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Off The Fringe

Expanding Their Horizons

STATE GRANT WILL ENABLE ANDERSONS TO PURSUE NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR TURFGRASS AND AGRICULTURE

By Larry Aylward, Editor-In-Chief

Chuck Anderson felt like he was back in college cramming all night for a final exam. Only this time, Anderson and some of his colleagues from The Andersons, the Maumee, Ohio-based agribusiness company, were cramming to ready a proposal for a chance to receive \$5 million in grants from the state of Ohio.

“Actually, it was like cramming four years of college into six weeks,” says Anderson, the company’s director of technical services and marketing development, adding that it took a team of 12 people working intently for a month and a half to complete the proposal. “The night before it was due, some people worked all night to finish it.”

All the hard work paid off. Last summer, The Andersons announced that a collaborative team it led will receive \$5 million in grants from the Ohio Third Frontier Commission, a state project whose goal is to expand Ohio’s high-tech research capabilities and promote innovation and company formation. The Andersons said it received the grants for the development and commercialization of advanced granules and other emerging technologies to provide solutions for the economic health and environmental concerns of the green industry and the agriculture industry.

The Andersons granular technology includes Contec DG in the golf industry, which is marketed by the company’s turf and specialty group, Andersons Golf Products. The grant enables The Andersons to accelerate its research in



extending this proprietary technology to agriculture applications, according to Tom Waggoner, president of The Andersons Turf & Specialty Group.

Waggoner is excited the company received the grant because it means the state believes The Andersons can create products that can have a positive impact.

“We look at our business as a quality-of-life industry,” Waggoner said. “How much better does it get than to help make the world green? How much better does it get than having a hand in creating an environment for kids and adults who can go outside and feel good about what they’re in?”

Waggoner said the world’s current emphasis on environmental sustainability plays into the green industry’s hands. Turfgrass has plenty to do with quality of life when you consider recreational activities such as golf, he added.

Other members of the collaborative team are: The Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC), the nation’s largest ag-biosciences center; Syngenta Crop Protection; PSB Co., an Ohio-based manufacturer of granule applicators; National Lime and Stone Co., an Ohio-based limestone supplier and granulator of advanced soil-dispersing granules; and Ohio Bio-products Innovation Center (OBIC), a state group that fosters industry and academic collaboration.

In December of 2007, the last thing on Chuck Anderson’s and Tom Waggoner’s minds was to apply for grant money. They were in the middle of the biggest professional turf product launch in the company’s history, Contec DG.

“The last thing we wanted to do was more research when we were just launching [the dispersible granule] technology that took us years to

Jesse Walle, Tom Waggoner, Chuck Anderson and Mike Bandy have \$5 million more to work with for R&D, thanks to a state grant.

get to market,” Anderson said.

But Tim Birthisel, technical manager of the turf and specialty group, found out about possible state funding through the OBIC, which committed to help The Andersons. Chuck Anderson said the OBIC “pushed us to think bigger.”

The company heard it only had about a 10 percent chance of getting funding, but Waggoner, Anderson, Birthisel and others liked their chances.

Anderson said it was evident the opportunity was bigger than to benefit just the turfgrass industry. “There was a greater cause,” he said.

Last winter, the company decided to draw up a proposal to apply for the grant. The proposal had to do with using technology to improve environmental and efficacy of delivering fertilizers and pesticides, not just for turf but for all of agriculture, Waggoner says.

