



IMPACT

By Rod Johnson



Often the game of golf is viewed by non-participants as a trivial pursuit; a game for the wealthy having the same impact on our society as a rained-out ice cream social. Fortunately for our profession, this is far from the truth.

In fact, golf has a tremendous impact on our nation's economy. The amount of money associated with golf is staggering. A million dollar professional tournament is small potatoes when compared to the total economic impact of the game. Imagine the dollars spent annually by the players of the game on equipment, clothing, green and cart fees, membership fees, travel, and golf-related real estate purchases.

Of major impact is the business of golf. Not just golf course management but total club management. Think of the dollars spent on course maintenance, facilities management, new construction, and the labor force employed.

Collectively, our profession is having tremendous impact on the game. There can be little argument that golf courses are in better playing condition than ever. Of more impact is that golf

courses are more responsibly maintained than ever. More golf courses are being maintained by responsible, educated, competent golf course superintendents.

The United States Golf Association chose the eve of this year's U.S. Open to announce that it will spend \$5.4 million on research over the next three years, more than double its previous funding. The USGA has directed 3 million of those dollars towards evaluating the impact of golf courses on the environment.

In announcing the USGA decision to study how fertilizers and pesticides affect the environment, C. Grant Spaeth, the USGA's president, said, "Right now the game is threatened by the lack

of knowledge about the environmental impact of pesticides and fertilizers used to maintain golf courses. I can think of nothing more urgent to golf than to answer this environmental question, and to propose responsible solutions."

I cannot think of anything more urgent to the game of golf — period! The information generated by this research promises more impact towards golf than square grooves ever came close to creating.

Do golfers understand the potential impact of this research? I think not. The lines to donate funds to turf research will never be as long as those to purchase Karsten Copper. Will this research be enough or will other interests and future technology demand more? Quite probably the latter.

The real impact to our profession is that golf's "Big Daddy", the USGA, recognizes the importance of this research and is moving for answers. Other threats to the game will surface (super golf balls, nonconforming grips, etc.), but this research takes on the utmost importance and promises long-term impact.



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