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# Golfdom

MAY 2011 • VOLUME 67 • NO. 5



Learning more about secondary plant health benefits

BY CLARK THROSSELL, PH.D.

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By Seth Jones

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Our scientific gear (and model Eric Bowen) were photographed at Lawrence (Kan.) CC, where Bill Irving is superintendent.

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## Turfgrass Trends

This month, *Golfdom's* practical research digest finds better reporting for NTEP data and how rethinking legumes can benefit your course. See pages 41-46.

## Online Exclusive



Stop by the *Golfdom* Daily ([www.golfdom.blogspot.com](http://www.golfdom.blogspot.com)) to check out behind-the-scenes action at the 2011 U.S. Open during tournament week, and to participate in *Golfdom's* U.S. Open fantasy golf contest, affectionately called the *Golfdom* HackOff.

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**A**pril was a crazy month, and about the best thing you can say about it is that it's over. I travelled the States extensively in April and early May. Six trips in seven weeks. I went to Scottsdale, Ariz.; Atlanta and Augusta, Ga.; Cleveland; Washington, D.C.; Asheville, N.C.; then finally Charlotte, N.C. before returning home to Lawrence, Kan.

At almost every stop I met a superintendent or two who was in some state of disgust with the weather, with gas prices, with labor, with budgets.

I was also on the phone a lot, and heard even more telling stories there. A superintendent in Portland, Ore., told me that they had just endured the coolest, wettest April they had ever had. They know wet weather in Portland, but only four days with temperatures above 60 degrees? That just steps right on the throat of progress early on in what is going to be an important season for many golf courses.

The most telling story I heard was from a northern superintendent. We were having a nice conversation, but when I turned the conversation to "how's business up there?" his tone took a sudden sharp turn.

"It's just terrible – absolutely awful," he growled.

He told me their April was brutally cold. The biggest slap in the face had just happened to him that day. It was the next-to-last day of April, and the course was hosting the local chamber of commerce for a golf event. The weather started off cold and then turned colder, finally spitting snow at the shivering golfers.

The chamber of commerce waved the white flag and took their members into the clubhouse for an early lunch. The superintendent was beside himself. "Even the chamber of commerce can't pretend that they want to golf in the weather we've been having," he groaned.

The Ohio Turfgrass Foundation sent out a press release stating the severity the cool, wet April was having on turf where most of the *Golf-dom* staff calls home. In many parts of the country the wet weather was pushing rivers beyond their limits. And in Texas, Oklahoma and parts

## Ready for Luck to Turn Around

BY SETH JONES



LIKE DEAN SAID,  
"YOU HAVE TO TEST  
YOUR LUCK EVERY  
DAY, BECAUSE YOU  
MIGHT BE WALKING  
AROUND LUCKY ALL  
DAY AND NOT EVEN  
KNOW IT."

of Arkansas and Louisiana, record drought.

It's not just the weather but also the economy. One superintendent told me that a few corporate events he used to count on at his course were once again cancelling. "Give us one more year to get back," they were telling him. Throw in those other outlying factors like rising gas prices, and you know even better than I do that this golf season stumbled in April.

Worst of all were the 300 tornadoes that wreaked havoc and killed hundreds in Tuscaloosa, Ala., and surrounding areas. It's like the bumper sticker reads: What's next? Gravity?

One of my favorite non-bumper sticker quotes is from sausage king Jimmy Dean. Dean was also known to sing a mean country song, but in my book, he's famous for producing the best breakfast sausage for what we call the "Jonesy scramble" at my house.

Mr. Dean once told a reporter for *Esquire* magazine, "You have to test your luck every day, because you might be walking around lucky all day and not even know it."

The good news is that April always leads to May. May 1<sup>st</sup> brought the breathtaking news of something I'll always remember: the announcement from President Barack Obama that Osama bin Laden was dead, shot twice by Navy Seals. How's that for starting a month off with a bang?

Superintendents across the country knew that they were in fact *not* lucky in the month of April. But the U.S. Open is right around the corner, signaling the most productive time of the year for golf. The news is even talking about gas prices dropping in the next few weeks.

So do like Mr. Dean said, and keep testing your luck every day. Eventually, it'll turn around. And when it does, you want to be ready.

