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Golfdom

FEBRUARY 2009 • VOLUME 65 • NO. 2

Rays of Hope

GOLFDOM REPORT

Despite tough financial times, superintendents are optimistic for the future, according to our survey.

BY LARRY AYLWARD

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Save the Jobs
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Turfgrass Trends

This month, *Golfdom's* practical research digest for turf managers discusses the problems associated with effluent water use on turf in the Southeast. Also, how to improve nutrient and organic matter recycling in turfgrass. See pages 47-52.

Online Exclusive

Watch this video podcast only at www.golfdom.com:



In 2007, the Carolinas GCSA donated thousands of dollars worth of equipment to New Orleans Golf Course Superintendent Peter Carew. This video details the impact the equipment has had on Carew's operation at Brechtel Memorial Park Golf Course.

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A Cautious Man

Who would know best about the state of the golf industry? The National Golf Foundation's Joe Beditz, of course.

By Larry Aylward

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All Quiet on the Construction Front

Architects, builders rely on restoration work to get them through the recession. They also rely on hope that things will get better.

By Anthony Pioppi

About the cover

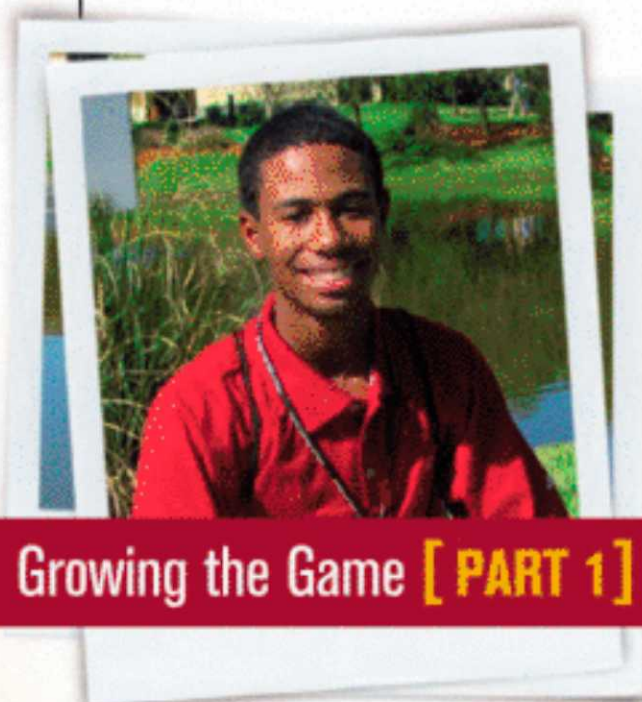
Art Director Carrie Parkhill used this Mike Klemme photograph of Whistling Straits Golf Course and some artistic wizardry to help get across our message.

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From the Mouths of Babes

The First Tee's finest convey the importance of youth access to golf.

By David Frabotta



Growing the Game [PART 1]