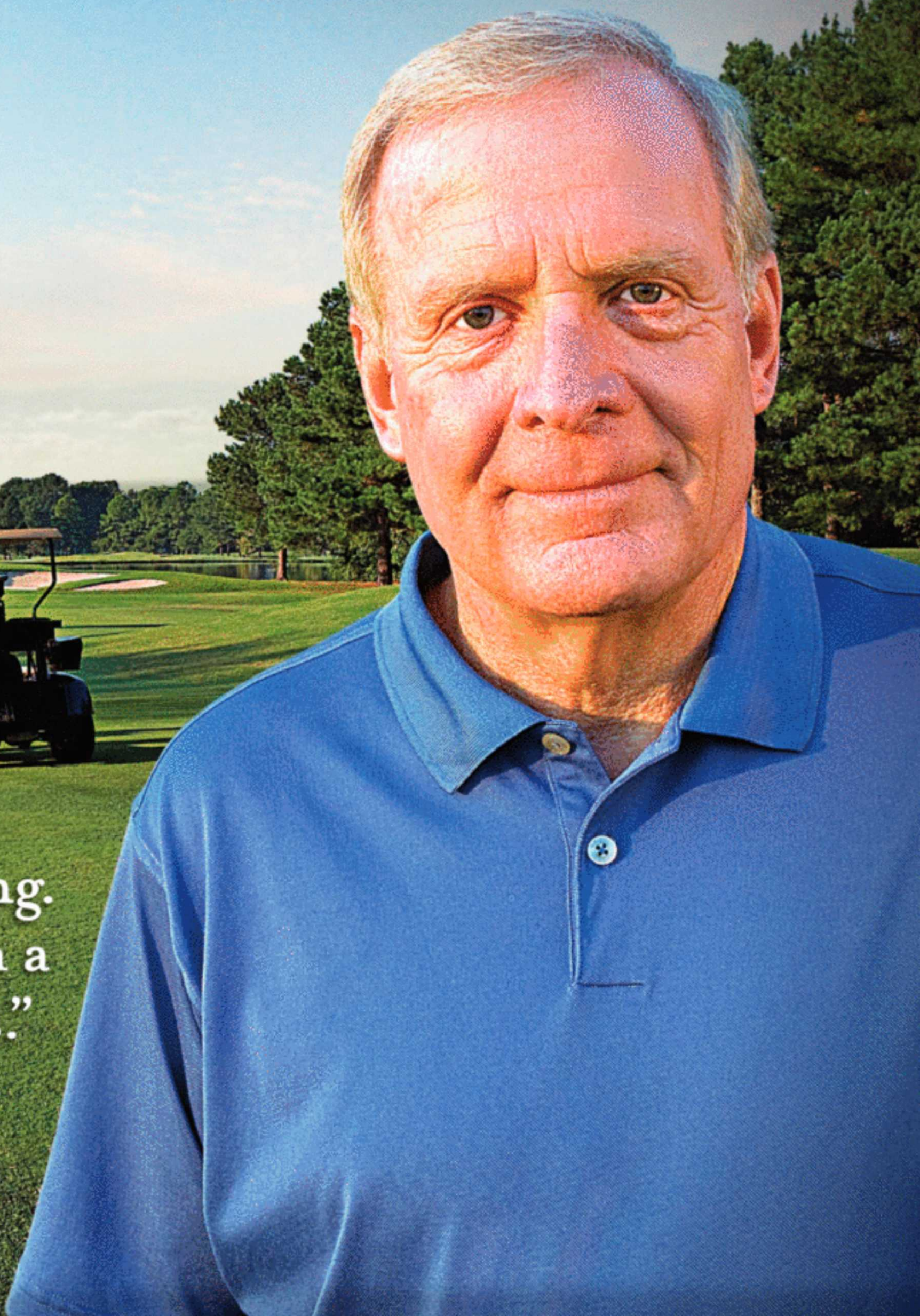
After making the first cut, the proposal was sent to the National Academy of Sciences, where two scientists were assigned to review it for about 60 days. After being scrutinized there, the proposal ended up in Columbus with the Ohio Department of Development, which was reviewing all the other proposals vying for grants.

A panel of scientists and business people gathered to determine the best proposals. They invited the proposers in to answer questions. Anderson said the panel consisted of about 18 people, and they grilled him, Waggoner, Birthisel and Syngenta’s Dennis Shepard for about 30 minutes.

“But we were ready,” Anderson said. Five million bucks proves that. ■



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“Quotable

“You would think I’d have been paroled by now.”

— Charles Joachim, certified superintendent of Champions Golf Club in Houston, on his 37 years as a superintendent.

“To be honest with you, I don’t miss San Diego for one second.”

