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Tony Denton, Golf Course Superintendent

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



We heard a lot about sustainability and sustainable initiatives at the Golf Industry Show in February. Certainly, in this day and age of environmental awareness, we should be thinking about how golf and turfgrass management fit into our ever-changing world.

Those of us close to golf and turf management know how much our knowledge, maintenance methods and product technology have changed for the better. But to the general public, local politicians, regulators and media, we're just another industry that uses "way too much water, chemicals and fertilizer, which is bad for the environment." That mantra has been repeated so many times that many people now consider it fact. But forget the public misconceptions. How much golfer education on these issues is taking place at our courses?

Today, all issues are polarized. You're either with me or against me. You're either for or against the environment, which is why local politicians tend to vote for bans and restrictions. The truth is, we're doing better, but sustainability has been politicized to the point of ideology. It has become green vs. brown, maintained vs. native, right plant vs. xeri-scaping and turf vs. mulch. Do golfers care?

What do golfers really think? Have we done a good job of surveying them on environmental issues? We tell them how important it is to have a good superintendent on the Golf Channel. But do we ever talk to them about the pros and cons of sustainability and what it might mean to their golf course's appearance — a factor often essential for golf course superintendents to remain employed?

The word sustainable means enduring, thus sustainable golf means the golf facility must endure. But a facility must remain profitable to be sustainable. It must meet golfer/customer expectations. But what is being done to modify golfer expectations in this time of extreme activist and regulatory pressure to help superintendents champion environmental steward goals?

Is Sustainable Maintainable?

BY JOEL JACKSON



WHAT DO GOLFERS
REALLY THINK?
HAVE WE DONE A
GOOD JOB OF
SURVEYING THEM
ON ENVIRONMENTAL
ISSUES?

Any programs that urge superintendents and golf facilities to change practices to become "greener" and more sustainable should have a strong education component aimed at owners, members and golfers. Focusing on the superintendent's role is not the answer. Superintendents are employees of owners, members and golfers. To keep their jobs, superintendents tend to do what their bosses want.

A growing number of superintendents are getting clubs enrolled in stewardship programs and are making headway to minimize inputs, conserve resources and reduce costs. Still, many superintendents and course officials feel change implies more time and expense to achieve some idealistic notion called environmental sustainability.

The bottom line is this: Is sustainable maintainable? Can the golf industry gurus unite and convince golfers of the merits of stewardship and to accept less-maintained turf acreage, yellowish and brownish roughs during dry periods, fewer fertilizer and chemical applications, fuzzier cart path edges, perennial plants instead of annuals, tree removal and pruning to let the sun shine on a green, and a lot of other things that don't really affect playing the game, but conserve resources and reduce inputs?

It's not enough just to showcase golf's positive environmental and economic facts to the government and the media. When golfers themselves are convinced that supporting sustainability is in the best interest of the game, we will have taken the biggest step toward building grassroots support for achieving sustainable golf.

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



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Spring's arrival signals the start of the annual migration of turfgrass students to partake in golf course internships throughout the country. Many of these students are eager and enthusiastic to learn. Like spring, they bring a sense of renewal with them. The legacy of these internships is the mentoring that occurs between the golf course superintendents and the students.

However, the mentoring process has come under siege — more than any time I can ever remember. Time has become a factor in being a mentor, no matter what profession you're in. People just don't have a lot of time to mentor others.

For golf course superintendents, having the patience and taking the time to explain specific activities to interns during a busy season when time is a precious commodity is a task in itself. That said, superintendents can still make a tremendous impact on interns by taking the time to be mentors.

From a student's perspective, it's vital to have a good mentor.

The term mentor can be traced back to Homer's classic poem "The Odyssey." Odysseus, or sometimes known as Ulysses, was the king of Ithaca who went off to fight in the Trojan War (he is known for the Trojan horse trick). He entrusted the care of his kingdom to Mentor, who served as the teacher and overseer of Odysseus' son, Telemachus.

From this early beginning, a mentor was defined as a trusted counselor. Mentors are usually older and more experienced. They help students learn and progress through the profession. Mentoring is not done for personal gain.

