

LET'S GRAB A CUP OF COFFEE

Golfdom sits down with seven veteran superintendents from around the country to discuss their careers, the future of the business and advice for today's superintendent.

BY SETH JONES, CHRIS LEWIS AND STEVEN TINGLE

In just these next few pages of the magazine, there is collectively more than 250 years of experience in this great industry.

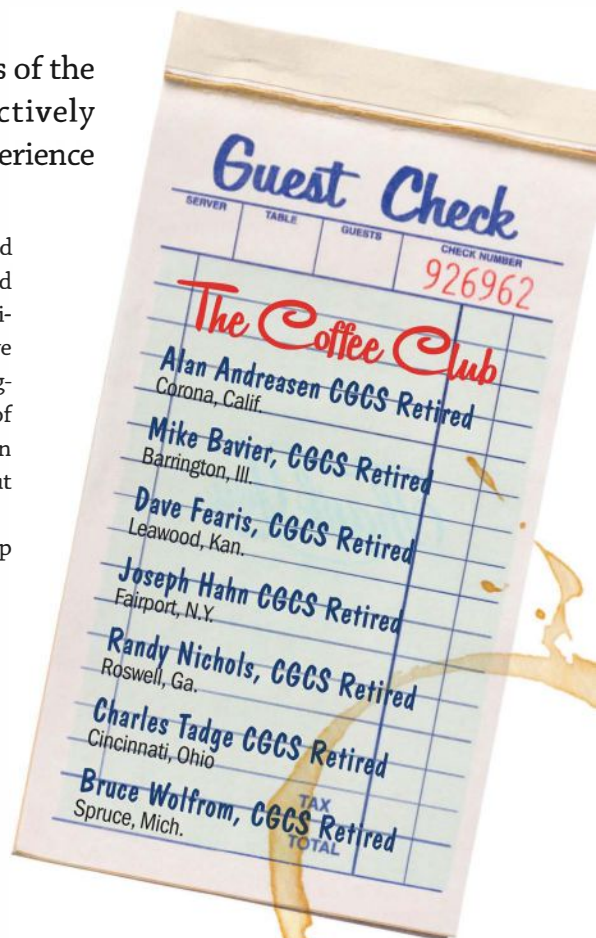
These veteran superintendents — all retired Certified Golf Course Superintendents and happy to give their time to chat about the business — come from across the nation and have grown (and killed) just about every grass imaginable. Among them are former presidents of the GCSAA, hosts of majors and mentors to an innumerable amount of superintendents out there working on golf courses today.

So, how do you take your coffee? Grab a cup and join us for one heck of a conversation.

GOLFDOM: Looking back at your career, knowing what you do now... would you do it all over again?

Dave Fearis: I probably would, in some capacity. I think it's a young man's profession. It's a sacrifice. Your job, unfortunately, comes first. It's hard to describe, that course becomes such a big part of you... superintendents are very proud. First thing in the morning, it's a neat experience to drive around and see the course without anyone on it... to see the beauty of it.

Randy Nichols: If you are talking about doing it all over again during the same time period, I would do it all over again. If you are talking about working as a superintendent



again in today's environment, I am not so sure.

Back in the '60s, when I was first introduced to the turf/golf business, the pressure on the superintendent was self-imposed. Today, the expectations are either difficult, or nearly im-

Continued on page 22

Continued from page 21



possible to achieve. "Perfect" is not good enough in many cases, even if you have a limited budget.

Joseph Hahn: I would absolutely do it again. It gave me the opportunity to do nine tournaments including three majors. I also got to do a lot of traveling and I got a lot of satisfaction when things went right and I learned to take it when Mother Nature humbled me. Plus I've enjoyed the opportunity to work with the 30 or so young guys who have gone on after working with me to become superintendents or assistants.



Charles Tadge: I think I would if I had the same conditions. But today things have changed a lot. There are opportunities if you get hooked up with the right golf course but a lot of the other opportunities are not as good. When I got out of Purdue there were a lot of the old timers retiring in the next few years, so there were a lot of opportunities for good jobs. That cycle hasn't repeated itself yet.

Alan Andreasen: No. It's too brutal of a business. If I had to do it all over again with the knowledge I have now I would look at something probably in golf but with some equity. You know, where you've got some kind of security rather than the whims of a board of directors or a management company.

