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Golfdom Gallery



WE CAME.
WE SAW.
WE TOOK PICTURES.

1 Stay off my grass! We saw this sign placed prominently on a soccer pitch in England recently. It's the truth, you know — you grow it, then people have to mess it all up...

2 Billy and some kid *Golfdom* EIC Seth Jones (right) got a free putting tip from golf legend Billy Casper (left) at the Billy Casper Golf Annual Meeting. The tip? Seth isn't telling.

3 A Sunningdale day Murray Long, courses and estate manager at Sunningdale Golf Club near London, gave us a proper tour of the No. 1 non-links golf course in England. Despite the way it looks, he did not show us how to hula.

4 Service right next door While in Ipswich, England, we got a tour of RJ National, the three-hole golf course at Jacobsen's European headquarters. We wonder if superintendent Jamie Hughes (pictured) gets a special rate on spare parts?

5 Where the MAZAK happens We drove from Minneapolis over to River Falls, Wis., to visit Jim Letourneau (left), COO of Foley United (with *Golfdom* publisher Pat Roberts.) The machine behind them is a MAZAK Super Turbo-X 48 MK II. What's that mean? We're not sure, but it sounds cool!

6 Why can't we be friends? It took a cricket match in England to make this photo happen. Toro Irrigation's Robert Jackson (left) and Robert Green (right) share a friendly moment with Jacobsen's Adam Slick (center.)

7 Blue crew Did they call each other? Jacobsen's Ian Mitchell, Seth and Jamie all are dressed eerily similar at the RJ National. And yet no one is wearing orange...?



PHOTOGRAPHY BY: SETH JONES (1, 3, 4, 5, 6); RICH KATZ (2); ADAM SLICK (7)

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My Second Office

BECAUSE THE COURSE IS YOUR FIRST

About our host

ALAN FERGUSON, head groundsman for St. George's Park near Burton-Upon-Trent, England, has his roots in golf. He started his career working at the Old Course at St. Andrews. But one glance at his office makes it clear: Ferguson is a sports turf manager through and through these days.

The former head groundsman at Portman Road (home

of Ipswich Town FC,) Ferguson now manages the turf at St. George's Park, the official home of the English national soccer team. The facility has 11 soccer fields — including one that is manicured to be an exact replica of the field at Wembley Stadium — in order to give the team the feeling of their home pitch.



“The Royal Highness Prince William did a few sprinkles, I did the rest.”

1 CROATIA VERSUS ENGLAND

“Those jerseys are signed by England and Croatia, from 2003. England won 3-1. This was during the rebuilding of Wembley Stadium, so they played the game at Portman Road, where I was the head groundsman. It was the first time an international game was played in Suffolk, England.”

2 READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL

“Those helmets are from what

they call the International Series — American football games played at Wembley Stadium. I went down to help out and picked these up. That game has become real popular here. By the way, I've never seen anything like that, American football is fascinating!”

3 SOME BUBBLY

“That bottle was given to me by the chairman of St. George's Park upon the grand opening of the park. I drank the

champagne and kept the bottle as a memento — I don't think I'll be getting too many more bottles of champagne from the chairman in my career.”

4 THE ROYAL SPADE

“That spade was part of a ceremony where we planted the eight millionth tree in the national forest that we are a part of. The Royal Highness Prince William did a few sprinkles, I did the rest. They're

lovely people, easy to talk to, just like you're sitting there having a cup of coffee. Years ago I met Prince William's father, he was equally laid back. It's a real honor to meet the royal family in your professional career.”

INTERVIEW AND PHOTO BY SETH JONES

Proud of your second office? Email us a photo of you in it to sjones@northeastmedia.net, and we may feature you and your office in an upcoming issue of *Golfdom*.



*Take a good look.
You may never see it again.*



*{fig. w-42}
Poa annua*



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“From a distance I couldn’t tell exactly what he was doing. But as I got closer, what I saw was truly amazing.”

MARK WOODWARD, *Contributing Editor*

This month, Woodward gets an assist from Kirby Putt, director of grounds at Arizona Country Club.

‘Grassroots’ ideas are among the best

Every once in a while you run across something that makes you say “Wow, isn’t that cool?” or “Why didn’t I think of that?”

I’ve been in the golf business for more than 40 years now, and I’ve seen a lot of changes and innovations. As my friend Shawn Emerson from Desert Mountain once told me, “The only thing that hasn’t changed over the years in the golf industry is the golfer’s ability.” If you really think about it, everything related to golf course maintenance and management has changed, and for the most part, the changes have been positive.