— Mark Woodward, CEO of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) in Lawrence, Kan., hinting that he doesn’t miss the pressures or the politics that came with his previous job as certified superintendent and director of golf operations for the city of San Diego, including overseeing Torrey Pines.

One ‘Big Audacious Goal’

RISE AIMS TO PROMOTE ITS MEMBERS’ PRODUCTS AS SAFE, GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE

By Larry Aylward, Editor-In-Chief

The Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) doesn’t just have a goal to promote pesticides and fertilizers as safe products. The Washington-based association that represents pesticide and fertilizer producers, suppliers and distributors has a Big Audacious Goal.

The Big Audacious Goal aims to “own our rightful place in the green movement by re-asserting the essential value of our products in protecting a healthy and vital environment from the consequences of ineffective plant management.”

The Big Audacious Goal is also about RISE and its members going on the offensive to promote their products as safe, green and sustainable. Allen James, executive director of RISE, said it’s important for the association to go on the offensive.

“I don’t think it’s trite of me to say that we are at a critical juncture in our industry’s history — a true tipping point, if you will, in our association and in our industry,” James said.

James said opinions about pesticides and fertilizers are being based on emotion and opinion, not facts. “We are losing the scientific foundation upon which are industry is based,” he said, noting that’s why the Big Audacious Goal is needed.

Mike Bandy, marketing manager for Andersons Golf Products, says he likes the Big Audacious Goal and notes that it’s time green industry suppliers of pesticides and fertilizer step up and speak out in support of their products.

“We haven’t done that for a while,” Bandy added. “We’re a little modest. ... But I think we need to be willing to defend our products. We can’t be afraid to tell people what we do and the benefits that we provide.”

Paul Rea, director of the specialty products division for BASF and a RISE board member, said the Big Audacious Goal is “an important move for everyone committed to the industry.”

“Our products are extensively well tested and safe,” Rea added. “They deliver great benefits to the users and the environment overall. For us that means we need to put that message more often in front of people who may not be aware of it.”

Bandy said it’s time the green industry be viewed on the right side of the green movement.

“Even though we’re a major part of taking care of what’s considered green — turfgrass, landscape, ornamentals — we’ve gotten tagged as being negative,” he said. “And the reality is our products our very critical to the growth and sustainability of turfgrass, landscape and ornamentals. What the big audacious goal will hopefully do for us is help correct that. We’re part of the solution, not part of the problem.” ■