Bruce Wolfrom: Sometime in my last 50 years in the business, I realized I was providing an arena where the "average Joe" could be a hero. Anyone, at any age, could have a hole-in-one, a birdie, an eagle. Even if the golfer never thought about my involvement in his or her moment of success, it's rewarding to know I was involved in that success. So I definitely would do it all over again.

Mike Bavier: I definitely would do it all over again. Working as a superintendent provided me the opportunity to make a living by enhancing the beauty of this earth and helping (my crew) feel a sense of accomplishment, while working to sustain an environment for the pleasure of golfers, as well as others.

How do you think the future of the game looks?

Bavier: It's been a tough few years for everyone. Play has been down in most areas.



Right now, I feel the focus should be on getting new players involved, especially juniors, as they are the future of the game, while also maintaining the interest of long-time players.

Fearis: I work at St. Andrews, our maintenance facility is right next to these 12 soccer fields Overland Park (Kan.) has, and those babies are always crowded. I thought this the other day: you can't play soccer when you're 50.

I think this Golf 2.0 is the way to go, showing the pluses of what golf can do besides just being outdoors. At different courses I've worked at, you get these emails about cut rates. All they're stressing is price. They're not promoting the game.

I remember Steve (Mona, then the CEO of GCSAA) and I went to a National Golf Foundation conference... they told us the growth of the game is in women and kids. Women don't play because of intimidation and time. And kids don't play because of cost and accessibility. That holds true to a point now.

Nichols: Unfortunately, I do not see a bright future for golf, nor our superintendent industry. I am not seeing the youth of today embracing the game as it has in past decades. Today's professional people do not have six or more hours available to complete a round of golf anymore. Many are more family-oriented than in the past, whereas my generation was work-oriented, neglecting our families.

Many courses have closed and many more are in bankruptcy protection or are considering "shutting the doors" altogether. New federal government mandates have made things even worse. Superintendents now have to worry about point source pollution, pesticide restrictions, water use restrictions and air pollution, particularly new restrictions on diesel engines, which drive up costs. These restrictions may lead to even more course closures.

History could very well repeat itself, as only the rich will be able to afford the game of golf again.

Wolfrom: I think the future of the game is bright. Golf is a game that can be played by anyone at any age. I believe that more and more people are realizing that.

There are a lot more junior programs around, too. Schools, public courses and recreation de-

Continued on page 24



PREPARE FOR WINTER STRESS



Enhance your turfs Winter Hardiness
with *Grigg Brothers*[®] Proven Foliars[™]

Ultraplex[®]
5-0-3

P-K Plus[®]
3-7-18+B, Co, Mo



For more information
scan or link.
<http://gri.gg/info1311>



VISIT
<http://griggbros.com>



JOIN
<http://gri.gg/join>



LIKE
<http://gri.gg/fb>



SUBSCRIBE
<http://gri.gg/tv>

Continued from page 22



partments are introducing kids to the game with classes, camps, leagues and clinics. There was a time when lessons for kids were only available at private clubs, which limited the number of new players. Now, anyone, anywhere, can take up the game at any age.

We'll probably see a few more courses close, but we're going to reach a point again where the demand is greater than the available courses, so we'll see new courses once more.

Andreasen: I think the future of the game looks outstanding for PGA Tour golf. Those courses have the TV technology to make their courses look good. It's almost mandatory, I think, excluding the USGA for a minute, that Tour golf knows that a large part of their popularity is the beauty of the golf course regardless of the playing conditions.

The average Joe Golfer kind of understands Scottish golf but they won't tolerate it at their own course. The USGA and the GCSAA have been making the pitch for years and years that you don't need lush park-like conditions to play golf.

In my area I'm seeing a lot of jobs that used to be \$90,000-a-year jobs are now \$55,000- to \$60,000-a-year jobs and the superintendent's job is being filled by high school graduates.

What advice do you have for today's superintendent?

Andreasen: Go back to college. After you get out and you have your degree and you have a job at a golf course get into some night classes, get a secondary skill.

Tadge: I would say keep your eyes and ears open and do the best job you can, even though the situation you're in might not be what you want it to be yet and you may have to move on to a different job. But I still think there are opportunities for the young superintendent.

Wolfram: If you haven't already, get a four-year degree. It doesn't have to be in turf. Business is a good degree to have. Be a profes-

sional. Wear a suit and tie to local and national superintendent meetings. Give back to the community you live in. Be a leader at your golf course, not a follower.