So, what are some of the characteristics of a good mentor? In a column she wrote in 2008 entitled "Qualities of a Good Mentor," writer Ellen Kappel lists the five qualities of a good mentor. The column was about mentoring graduate students, but it could apply to any mentor, including superintendents. I'm sure you'll take something away from the list:

Take the Time to Mentor Someone

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



A GOOD MENTOR SHOWS WHERE OPPORTUNITIES LIE AND HOW TO ACHIEVE THEM

1. Mentors create opportunity and open doors. A good mentor also shows where opportunities lie and how to achieve them.

2. Mentors know students' strengths and abilities. A mentor doesn't set up a student to fail. A mentor challenges a student but doesn't assign tasks that a student can't handle. A good mentor knows the student better than the student knows himself or herself.

3. Mentors set good examples. Students watch their mentors' work habits, how they interact with people, and how they handle crisis situations.

4. Mentors want students to succeed, and they help students learn from the mentors' mistakes. Mentors aren't in competition with their students. They don't put up roadblocks to students' successes.

5. Mentors want students to get to the point where they're comfortable enough to work independently.

Those of you who have carved out successful careers in this industry probably had mentors — people who believed in you when you didn't believe in yourself. Our mentors' guidance and wisdom directed us along our career paths.

Often, we didn't realize until later the people who mentored us were our mentors.

One of the greatest gifts we can offer is our time. So as this golf season begins — and even when you find yourself busy — try to take the time to mentor someone.

Take the time to impact someone's career path personally and professionally.

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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PUTTING SURFACE GUIDE

Each year, *Golfdom* offers its greens management guide and reports on the major issues affecting the most important turfgrass on the golf course. Here's this year's lineup of stories:



PHOTO COURTESY: THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA GOLF COURSE

By John Walsh, Contributing Author

18 ON A ROLL More superintendents are rolling their courses' greens to keep them fast and healthy. **By John Walsh**

24 BANKING ON EARLY-SEASON DOLLAR SPOT CONTROL Superintendents find success and save money by spraying earlier. **By Anthony Pioppi**

27 THE POLITICS OF GREENSPEED There are few issues facing our industry that affect the majority of golf course superintendents, regardless of what type of facility they manage, as much as the topic of green speed. **By Christopher S. Gray, Sr.**

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ON A



Fifteen years ago, golf course superintendents were much more apprehensive about rolling their course's greens than they are now.

"They were saying, 'No way those machines would be on my course,' because they were worried about compaction and bruising the turf," says Thom Nikolai, Ph.D., a turfgrass academic specialist at Michigan State University who has been conducting rolling research since 1994.

Research changed that apprehension. Now superintendents are rolling greens more than ever.

"Most superintendents I know roll at least three days a week," Nikolai says.

Fifteen years ago, Bob Bittner, certified superintendent at The Club at Pelican Bay in Naples, Fla., was rolling three

times a week and was worried about compaction and wear and tear. Now, he's rolling the TifEagle greens daily.

