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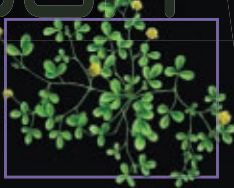
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GCSAA'S LYMAN SAYS NGF NUMBERS TELL A SORDID TALE OF THE GOLF MARKET

By Marty Whitford, Contributing Editor

Which do you want first — the good news or bad? Given the state of the economy, perhaps it's best to tee off with a few positive signs.

The good news is the number of rounds played on U.S. courses increased 0.5 percent from January through September 2009 compared to the same time last year. Rounds played at public-access courses led the way with a 0.8 percent climb.

Another sweet spot: Four times as many golf courses opened in the United States in 2008 than did in 2007. That's pretty much the best of the good stuff that Greg Lyman, environmental programs director for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), told members of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) at the organization's recent meeting in Or-



lando. RISE's more than 200 members represent major pesticide, fungicide, herbicide and fertilizer manufacturers, formulators and distributors.

Now for the golf market's nasty slice, according to Lyman, who sourced the National Golf Foundation as the generator of the statistics used in his presentation:

- Rounds played at private golf courses in the United States declined 0.7 percent in the first nine months of 2009.
- Although new course openings quadrupled last year, that statistic is skewed by the meager 8.5 recorded course openings in 2007 — 243.5 less golf courses than opened in 2001.
- Private facilities' membership, on average, fell 13 percent and rounds played at such clubs dropped 17 percent last year.
- An estimated 10 percent to 20 percent of the nation's about 4,400 private golf facilities are "at risk" with this group, averaging a 29 percent drop in members and 22 percent decline in rounds played last year.
- 57 percent of these "at risk" private golf courses operated at a loss in 2008.

"It has been a little rough the past few years, but the golf market appears to have stabilized for the most part — except for, perhaps, a few more corrections looming on the private side," Lyman concluded. "I think we'll see more private clubs converting to public courses, in the short term, to facilitate matters." ■

Whitford is Editor-in-Chief of Landscape Management, Golfdom's sister publication.

PHOTO COURTESY: MARTY WHITFORD



December
THIS MONTH'S HEALTH TIP

More guests visit around the holidays, and they add to the noise, confusion and stress to your dog and take him out of his routine. Dogs can be stepped on, and 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.

Berkley. His owner is David Callahan, assistant superintendent at Hidden Valley Country Club in Salem, Va. (Photo by: David Callahan)



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Hole of the

▶ Hole No. 12 | West Seattle Golf Course | Seattle, WA



Month

Hole Stats

Distance: 515 yards

Par 5

The Turf

Greens: Poa annua

Fairways: Poa annua,
Bentgrass, Ryegrass and
Annual Bluegrass mixture

Recognized as one of the Northwest's best municipal courses, West Seattle Golf Course's bunkered greens, tree-lined fairways and meandering creek have enhanced the urban landscape for 70 years.

Longfellow Creek guards No. 12's first 300 yards on the right, while fairway bunkers line the left. An elevated, back-to-front sloping green creates a blind chip shot that's tough to land. "Hole 12 can be a heartbreaker," said superintendent John Price, who's worked at the course for 25 years. "The drive needs to thread the tight corridor of trees as it crosses Longfellow Creek — a slight error in either direction results in a big number."

West Seattle GC's urban location sets it apart from traditional courses, but the proximity also impacts maintenance decisions. As an entity of the city park system, the course is subject to pesticide reduction and maintenance restrictions enacted in 1999.

"We've worked with partners, including BASF, to create a low-use pest management program that offers exceptional performance while meeting our environmental needs," Price said. "BASF products and advice help us make cost-saving, yet efficacious improvements that are essential to our course's existence."

Trinity® fungicide helps Price control his biggest disease threat — anthracnose — caused by cold, wet conditions. Price applies Trinity preventively in May and June at the 1.0 ounce per 1,000 square feet rate with an additional application in early November using 0.5 ounces per 1,000 square feet.

"I'm very confident in Trinity's performance and chemistry," Price said. "Our intense monitoring shows Trinity does its job without impacting off-target aspects of our course."

