it was a pleasure to visit a "desert golf course." Desert golf courses have sand greens. Interestingly, they also have sand tees, fairways and roughs. I'm still having a hard time visualizing those bunkers, but why digress. For me, I had never been on a sand green until then, but it was pretty cool and seemed to require little maintenance. Additionally, there is a rich history to sand greens.

It is well known that Pinehurst No. 2 had sand greens prior to 1935. What may not be known is that some famous people have played on sand greens. Take, for instance, the 1908 New York Times with the headline, "Augusta Welcomes Taft; President-Elect Finds Sand Greens Troublesome on Golf Links." The article reported that then President-elect William H. Taft immediately played a round of golf upon arriving in Augusta and pronounced that the golf course was "much to his liking, although he said he would have to become familiar with the sand greens, which were a little difficult after his play on grass."

Talk about a simpler time.

Besides the potential for sand greens to be more difficult to play, I found the rules for playing on sand greens can be complicated. For example, read this from a list of local rules: "A fellow competitor or the opponent of the last player

Simple Approach Is Not Always So Easy

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



IT MIGHT APPEAR
THE MAINTENANCE
AND CONSTRUCTION
OF SAND GREENS
WOULD BE EASY,
LOW COST AND
ENVIRONMENTALLY
FRIENDLY

to hole out shall cause the sand within three smoother widths of the hole to be smoothed, with the smoother edge of the implement I provided (not the rake top)." I will not bother you with the remaining etiquette, definitions and actual rules. It makes the United States Golf Association's Decisions on the Rules of Golf read like a "People" magazine article.

It might appear the maintenance and construction of sand greens would be easy, low cost and environmentally friendly. But I came across a 1931 article entitled, "How We Built Our Oiled Sand Greens," that tells otherwise. I was struck by the following quote in the article: "Our sand greens are 42 feet in diameter and are built on the native soil. In rebuilding them, three barrels of rather heavy fuel oil are first put in the base and allowed to soak in for a few days in order to kill the vegetation and to help keep the base from absorbing the oil out of the sand on the greens."

I don't think the Environmental Protection Agency would look favorably on dumping used motor oil on the soil. Other types of oils, such as soybean-based oil, coconut oil and vegetable oil could be tried, but a problem with them is the tremendous amount of weed pressure they can cause.

In areas where it rains, runoff and erosion can also be a problem on sand greens. This brings me to drainage of the green, how to set the cup (don't have to worry about pin placements) and other maintenance requirements, but those are discussions for another day.

Actually, my enthusiasm for my new idea is not as high as it was earlier in this column. I'm sure there is a place for sand greens, but simplistic answers never seem to be simple.

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