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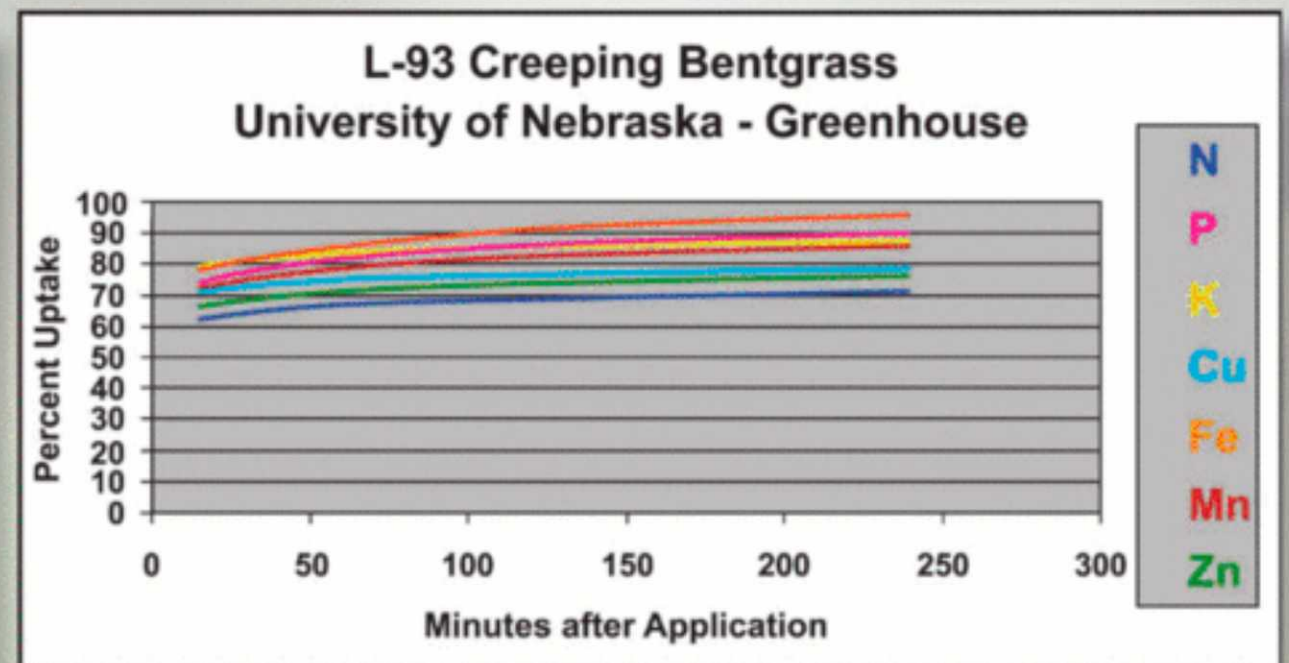
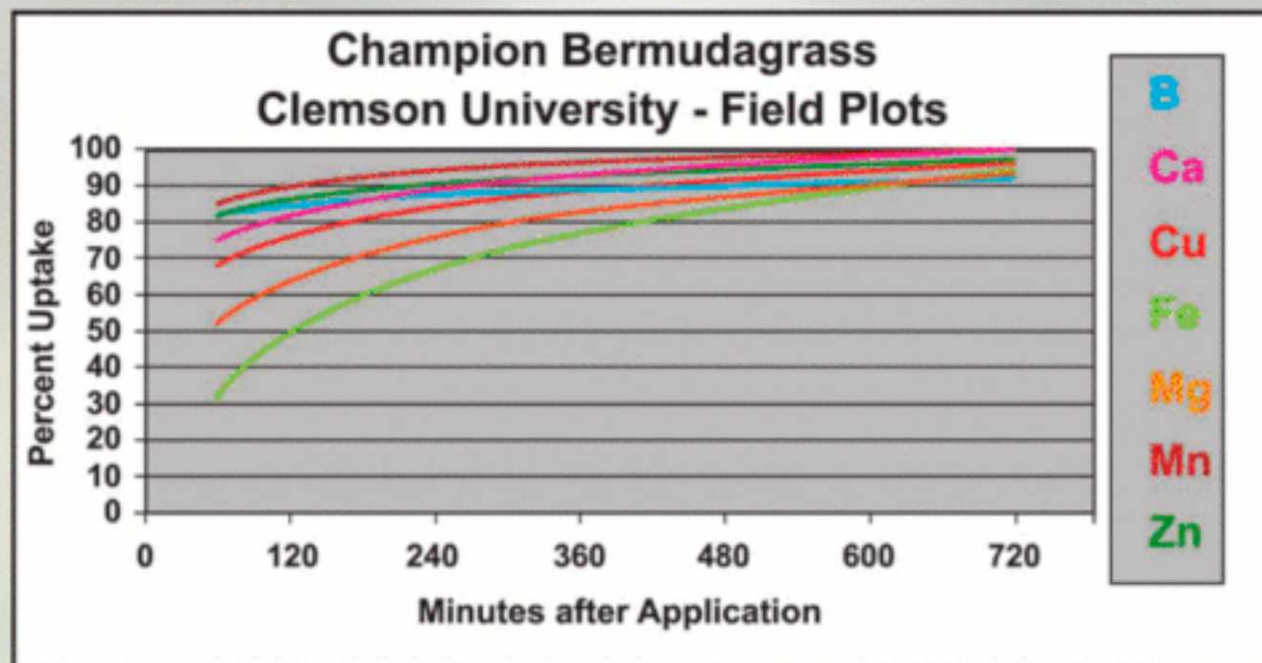


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Hole of the

▶ Hole No. 1 | Plantation Golf Course | Maui, Hawaii

PHOTO COURTESY: KAPALUA RESORT

Month

Hole Stats

Distance: 520 yards

Par 4

The Turf

Green: Tifeagle

Fairway: 328 Bermudagrass

Each January, golf greats gather for the PGA TOUR's Mercedes-Benz Championship at the Plantation Golf Course on Maui. This 7,411-yard course, designed by Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw, hosts more than 45,000 rounds a year. Both amateurs and professionals admit that one of the challenges is walking the course, primarily because it begins at sea level and climbs more than 400 feet.