Recently, while completing a bunker renovation project at the Arizona Country Club in Phoenix, I was introduced to a grassroots idea called the F1 core collector by the director of grounds, Kirby Putt. He was waving me over and laughing as he pulled cores off his greens with this bunker rake attachment. From a distance I couldn’t tell exactly

what he was doing. But as I got closer, what I saw was truly amazing.

Kirby by nature is a funny guy, but what I witnessed when I pulled up to the green was a superintendent who was downright giddy. He was quickly and efficiently removing the cores from the greens in a matter of minutes, piling them off to the side of the collars for pickup. Kirby explained, “I have one of three made by James Hill, and I love this machine.”

He also advised me that the F1 will be on the market very soon. In simple terms, Kirby was sitting on a bunker rake with the F1 core collector attached, virtually removing all of the aerification plugs on the entire green in seven to eight minutes. This tool is an incredible time-saving device for what is often a tedious and

labor-intensive job.

Later that evening, I paused for a moment and reflected on how many cores I’ve pushed off greens.

I also thought about the other innovations great minds have come up with that helped me in my career as a superintendent. I sat down that evening and quickly listed 10 inventions that came to mind:

- 1 **Rolling machines for smoothing greens** Prior to these techniques, we put bricks in the baskets of our walking greens mowers.
- 2 **Brushing, verticutting and groomer attachments** We all know how much better our turf is since these came along.
- 3 **Lightweight fairway mowers** In my day, a Jacobsen F10 and Toro Parkmaster ruled the earth.

- 4 **Bunker machines for raking** It was common to hand-rake bunkers. Another time-saving gem.
- 5 **Deeptine aerifiers** And how about this tool? Ten-inch holes that have cured many a green or fairway problem, saving many a superintendent’s job.
- 6 **Growth regulators** Considered the “extra employee” on many grounds crews, these create labor savings and enhance turf.
- 7 **Wetting agents** Making water wetter for much improved infiltration.
- 8 **Mechanics lift** You want to make a best friend, buy your mechanic a lift. How many of you laid on the ground, and maybe still do, to repair equipment. Shame on the course who doesn’t own one of these.
- 9 **Spin grinders** The days of backlapping are over (I know some of you still prefer the old way.)
- 10 **Hydraulics** Where would we be without hydraulics? There are so many more great inventions and ideas waiting to spring into action. I witnessed one recently that I’m sure will have a place in many a maintenance facility across the country. The F1 core collector might just go on my list of creative innovations to expedite the aerification process and get golfers back onto our courses sooner.

Mark Woodward is president of Mark Woodward and Associates, principal of Damarco Golf, CEO of MasterStep Golf Group and a contributing editor for *Golfdom*.

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“We are always at the mercy of the weather, but with this new research we might be able to modify some of our inputs or practices to improve plant vigor and make wiser decisions.”

JOEL JACKSON, *Contributing Editor*

Road trip research notes

My road trips to education sessions so far this year have included the Nutrient Management Symposium, the Central Florida Vendor Expo and the Everglades GCSA Spring Symposium. And they all had me wondering what new or modified turf management practices are on the horizon.

It's no secret that Florida has been ground zero for EPA's Numeric Nutrient Criteria, spawned by a court settlement and not the result of open debate of the facts. In the wake of all the angst raised by activists about nutrient pollution of waterways, the University of Florida undertook an eight-year study of nutrient management practices sponsored by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

The most important result was that the summer fertilizer application bans forced people to apply in the spring and fall when plant roots are just renewing growth or shutting down and plants are less effective at absorbing nutrients. Nutrients applied on test plots in the summer months were essentially taken up with little or no leaching at all.

Common sense precautions against applying fertilizers in advance of forecasted heavy rains or too close to water bodies are always in effect.

Another key find was that if you bring in sod you need to find out when the plots were last fertilized. Sod farms keep the plots lean and mean like a lot of “firm and fast” golf courses. But when harvesting the sod for a customer, the farms want it looking good, so they fertilize.

Researchers have found that if a sod farm has fed the turf in a two- to six-week period before harvesting, a lot of the nutrients are transported in that soil layer with the sod. Because of that information, the state may change its model fertilizer ordinance to include a 30- to 60-day waiting period before applying more nutrients. That makes sense, as new

roots must sprout from the stolons before they can take up nutrients.