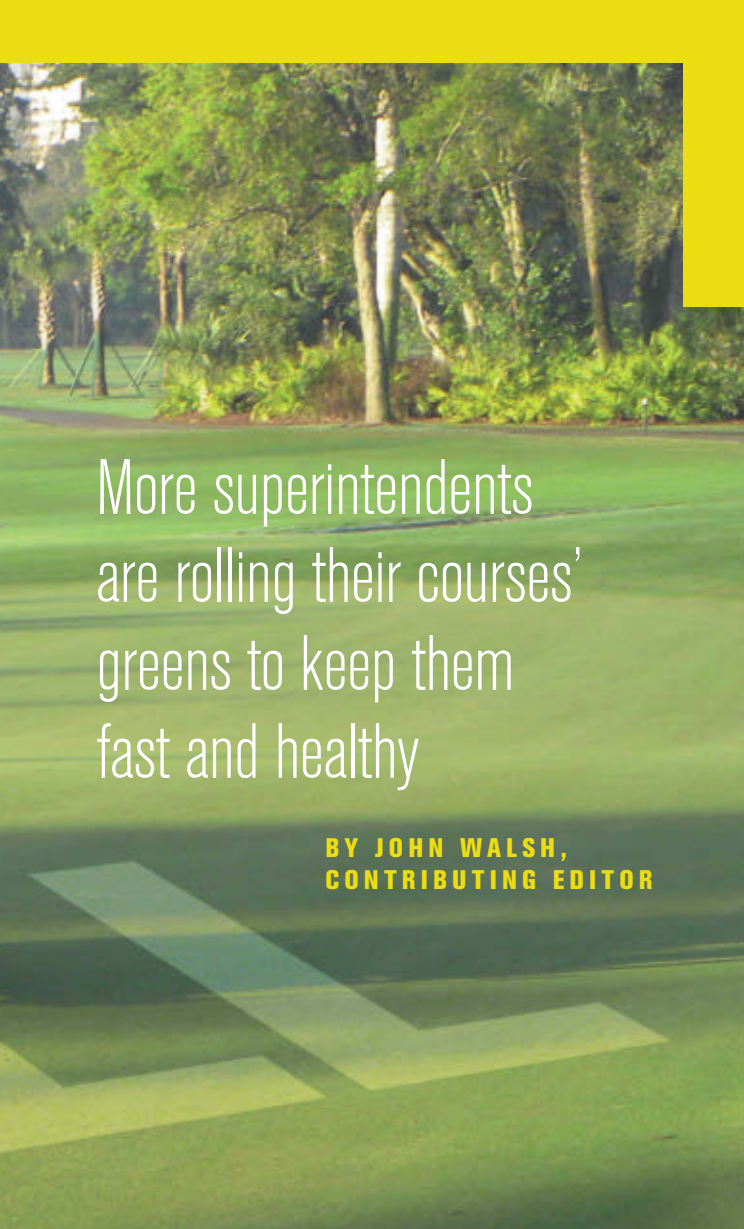
"Everyone is rolling more than they used to," Bittner says.

The increase of rolling frequency is primarily for two reasons: green speed, driven by golfer expectations; and healthier turf, through higher heights of cut and moisture reduction.

"Lowering the height of cut caused rolling to become more popular," says Shawn Emerson, director of golf at the six-course Desert Mountain Club in Scottsdale, Ariz. "We were at such low heights. I didn't like lowering mowing heights just to create speed."

MSU research and turfgrass scientist James Beard, Ph.D., solidified Emerson's views about rolling.

"He's the one that really OK'd rolling for me," Emerson says about Beard. "I also talked to the PGA Tour and folks like



More superintendents are rolling their courses' greens to keep them fast and healthy

BY JOHN WALSH,
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Marsh Benson (Augusta National) and Matt Shaffer (Merion Golf Club) — the people who did a lot of rolling.”

The need for speed

Emerson began rolling regularly in 2000-2001 when the green speed was 10 feet. Throughout the past 10 years, he began rolling more — three days a week — and now he's rolling more than ever. Expectations have risen along with the target green speed, which is 11 feet now.

“If we want to really speed up greens for a special event, we'll roll every day,” he says.

At Pelican Bay, the course's green speed is 10.5 daily. During tournaments, it's about 1 foot faster. Because the greens are undulated, speeds of 12 to 12.5 are too fast, Bittner says.

Patrick Santerre, superintendent at the 18-hole Le Diamant Golf Club in Mirabel, Quebec, generates 10 to 12 inches on the Stimpmeter as a result of rolling. Because Santerre's course has 12 push-up greens (*Poa annua*) and six USGA-spec greens (*bentgrass*), it's difficult to achieve consistency between the two types, so he plans to roll the push-up greens five times a week compared to four times a week for the USGA greens,

which are faster because of their construction, he says.

However, rolling — which provides a better, smoother ball

roll and a more even putting surface — can lose its impact as the day progresses. Emerson's greens will lose 25 percent of their roll during the day. So his staff rolls the greens at 8 a.m., and the green speed is 11.6. After the springboard effect goes away, the greens end up at 11.2.

“There are 108 putting greens at Desert Mountain, and every one is within 3 or 4 inches,” Emerson says.

How high can you mow?

Many superintendent have raised mowing heights as a result of more frequent rolling.

“Some guys are still seeing how low they can go because
Continued on page 20”

ROLLER SELECTION

As with any cultural practice, golf course superintendents like to tweak methods and use what works for them. Rolling is no different. Superintendents use various rollers to achieve a better putting surface, which includes smoother ball roll, faster greens speeds and drier turf.