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# Off The Fringe

## Superintendents serve their profession at National Golf Day 2011

By Tim Connolly

**W**ASHINGTON, D.C. — The positive energy was palpable during the recent National Golf Day activities on Capitol Hill, when golf's main organizations converged to engage members of Congress with powerful messages of the game's impact on their constituents.

We Are Golf, a coalition of the industry's top organizations, including the GCSAA, CMAA, NGCOA, PGA of America and the World Golf Foundation, is determined to put a face on the game.

"We're trying to let Congress know that when they make decisions on golf,

to use us as a resource so we can provide them the necessary information so that they're not just making a decision in a vacuum," Rhett Evans, GCSAA CEO, said.

Jay Goughnour, owner and superintendent of Raccoon Valley Golf Course in Jefferson, Iowa, was there to talk disaster relief for golf courses. His nine-hole course was devastated by flooding in May of 2008.

"When natural disasters affect golf courses, courses should be treated like other small businesses and placed in the same playing field," he said.

Goughnour wants Congress to know that golf faces the same hardships as any other business in this economy. "There are a lot of courses

that struggle to make ends meet. They employ a few people and they're great meeting places and valuable assets to the community, but they're not rich people. I own a nine-hole golf course and I can promise you I'm not rich. I'm just a hard-working individual."

Mike Barrett, CGCS, has been the superintendent at Argyle CC in Silver Spring, Md., for 15 years. For Barrett, We Are Golf's mission to put a face on the game is a key point. "I tell people that the survival and success of Argyle Country Club is paramount to me. It's how I make my living, how I support my family. I have 15 guys. That's how they support their families. People lose sight of just how important golf is. It creates jobs."

"When you look at politics, it's really local," Evans said. "There needs to be a grassroots effort. Just think what that would do to spread the word even that much faster. And that can be done. It just takes some folks who are motivated."

Folks like the group of superintendents who served their profession in the nation's capital on National Golf Day.

*Tim Connolly is the assistant superintendent at TPC Potomac at Avenel Farm in Potomac, Md.*



Rafael Barajas, CGCS, Robert Randquist, CGCS, and Rhett Evans, GCSAA CEO, share a laugh during National Golf Day.

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The tornado left a wake of destruction across the city.

# Recounting the Tuscaloosa tornadoes

By Beth Geraci

**G**ib Fox and his family huddled in a makeshift teepee in the center of their living room. Fox's two young children were oblivious to what was happening. But Fox and his wife knew darn well what they were dealing with.

A mile and a half away, the Tuscaloosa, Ala., tornado was touching down.

When the worst was over, Fox, the golf course superintendent at Tuscaloosa's Ol' Colony Golf Complex, stepped outside.

"It was black as night and eerily calm," he said. "Everybody says it sounds like a freight train. It sounds worse.



This thing sounded like a group of jets hitting the afterburners at the same time."

The tornado reportedly carved a path 300 miles long from Mississippi to Georgia, traveling at about 180 miles per hour. "We were looking at it as it passed and I was saying, 'This is bad,'" Fox said. "You could see it clear as day."

About a half hour after the tornado struck, as Fox stood in his yard marveling at the eerie calm, the winds picked up again — a second, smaller twister. It swept right over the golf course. "I could see it. It was spinning up the in the air and I could see it," Fox marveled.

Like Fox's home and neighborhood, the golf course was spared damage. Other areas, however, were not so lucky. The death toll reached 41 in Tuscaloosa alone; 30 residents are still missing; and entire neighborhoods are obliterated.

"It looks like you took bulldozers and lined them up in a row and went to work," Fox said. "There's nothing left."

## Goldom Scores Big at 2011 TOCA Communication Contest

We stop here briefly to sing our own praises (don't mind if we do). That's because we earned accolades at the Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) contest, bringing home awards for editorial content and graphic design.

*Goldom* earned six first place awards, including honors for feature writing (for the story "Giving Thanks"); web writing ("A Golf Course Uplifts a Community"); special projects (Plant Health Report and Water Wise); and headline writing ("I'll Take a... Mulligan"). *Goldom* also won first place for portrait photography with the June 2010 cover photo of Chris Dalhamer.

*Goldom* also garnered two merit awards. "The Best of Both Worlds" won for environmental stewardship article, and the 2010 Annual Putting Surface Guide won for special projects.

Seth Jones won merits for his work last year at *Golf Course Management* magazine, for his operations profile of Whistling Straits and for his cover story on Nick Price.

Congrats, team!



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