Mark Eitelman



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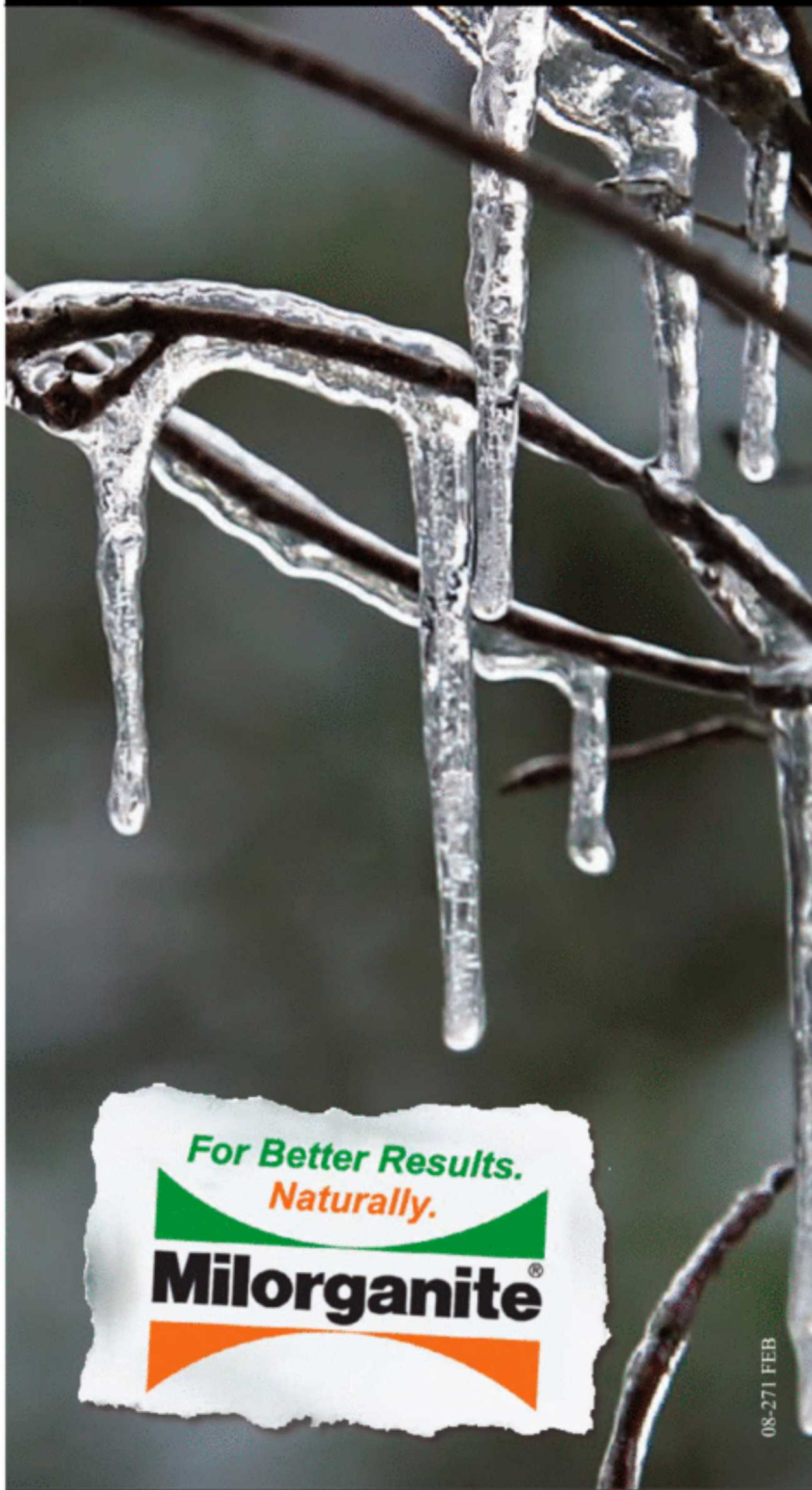


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February
THIS MONTH'S HEALTH TIP



It's February, which means Valentine's Day. We all love chocolate, but remember that chocolate can give your dog theobromine poisoning, which is an over stimulation of the nervous system that can be fatal. Chocolate also causes vomiting, tremors, hyperactivity and seizures. Give your dog a healthy treat and do not leave sweets where your dog can reach them.

KC. Her owner is Randy Slavik, certified superintendent of the Wausau Country Club in Schofield, Wis. (Photo by: Randy Slavik)



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By the time you read this from when I wrote it (Jan. 12), who knows what will have happened to the economy? Will more jobs have been lost? Will more foreclosures have occurred? Will the stock market have bottomed out?

I can hardly wait to find out. Like you, I'm wrapped up in these stark financial times like I'm reading a novel that I can't put down. But I'm only a voracious reader of this economic news because I long to read something that says the economy is getting better. Will somebody please say we've hit rock bottom!

Unfortunately, I've also learned that reading too much about our economy isn't such a good idea. Most of the news is hard to stomach.

What scares me more than anything about the economy — more than the credit crunch and more than the housing and stock market messes — is the job loss. I know your eyes had to pop out of your head when you read that American job loss in 2008 was the highest it has been since 1945.

I read a story recently on CNNMoney.com that reports the recession will get worse if the job market gets worse because the more people out of work, the more who will lose their homes and default on their credit cards. It becomes a vicious circle.

And then there are the working people who are *worried* about losing their jobs (most of them won't) and stop spending money "just in case something happens." The lack of spending between the unemployed and those afraid about being unemployed impacts myriad businesses, from restaurants to retail, and causes sales to drop even further.

Alas, the job loss mounts.

Late last year we asked about 100 golf course superintendents if they had to lay off any employees from their golf course maintenance staffs. Forty-eight percent said, "Yes, we've felt the economic pinch." Thirty-seven percent said, "No, we haven't felt the downturn," and 15 percent said, "We will probably lay off employees in 2009."