Fertilizer formulations were another topic that piqued my interest. Over the years we have seen phosphorous fade from most blends. There are times when it is appropriate to apply phosphorous, and we do more soil and tissue testing to determine that need. Recent comments by Auburn University's Elizabeth Guertal, Ph.D., at the Everglades Symposium indicate we might want to start looking at potassium levels in our blends as well.

Another area gaining research interest is how light intensity and duration affects plant growth efficiency. Pretty soon, “What's in Your Cart?” might contain a light meter along with the moisture

meter. The use of moisture sensors and meters is becoming more commonplace as we have to face concerns over water availability (check out the story on page 40 for details on how popular these meters have become for one company.)

Now the amount of light a plant receives during any given period is being explored as it affects plant transpiration, which affects not only water and nutrient uptake, but also the ability to fight disease and withstand wear. We know turf suffers in the shade, but now simple hazy, cloudy days can limit turf viability.

We are always at the mercy of the weather, but with this new research we might be able to modify some of our inputs or practices to improve plant vigor and make wiser decisions.

One thing I have learned from my travels so far this year is that continuing education is more important than ever in the golf course maintenance industry.

We will always have basic truths when it comes to cultural practices, irrigation management and nutrient requirements, but you can bet there is always going to be room for improvement.

Thanks to advancements in research technology we can unlock more of nature's secrets and learn to modify our practices to become even better environmental stewards.

Joel Jackson, CGCS-Ret., is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.

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“I think most people would assume a suit is the proper interview attire. However, that’s apparently not always the case.”

MATT NEFF, *assistant superintendent, Wedgewood G&CC, Powell, Ohio*

No jacket required

This past winter at the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Conference and Show, I attended a couple talks on career development led by a human resources director and a respected superintendent. I took quite a bit away from both speakers, but a comment on interview attire from one of the attendees — and the resulting discussion — is what stuck with me.

He relayed the story of an interview he had for a superintendent position. The interviewer had commented on the fact that he wore a suit and said he should have dressed more casually.

The story stuck with me because the same thing happened to me, and, as it turns out, to another guy in the room.

In my case, the interviewer actually said, and I’m not making this up, “You look more like a banker than a superintendent.” I don’t want to imply that he was rude. But he made that comment more than once during the interview.

Now, to be completely honest, I do look great in a suit. And I do have impeccable taste in shirt-and-tie combinations.

Nonetheless, I’ve wondered ever since if the fact that I looked “more like a banker” to him factored into his decision to not hire me.

I’m still not really sure what a superintendent is supposed to look like. Maybe I should have shown up in a pair of Carhartts that smelled like 2,4-D with a Stimpmeter hanging in the hammer loop and a hose over my shoulder.

I could have opened with a Carl Spackler impression and then randomly alternated between a slight country drawl (to subtly imply that I was raised on a farm) and a Scottish brogue (to subtly imply that I’m descended from Old Tom Morris). That would have covered pretty much all the major stereotypes while leaving a lasting impression

of professionalism and mental stability.

In any case, that incident, along with the discussion at the OTF conference, got me thinking about how to handle the same situation in the future. I think most people, me included, would assume a suit is the proper interview attire, unless otherwise told. However, that’s apparently not always the case.

It may not necessarily be a bad idea, but I’ve always been a little uncomfortable asking the contact person with whom I’m setting up the interview how I should dress. On one hand, by asking, you run the risk of coming off as unprofessional or ignorant. On the other hand, you may lose an opportunity because your attire is not exactly what was expected.

The key, as I see it, is to listen carefully to the contact person when you’re setting up the interview. Take note not only of the person’s words, but also of his or her tone.

The importance of both of those things can be easily forgotten when you’re in the midst of trying to coordinate schedules, learn about the interview format and deal with the other miscellaneous details that are involved in setting up an interview.

Nonetheless, listening carefully on that phone call will enable you to more accurately gauge the company’s expectations and give you an idea of how best to approach the interview.

I knew my interview was going to be a one-on-one meeting with the owner, and I got the impression that it wasn’t going to be a highly structured, formal interview. However, attire wasn’t addressed in the phone call, and I chose to go with a suit. Frankly, I’d rather be overdressed than underdressed for something as important as a job interview.

Maybe it cost me an opportunity, I don’t know. I do know that it made me realize the need to listen intently when dealing with potential employers, and to always trust my judgment about their expectations.

And I guess, if all else fails, you could just ask.

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