Price proactively communicates the course's cultural and chemical practices to golfers and community members. "Our whole industry needs openness," he said. "I lead public forums on the science behind responsible chemistries and recent innovations used to keep turf healthy. These forums reassure the public that we're not engaged in irresponsible pesticide use and West Seattle is better off because of our open approach."

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



Perhaps you've heard the old saying that "silence is consent!" It's true. If you don't take the time to write your legislators at all levels of government on occasion about issues that affect your private property or your profession, the politicians will have no idea what's happening on Main Street, your golf course or your own front yard.

We elect politicians to represent us all — it's a republic, not a democracy. If you don't tell them about your special needs for your private property rights or issues facing golf course management, who will?

In the case of issues, numbers count and hundreds and thousands of letters and e-mails laying out fair, common-sense, science-based positions carry some weight. But it's all for naught unless you write it, stamp it and send it.

We can all sit around and gripe at our local chapter meetings, but until you take the step of writing your commissioner, state senator or U.S. congressperson, you're just spinning your wheels and getting thrown under the bus by activists and bureaucrats who shout "the sky is falling" while the media joins in with shoddy reporting of all sides on an issue.

I'll admit I'm in a constant state of flux trying to balance idealism, realism, optimism and that ever-popular pessimism about the intelligence and honesty of our elected "leaders" and our representative government.

One thing I know is if I don't make the attempt to tell them about what's bugging me and where I think the Environmental Protection Agency and others are off base on some key issues, then I'm not even exercising my rights under our system of governance.

Having been involved in association work now for more than 10 years, I know how hard it is to get members to meetings, much less to write personal letters to their legislators.

Here's a tip I heard from our lobbyist at our last board meeting. He said in lieu of having a Mr. Smith Goes to Washington moment of hundreds of bags of mail being

Time to Get in a Politician's Ear

BY JOEL JACKSON



IF YOU DON'T TELL
THEM ABOUT YOUR
SPECIAL NEEDS,
WHO WILL?

dumped on Congress' doorstep, each chapter should write a letter to each U.S. senator from its state and to the U.S. representative from each chapter's region. Each chapter president and/or the board should sign the letter, as well as list every name of the chapter's members and their golf courses. It's a bit of a proxy letter, but it does highlight the number of people affected by the issue in question.

I might suggest that, when it comes to the House of Representatives, you use a return-address zip code from a member in that congressperson's district, or he or she might toss it in file 13 before opening it.

I know many chapters can have two, three or four congresspeople in their geographic regions. But this can be an effective tool, and is a lot more practical than expecting all 100 members of your chapter to write three letters to Washington.

And I don't believe in, "Do as I say, and not as I do!" I've written my two senators, and guess who my congressman is? He's none other than the honorable Alan Grayson of "Republicans Want You to Die Quickly Fame." But I told Grayson of my concerns about the EPA's WaterSense Program and what I thought of how the agency has handled the phase-out of methyl bromide. I also gave him some facts about turfgrass environmental benefits and golf's economic impact on Florida.

Won't you find a few minutes to exercise your rights? Speak up for yourself and your profession!

Certified Superintendent Joel Jackson is Executive Director of the Florida GCSA. Jackson is also known for speaking up for his industry's rights.

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When Performance Matters.™

Cutting height is the most important factor in determining the turfgrass community's cultural intensity, which increases as the height of cut is lowered within the adaptive range of the given turfgrass species.

Although cultural inputs increase at lower heights, this may or may not influence the input amount — but it will most likely influence the frequency of input.

The increased cultural intensity occurs because of a change in the turfgrass community and the plant itself. As the cutting height is lowered, the turfgrass community becomes denser. The impact of lowering the height to increase density is most apparent on a perennial ryegrass and/or Kentucky bluegrass fairway.

If the fairway mowing height is lowered from above a 1-inch height of cut to below a 1-inch height of cut, how a golf ball lays on that turf is greatly affected.

At heights above 1 inch, the golf ball tends to settle into the turf canopy. But the turf is not dense enough to support the golf ball completely above the canopy. At heights below an inch, the golf ball sits up because of the increase in the number of shoots supporting the ball.

The downside to the greater number of shoots or increased density (crowding) is that each individual plant becomes smaller with thinner leaves and less root mass — basically, the plant is more juvenile. These plants become more susceptible to environmental, pest and management stresses than their brethren at higher heights of cut.