There are basically five types of rollers: sidewinder, vibratory, triplex, speed and universal.



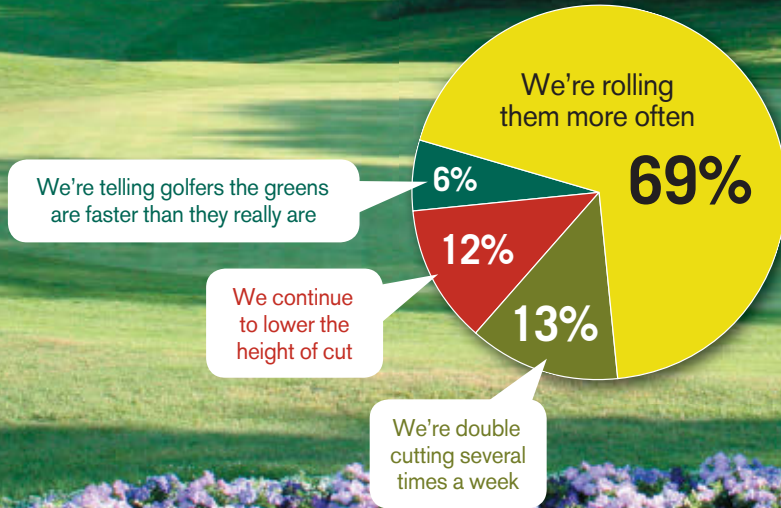
Shawn Emerson (left) says turfgrass scientist James Beard “OK'd rolling for me.”

PHOTO (RIGHT) BY: STUART BUCK

HOW TO MAKE 'EM FAST

How are you managing demand for faster putting greens?

Based on 2010 survey of 575 superintendents. Superintendents were asked to check all choices that applied.



Continued from page 19

it's the macho thing to do," Nikolai says. "Now I think it should be how high can you mow."

Nikolai cites Mike Morris, the certified superintendent at Crystal Downs Country Club in Frankfort, Mich., who used to mow greens at 0.115 of an inch and now is at 0.145.

"He's rolling every day, and everyone is happy," Nikolai says. "There's less stress on the turf."

Emerson started playing with mowing heights based on speeds. From November through February, when there's less light, high traffic and slow growth, Emerson likes to raise the height of cut. He also doesn't want to lower fertility on the greens during the winter.

"Rolling is more about raising the height of cut than green speed," he says. "I'm never below one-eighth of an inch."

Scott Griffith, superintendent at the University of Georgia Golf Course, hasn't raised the height of cut on the course's Dominant bentgrass greens yet but plans to. He'll keep the height of cut low until the end of April after he hosts the PGA Tour's Nationwide tournament. Presently, the height of cut is 0.115, but 0.140 is the goal, yet 0.135 is more realistic, he says.

Cultural benefits

Another result of frequent rolling is less disease (dollar spot, anthracnose and brown patch) because of a higher height of cut and less moisture. For example, rolling has helped

reduce the amount of dollar spot on the greens at Desert Mountain, Emerson says. "It's a moisture-management issue," he adds. "Moisture is a big issue."

Emerson watches the tire pressure on the triplexes carefully when rolling because he doesn't want to leave marks on the greens. He also says a key point is not to roll if there's frost because you don't want to crush the plant's crown.

Years ago compaction was a big worry among superin-

ROLLING AND MOWING, AND

The key to any rolling program is how often you roll and mow and how you alternate the two practices. Do you roll greens every day but mow every other? Do you mow two days in a row and roll the third? Do you mow every day and roll every other?

"When you alternate mowing and rolling for the entire season, you see healthier turf stands compared to mowing every day," says Thom Nikolai, Ph.D., a turfgrass academic specialist at Michigan State

University who has been conducting rolling research since 1994. "Any program in which you alternate can work well if you want to save money, too."

At The Club at Pelican Bay in Naples, Fla., certified superintendent Bob Bittner's goal is to mow less often and keep the greens consistent by rolling daily. Normally, the crew mows every day and rolls five times a week. They mow every other day in the winter (November through April).