The golf course industry is a small cog in an enormous economic wheel, but we can do our

Our 2009 Mantra: Save the Jobs

BY LARRY AYLWARD



THE INDUSTRY IS
A SMALL COG IN
AN ENORMOUS
ECONOMIC WHEEL,
BUT WE CAN DO OUR
PART TO HELP
THIS ECONOMY
GET BETTER

part to help this economy get better. And that starts on the job front.

Now, I know that labor, which makes up the majority of superintendents' budgets, is the first thing to get whacked when maintenance budgets must be trimmed. That only makes sense. But during these difficult economic times — when we know that more layoffs only add to the problem — I urge superintendents to look elsewhere to make cuts. I know this could be a monumental and time-consuming task, but it will be worth your efforts if it saves some jobs.

The same holds true for other golf course decision makers. Owners and general managers should take the same approach. Try to save jobs at all costs.

I realize there might be no other alternatives to cut costs than to cut jobs. And if that's the case for you, I just ask that you don't fire people and forget about them. Try to help them find new jobs. Superintendents, general managers and owners are well-connected in this tight-knit industry. Use your relationships to help others.

Also, don't let firings strictly made over financial matters ruin people's self-esteem. Help those people stay positive by providing positive reinforcement.

Let's not view job loss only as a government statistic in this suffering economy. Job loss is also a delicate human-relations issue. It impacts family, lifestyle and health, among other things. If you've lost your job, I'm sure you realize this.

Finally, here's to some good economic news in 2009 that's *really* worth reading.

And, hopefully, it will be about less job loss and an improving economy.

Aylward, editor in chief of Golfdom, can be reached at larryward@questex.com.

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Life for many golf course superintendents earlier this month was the Big Easy, that is if they attended the Golf Industry Show in New Orleans. But now that they're back on Main Street, far removed from Bourbon Street, superintendents must deal with the ongoing economic and environmental pressures on the performance of their duties and the health and appearance of their courses. The economy and the environment are so interconnected that making sure you pay attention to both is critical for success — and survival.

As the sluggish economy forces cutbacks in budgets resulting in less labor and possibly fewer purchases of equipment, fertilizer and chemicals, superintendents are challenged to revise old practices and develop new strategies for course management.

Mowing and edging/trimming schedules can be tweaked to reduce energy (fuel costs) and equipment wear. Turning out the lights in vacant locker rooms, bathrooms and offices saves money and energy, as does modifying the irrigation schedule to reduce pump run time. Irrigating during electric utility off-peak hours can net even more savings.

If planned construction projects go on as scheduled, then take the opportunity to innovate while you renovate. Environmental stewardship has been moving to the front burner on community stovetops. It's a perfect time to finally consider and implement the reduction of maintained turf acreage. That in itself is a win-win situation as you reduce inputs of labor, fuel, water, pesticides and fertilizers.

Installation of native plants and grasses can be done on a gradual, in-house basis to save contractor fees and simultaneously reduce maintenance costs while continually reducing overall costs of course maintenance. Once or twice a year the native areas need to be mowed or pruned versus previous weekly maintenance on turf areas.

These native areas reduce the course's water-use footprint. Water availability is becoming a dominant issue across the country. We demonstrate our proactive stewardship of the community's resources by converting out-of-play areas.

By using less potable groundwater and re-

The Economy And the Environment

BY JOEL JACKSON



THEY ARE SO
INTERCONNECTED
THAT MAKING SURE
YOU PAY ATTENTION
TO BOTH IS CRITICAL
FOR SUCCESS — AND
SURVIVAL

ducing the amount of reclaimed water needed or pumped, we can potentially make more effluent water available for other golf course or landscape irrigation systems to join the purple pipeline.

Recycling and composting programs for organic debris can reduce costs and be used as fertilizer in plant beds and deep roughs. One Florida club recently estimated it could cut trash hauling fees (nearly \$120,000 per year) in half by recycling grass clippings, landscape trimmings, cardboard boxes and food waste from the clubhouse on site.

Water-quality issues are also facing communities with fertilizer use on turfgrass being targeted as an area of concern. Even though the science says proper turf nutrient applications should not be a major concern for runoff or leaching, perception is reality and the media loves controversy.

A newly patented process of using floating mats of aquatic plants to sequester dissolved nutrients in water bodies is another example of a sustainable system that golf courses can use to meet Clean Water Act requirements. Eventually, the plants can be harvested and composted, and the nutrients can be reused as an organic nutrient source for the roughs.

For sure, you have much on your plate these days. There's the economy and its immediate pressures with environmental stewardship looming as a constant challenge to do better.

To deal with both, you must display a persistent pursuit of education and excellence in both areas to produce the most effective and efficient golf courses possible.

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.