If you don't have strong communication skills, work on that. Write letters to your board of directors, owners and players. Don't rely on blogs, Twitter or Facebook. Use whole sentences. I've seen too many knowledgeable, talented people fail, due to their lack of ability to communicate. Always look for new knowledge. Research is continuously finding new answers to old problems. The most important asset you have is you. Develop yourself and you'll go far.

Fearis: Most of them are coming out of the turf schools. The only thing turf schools don't teach them is communication. I'll readily admit I wasn't the best superintendent, but I knew how to communicate.

On weekends I'd get there and do set-up, change tee markers, then I'd come back to the pro shop — the assistant pro was inevitably late — so I'd go in and make a pot of coffee and greet the early golfers. It's the little things, but it's on that line of communication.

You can't speak to the golfers in agronomic terms. These are businessmen and businesswomen. You've got to make it relate.

Nichols: First, receive the best education possible. Then, work (as an intern or assistant) at a club/facility similar to the facility you desire to be a superintendent at, and network with everyone in the industry — assistant superintendents, superintendents, sales representatives, university personnel, golf professionals, general managers, club officials and other allied professional groups. Be involved with your professional associations as often as possible.

And, finally, never forget how extremely important education is. Continue to receive certifications throughout your career.

Bavier: Most superintendents are experiencing the downsizing of their crew and budgets. Sure, superintendents are working longer hours, but they are also realizing that their sacrifice will have a positive, long-term effect on the game, as they are maintaining golfers' participation.

Most importantly, however, during these difficult periods, it is still necessary to maintain an acceptable balance of time between work and family. ☺

Can you pass the sugar?

As you might imagine, we had more than one cup of coffee with our sources. But we couldn't fit everything into the print magazine.

If you'd like to see the complete interviews with any of our sources for this story, stop by **Golfdom.com**, where we'll be posting all of the unabridged conversations.

GO GREEN.

[...on your tee boxes]

[...on your greens]

[...on your high traffic areas]

[...on your fairways]



INTRODUCING THE TURFCO® TRIWAVE™ 40

Damaged turf on your #7 tee? Weak areas on your #2 and #12 greens? Want to improve the overall stand of grass on your high traffic areas on #6 and #10? Greening up your course has never been easier or quicker with the TriWave 40. Just hook up to your turf vehicle and **seed them all in one trip.**

- Quickly adjust seed rates and depths to match conditions—no tools required
- Patented floating heads and seed delivery system maximize germination rates
- Patented WaveBlade™ technology optimizes seed-to-soil contact with minimal turf disruption
- Seed while you turn so you can follow greens, collars and contours

It's your grass on the line. Save it with the TriWave 40.

CALL 1-800-679-8201

for a FREE on-site demonstration, or

VISIT WWW.TURFCO.COM

to see the TriWave 40 in action.



THE LEADER. SINCE 1961.

Fertilizing for the future

Superintendents can simplify fall fertilization with control and slow release fertilizers, producing green and healthy turf for the following season.

BY ERIC MILTNER, PH.D.

Different climates, root-zone mix composition, golfer expectations and budgets all play a role in today's modern golf course, turning something as important as fertility management from an art form to a science. And with recent advances in the understanding of nutrient behavior, smart superintendents are putting even more science into the process.

Who knew something as simple as fall fertilization could be so complicated? And the big question — with so many fertilizer choices readily available, what's the most efficient and cost effective way to manage fall fertilization for your course?

Todd Lederer, superintendent for the town

of Mooresville, N.C., brings 25 years of industry experience to his fertilization programs. When it comes to implementing successful fall fertilization programs, Lederer has found the two main factors — and an unlikely duo — are plant growth regulators and a controlled-release fertilizer.

“Plant growth regulators are as equally important in any fertility program regardless of weather conditions to yield a successful growing season,” says Lederer. “I have been using PGRs in our fall fertility programs for the courses' greens, fairways and tees, and we have decreased mowing frequency and spikes in growth.”

In addition to PGRs and fertilizers, every year Lederer completes soil testing on the Moorestown course, which consists of taking soil samples, sending them to Harris laboratory, where it is analyzed to determine deficiencies of phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) pH levels.