Coore and Crenshaw designed the first hole as a beautiful introduction to the course; however, it also grabs players' attention as a challenging par-4 hole that stretches 520 yards. It requires a big tee shot



to a wide right-to-left fairway and a set of fairway bunkers on the left that depict the splashing waves of Honokohua Bay. A solid drive sets golfers up to hit a short iron onto a large green that slopes from left to right, catching the approach shots and curving them toward the hole location.

Course superintendent, Oswaldo Cardenas, works closely with Juan Gutierrez, director of agronomy and facility maintenance, to keep the Plantation fairways and greens in perfect shape. The 27-member crew faces a myriad of challenges, and uses a full-scale cultural and chemical approach to control fairy ring, pythium blight, weed invaders and tropical broadleaves.

In early 2007, Cardenas noticed a serious infestation of mushrooms in greens and rough areas. "We applied Insignia® fungicide in rotation with two other fungicides to deal with fairy ring and the infestation has practically disappeared," Cardenas said. "During the limited-sunlight rainy season, Insignia helps us overcome diseases like pythium blight and bermudagrass decline."

Insignia controls an exceptionally broad spectrum of turf diseases and provides residual control for up to 28 days. Cardenas has incorporated Insignia into his preventive maintenance program and will continue to use the product on other diseases that may challenge the Plantation.

To learn more about Insignia and BASF, visit www.betterturf.com and www.basfturftalk.com.



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



From the Back Tees

■ OPINIONS ACROSS THE GAMUT

Happy New Year! New column title. New mug shot. But this column had to be submitted last November. So here's my auld lange syne to 2008:

Birdie: Smooth transition from Steve Mona to Mark Woodward as CEO of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Rub of the Green: Mona stays in the golf industry and can continue to promote GCSAA as an industry leader.

Handicap: After being "one of the guys," certified superintendent Woodward now works for all us guys and gals. That's not always an easy transition. But I think his years of city government experience, including as the director of golf operations for the city of San Diego, will serve him well.

Bogey: LPGA invokes "Mandatory English" rule for all players.

Rub of the Green: Instead of being done proactively, it was done with a hammer.

Handicap: Due to negative public opinion, the LPGA had to reverse itself. Not a good confidence builder.

Birdie Recovery: LPGA works with GCSAA to gain a tour agronomist in John Miller, a certified superintendent from Ohio.

Rub of the Green: LPGA players and officials at the 2008 PGA Merchandise Show were more than pleased with the prospects of more consistent playing conditions at their tournament sites.

Handicap: Dealing with possible changes at these sites.

Birdie: Drafting more tournament players onto the GCSAA's Environmental Institute of Golf team (Vijay Singh and Sergio, Garcia for example). We need stars speaking out about the positives of golf and the environment. Kudos to Greg Norman and Lorena Ochoa for giving public kudos to superintendents.

Birdies and Bogies On a Tour of 2008

BY JOEL JACKSON



TIGER SHOULD BE
MORE INVOLVED.
THAT WOULD BE A
ROAR HEARD ROUND
THE WORLD

Rub of the Green: Tigers are endangered species. They should be more involved. That would be a roar heard round the world.

Handicap: Taking a stand contrary to the public perception (perceived reality) makes corporate America nervous. They don't want their pro-player spokespersons becoming targets for tree huggers.

Bogey: The Environmental Protection Agency's handling of the methyl bromide phase out under the Montreal Accord. The EPA has been forcing deeper and faster cutbacks in production and stockpile access than called for by law. This is forcing golf and turfgrass use of methyl bromide out of the picture before a safe, viable alternative can be developed, which was also a stipulation in the Montreal Accord that EPA chose to ignore.