For example, as the height of cut decreases, the likelihood of disease severity increases. In response, the amount and frequency of fungicide applications increase in response to the increased pest severity.

Regarding nutrients, the total amount may be similar at both a higher and lower height of cut but the frequency will be higher at the lower cut.

Also, all cultural practices — irrigation,

Cutting Height and Cultural Intensity

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



MOWER OPERATION

IS CRITICAL IN

REGARD TO

SHORTLY CUT

TURFGRASS HEALTH

fertilization, pest control and mechanical management — increase in intensity.

Mechanically, as cutting heights are lowered, proper mower selection and adjustment becomes increasingly critical. If you've tried to reduce your carbon footprint by using a push reel mower to mow your lawn or your course's putting green, you know the importance of an adjusted and sharp reel.

With hydraulic-driven units, the importance of a sharp reel may not be as noticeable to us, but it is to the plant. Ripping, pinching or shredding a leaf blade on a continual basis is not good for the turf's overall health. As the height of cut is lowered, mowing frequency increases, as does the frequency of reel and bed-knife sharpening.

Mowing is the most prevalent practice in putting-green management because it's done on a daily basis. Hence, mower operation is critical in regard to shortly cut turf health.

Wear caused by turning, sliding or speeding around curves and turns on green and collars contributes to chronic turf loss. Such turf loss is magnified at lower heights because the plants previously mentioned are more juvenile in nature and more susceptible to traffic.

For many, increasing heights of cut, especially on putting greens, may not be an option. But for those who can raise the height of cut to a more optimum height, the cost of maintaining that turfgrass is likely to decrease.

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



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THANKS, LARRY ... FOR 10 YEARS OF

Golfdom recently partnered with several industry leaders to publicly recognize, and personally thank, Larry Aylward for his 10 years of dedicated service to the golf course maintenance industry. As *Golfdom* Editor-in-Chief, Larry has spent the past decade working tirelessly behind the scenes to tell a story of a noble profession he cares so much about.

Some of the golf industry's brightest luminaries have shared their heartfelt feelings and anecdotes on these two pages. We invite you to join us in congratulating Larry by visiting <http://golfdom.blogspot.com/> and adding your personal thanks and most memorable "Larry story."

Knowing full well Larry's modesty – his mantra is "It's not about us (*Golfdom*); it's about the superintendent." – it's important to note this endeavor helped raise thousands of dollars for Santa's Helper, a charity Larry started in Akron, Ohio, years ago with some friends. Every Christmas, Larry and his buddies solicit donations and purchase Christmas gifts for underprivileged children in Akron. They don Santa suits and pass out the gifts in what has truly become a labor of love.



My dealings with Larry have been nothing but positive.

The consummate professional, **Larry is one of the greatest advocates our industry, and golf course superintendents in particular, could ever have.**

Larry's a bit like Fox News – fair and balanced. He's done a superb job creating and delivering timely information that empowers superintendents to do their jobs better and faster. He keeps our profession ever in the know regarding best practices and evolving trends, issues and solutions. *Golfdom* is one the best publications in the business thanks largely to Larry's time, talents and unwavering commitment.



PAUL B. LATSHAW, MSM, CGCS DIRECTOR OF GROUNDS OPERATIONS
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Larry Aylward is, above all else, a fine human being who genuinely cares about others. He is the epitome of the philosophy of putting others before yourself. Beyond that, he is a great advocate for the golf course management profession. You don't have to read his work for too long to realize **he genuinely cares for the golf course superintendent and the industry that supports this noble profession.**

Congratulations, Larry, on your long service to the golf course management profession and industry. You have touched many people along the way, and have done so in a respectful, gentlemanly manner that reflects very well on you and those you represent.

STEPHEN F. MONA CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER, WORLD GOLF FOUNDATION



When Larry came out to do the article on Oakland Hills prior to the 2008 PGA Championship, we all found him to be warm, open and very friendly. He made us all feel comfortable and special. I am still in contact with him today and **consider him to be a great industry partner.**

STEVE COOK, CGCS, MG
GOLF COURSE MANAGER, OAKLAND HILLS CC

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