Researchers at Penn State University have also noted that applying nutrients such as phosphorus and potassium in late fall can maximize



root growth and plant maturation, as well as enhance turf's hardiness, disease resistance and wear tolerance into the following summer.

"Nitrogen is what drives the uptake of nutrients and plant growth in the absence of heat or during stressful climate conditions," says Lederer. "By testing our soils we determine what areas are deficient, which usually requires more phosphorus and potassium and we base our fertilization efforts for the following year off the results."

Capitalizing on temperature

By using a controlled-release fertilizer, superintendent Bryan McBride of Moss Creek GC near Dayton, Ohio has successfully been able to get nutrients into the turf when the root zone needs it most. And by incorporating a

thorough fall fertilization campaign, McBride is able to keep his turf's nitrogen levels up year-round, allowing his turf to better fight disease through the entire year.

"I save on gas, time and labor by fertilizing in the late fall once with Spread it & Forget it controlled-release fertilizer," says McBride. "The technology of the advanced polymer coating is activated by soil temperature. It just sits there after one application and the nitrogen release shuts down in cold soil so the granules do not release too soon."



Bryan McBride

Continued on page 28

Southern Grasses Need Southern Weed Control

When it comes to weed control, customization is key. Southern grasses, for example, have unique challenges due to the nearly year-round growing season and other factors such as sensitivity to select herbicides and low shade and traffic tolerance. Herbicide producers have increased their use of field research and chemistry to develop formulations that target weeds in a specific region such as the South.

According to Jim Goodrich, product specialist for Kansas City, Missouri-based PBI-Gordon Corporation, carfentrazone is an ingredient that, when formulated with 2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba, provides proven broadleaf weed control in southern grasses. Carfentrazone works in this combination to inhibit a key enzyme in chlorophyll production, causing cell membranes to rupture and quickly disintegrate.

Also important in the South, is an effective herbicide that is highly selective in most established warm- and cool-season turfgrasses including: bermuda, zoysia, bahiagrass, common St. Augustine, buffalograss, centipedegrass, seashore paspalum and tall fescue.

One product that meets these criteria is SpeedZone® Southern from PBI-Gordon. The product is proven in university and cooperator tests to produce fast-acting response and visible activity within hours. Important in the often-moist South, it is rain-fast in just three hours and causes weed death in 7-14 days.



As shown in these before and after photos, clover was eliminated from this lawn in 1 week.

SpeedZone® is a registered trademark of PBI-Gordon Corp.
Always read and follow label directions. 4/13 02449

// FALL FERTILIZING



Seen here are the fall application results from using Duration CR controlled release fertilizer on Mooresville's greens and tees.

Continued from page 27

The patented polymer coating in Spread it & Forget it allows more consistent feeding in the fall, and preserves nutrients to be used during the spring green-up. The Moss Creek GC fairways and tees are dominantly bentgrass. To keep everything under growth regulation, McBride completes one application of a plant growth regulator in mid-September, taking his bentgrass into dormancy.

Enhancing spring green-up

Fall fertilization will also enhance spring green-up without the excessive growth that often accompanies early-spring fertilization. This green-up often will last into mid-spring, so an early spring fertilizer application is not needed.

"Fall fertilization is the most important fertilization of the year," says McBride. "The plants need to have enough nutrients to make it through winter and come out strong in the spring. By giving the plant enough nutrients with a controlled-release fertilizer, I have been able to cut my fungicide budget and still have strong, healthy turf."

"It is important to remember to fertilize turf before it undergoes stress," says Bob Raley, Turf Agronomist, Agrium Advanced Technologies. "Fall feeding enables cool-season grasses to establish strong roots for the spring growing season and prepares grasses more effectively to survive stresses of the summer golf season."

The best time to prepare greens to bounce back quickly in the spring is (depending on geography) during the late-fall; for McBride, he applies a controlled-release fertilizer in late-October, after the course has shut down for the season.

"Many superintendents go out three or four times with a slow release fertilizer, but I have been using Spread it & Forget it consistently for four years," says McBride. "I apply it once per year on



Fall fertilization will enhance spring green-up without the excessive growth that often comes with early-spring fertilization. Green-up will often last into mid-spring, so an early spring fertilization app is not needed.