Rub of the Green: The International Committee allows other countries to use methyl bromide to grow in golf courses because it's a critical need. But somehow the science stops at the U.S. border. Qué pasa?

Birdie Finish: A salute to Annika Sorenstam on her stellar career with the LPGA. It's not a stretch to say she was a tigress in her own part of the jungle out there.

Rub of the Green: She will still be involved in golf and a good ambassador for the game.

Handicap: I just hope this isn't a Brett Favre-like retirement.

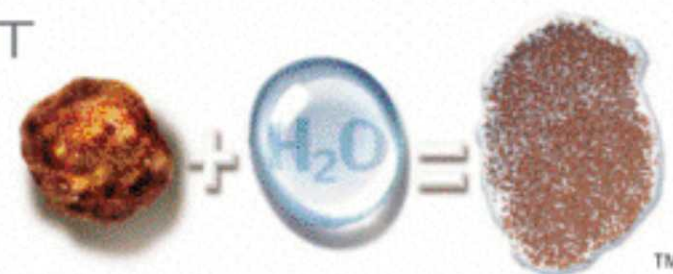
Now it's time to tee it up for 2009.

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



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By this time, you've read or heard many columnists, celebrities, experts or family members state their New Year's resolutions. Sitting here waiting for a flight connection, I'm contemplating not so much what I will do, but trying more to find answers to some of the agronomic and economic questions that I have come across this past year.

So here goes, with not much thought and worse the potential to look foolish or uninformed.

Why is ghost grass, known as Mad Tiller Disease or Etiolated Tiller Syndrome (ETS), becoming more of a serious problem on *Poa annua* fairways (or bluegrass/ryegrass fairways)? In the past, I've written about this problem, but in general dismissed it as a nuisance that can easily be remedied with mowing. Yet, this phenomenon has grown in severity throughout Pennsylvania and the mid-Atlantic region to a point where it is gaining discussion among many golf course superintendents. A common quote I hear is, "You can't mow frequently enough to eliminate the symptoms." Is the cause a bacterium, a fungus, combination or some environmental factor?

How big a problem will nematodes become on cool-season golf courses in the future? Personally, I have not been involved with that many diagnoses where nematodes were the problem, and in those cases I have blown the diagnosis where samples had not been taken.

Why are nematodes becoming more prevalent in the Northeast and the reason for several high-profile courses in California to renovate? Why is one year worse for nematodes than others? Maybe I should read a text book on nematodes (too many years since I took those classes). If nematodes do become an increasing problem, what do we do without Nematicur?

What is ultradwarf grain? One of the more interesting things that I have observed over the last couple of years is the development of "swirling leaves and plants" that develop into large patches on ultradwarf greens. Given that

A Resolution to Find Some Answers

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



HOW BIG A
PROBLEM WILL
NEMATODES
BECOME ON
COOL-SEASON
GOLF COURSES IN
THE FUTURE?

ultradwarfs are vegetatively propagated, the green should appear uniform. Is its change in growth habit because of genetic makeup, cultural practices, environmental conditions or a combination of these factors or others? And why is there such a difference in opinion whether it impacts ball roll? And if it is truly "grain" in the sense that most of us think of grain, why can't (or maybe you can) management practices like topdressing and brushing remove it?

In some areas of the world, the availability of any kind of water for golf course development is limited. In some situations, the use of sea water to maintain the golf course has been proposed. My question is not what grass can tolerate seawater, but how long does it take various soils to become degraded by the seawater to the point where any turfgrass can't be sustained? If this information exists, should that information be included in golf course design and construction specifications?

This past year, I've watched companies disappear or go on life support. These companies have survived two world wars, a depression, numerous recessions and decades of competition. This raises the question of what makes a business or industry sustainable? Specifically, what are the factors given the diversity of golf and the golf business that are important for future sustainability?

I could sign up for airport Internet service and maybe find the answers to these questions, but I'm just too cheap. Instead, I will take this coming year and try to find the answers.

Happy New Year.

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.