Mooreville GC's fall fertilization schedule

AERIFICATION

- Bentgrass greens mid-September
- 419 Bermuda tees and fairways mid-July

PRIMO MAXX – PLANT GROWTH REGULATOR

- Applies on greens September-November using GGD (growing degree day method)
- Applies on fairways and tees June-September every 18 to 21 days

DURATION CR CONTROLLED-RELEASE FERTILIZER

- Applies one pound of nitrogen/1,000 sq. ft. in a controlled-release fertilizer and a granular soil conditioner with humic acid to regulate the soil pH levels
- Depending on weather and turf conditions, in mid-October Lederer applies an additional 0.5 pounds of nitrogen/1,000 sq. ft. across his course
- Fairways – 2.5-3.5 pounds/1,000 sq. ft. of nitrogen
- Greens and tees – 3.5 -4.5 pounds/1,000 sq. ft. annually

fairways, and every year I have, the course has less dollar spot and virtually no surge growth.”

McBride completes one granular application in the fall to target root systems, which physiologically is meant for primary nutrient uptake and will consistently feed the plant over a longer period of time. This gives plants an extra boost for winter, taking turf into the late spring. For tees he adds an all-mineral blend due to the additional wear and tear during the season.

“Because of the way controlled-release fertilizers are formulated, one application can meet all of our course needs for the

Continued on page 30

When Speed Matters - SpeedZone® Wins.



And Speed Always Matters.

The competition can talk all they want, but when the checkered flag drops, the winner is clear: SpeedZone® Southern Broadleaf Herbicide for Turf. SpeedZone Southern delivers broad-spectrum control of the toughest weeds fast. In fact, you can see visible results within 24 hours. That means more happy golfers, and it's one of the reasons SpeedZone is the #1 speed herbicide on the market.

G pbi/gordon
CORPORATION
An Employee-Owned Company

800.821.7925

pbigordon.com/speedzone_southern

Why controlled-release fertilizers work

Fertilizer manufacturers accomplish a controlled- or slow-release reaction with compounds that bind with the highly soluble nutrient sources or by encapsulation of the fertilizer source within a water-insoluble coating. The purpose of a controlled-release fertilizer is to prevent 100-percent release of the nutrients immediately following application, but instead to promote metered feeding, based on soil temperature.

Industry-leading products release their nutrients through a proprietary polymer coating, and by varying coating thicknesses water can move through the coating at different speeds to the nutrients inside. This extends the time of feeding, ensuring nutrients are delivered when the plant's root zone is most ready to absorb the nutrition.

Continued from page 29

season," says McBride. "One year we had so much rain during the season and typically you would see surges in certain areas, but our course maintained smooth, even growth. Our golfers were very happy."

Maximizing root growth

Fall fertilization yields an increase in rooting, maximizing root growth of cool-season turfgrasses that occurs in spring and fall. Some root growth will occur in winter if temperatures are above freezing, whereas little if any growth occurs in summer. During fall fertilization in most regions the roots are still growing at a time when shoot growth has ceased, thus allowing the roots to make full use of the fertilizer.

"When fertilizer is applied in late fall there is an increase in the plant's carbohydrate reserves that occurs," says Raley. "Turfgrasses accumulate carbohydrates in stems and roots during fall, which gives turf a slight advantage to resist winter injury and aid in disease and environmental stress resistance the following spring and summer."

When deciding on a fall fertilizer program, remember to consider climate and grass type to determine what will work best on the course. Slow- and controlled-release fertilizers effectively deliver more nutrients to intended plants when needed — nutrients stay in the root zone and feed the plant at the root, which results in green, healthy turf in fall and spring, while promoting disease resistance in the summer. **G**

Eric Miltner is a Turf Agronomist at Agrium Advanced Technologies. He can be reached at emiltner@agriumat.com.

J2 GOLF MARKETING & PHOTOGRAPHY

We know Golf, and have been helping golf vendors, golf courses, municipalities and private clubs develop their image and strategies to communicate.

- Collateral Design
- Course Photography
- Trade Show Booths

- eMail Marketing
- Digital Brochures
- Advertising Campaigns

- Custom Websites
- Media Relations
- Demographic Analysis

Websites & Digital Flip Brochures

FROM PERSONAL SUPERINTENDENT WEBSITES AND ELEGANT MEMBERSHIP BROCHURES, TO VENDOR MARKETING SOLUTIONS, YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT HANDS WITH

J2 GOLF MARKETING & PHOTOGRAPHY

206-324-2442 + INFO@J2GOLFMARKETING.COM