



# Fertilizers, Werewolves and Instruction Make a Bad Threesome

by Rob Schultz

Whenever I read another story about the danger of pesticides used on golf courses I think about a kid named Bennie, who used to hang around the local muni where I grew up.

To say Bennie was a tad strange is like saying that Saddam Hussein has a problem with his temper. Bennie had hair, lots of hair. Even though he couldn't have been older than 17, hair covered his back and you could braid the stuff coming out of his nose and ears. We called him the werewolf.

To make matters worse, nobody ever learned anything about him because Bennie had a tendency to talk the way rock-and-roller James Brown sang.

One day, when a buddy and I were playing golf with a couple of local old-timers, we were told the story of why Bennie was Bennie.

"He likes to lick his golf balls when there's fertilizer on the greens," said one of the old-timers.

For years, I was stupid enough to believe that story. One day after I slurped all over my Maxfli and found one of those tiny white nuggets between my teeth, I ran home certain to find hair growing where it wasn't supposed to. I was certain I would soon be howling at the moon.

Unfortunately, there are still plenty of people who still believe in similar stories. Like my neighbor, who boards up his house whenever I spread Milorganite on my lawn.

The untruths about fertilizers and pesticides head my list of what I have decided to call golf stupidity.

Next on my list are the instruction features that make up the bulk of the national golf magazines which flood my mailbox every month.

These instruction pieces have wonderful intentions, but they should carry a warning label that says: "Surgeon General's warning that digesting the hundreds of instructional pieces appearing in monthly magazines can cause hypertension, broken hearts and angry golf partners who have to listen to four

hours of instruction speak while trying to complete a round."

One article will tell golfers to keep the right elbow tucked close to the body at all times while the next one will say it's OK to let the elbow fly away from the body.

Yet another magazine will blare a headline on the cover that offers sure-fire cures for the slice. When you start reading, the author, Dr. William Allen Randolph Joseph, who received doctorates in physics and anatomy and why the most intelligent people only have first names, will explain that is you keep your left arm at a 30 degree angle, your right arm at a 46 degree angle, your chin at a 14 degree angle and clip six nose hairs prior to your round, you won't slice.

I've played golf with lots of folks who have read every word of every instructional article ever written. They are notoriously the slowest golfers on the planet because it takes them twenty minutes to set up for every shot. I'd love to pen an instructional piece entitled, "Sure-fire cure to speed up play." The article would be summed up in three

words: "Ban instructional articles."

Everybody needs a golf lesson once and awhile. I've had plenty of them and learned that the best teachers offer maybe one piece of advice that involves just one swing thought. But such advice wouldn't sell magazines. Golf has mirrored the medical profession. Reading a golf instructional article or spending gobs of money on one of those silly instruction schools are like going to the doctor looking for a prescription for a sinus infection and he tells you he needs to run a battery of tests on you. Since you have no clue about medicine, you agree to \$1,000 worth of tests and go home feeling no better and without the prescription you wanted in the first place.

Next on the list brings us back to the golf course superintendent's position, or the job that virtually every golfer on this planet thinks he knows more about than the golf course superintendent.

There's an old saying that claims there are two certainties in life: Death and taxes. Wrong. There are three things: Death, taxes and gripes about the golf course.

I can count on one of my golf partners complaining about a blade of grass that's either out of place or not green enough during every round of golf. Here's the scenario: One of my partners pulls out his Golf Digest and reads over how to address the ball to ensure he won't slice, skull or chili-dip—terms which belong more in a Jeffrey Dahmer trial than on a golf course. Then the golfer makes the worst swing in the history of the game and his ball sails over two fairways and into a divot left by another Golf Digest subscriber. Now my partner is mad. "Why didn't the grounds crew repair that?" He screams. "Now there's no chance I can make par."

My other partners stand around and wonder how a golfer can act like that. I always have a pat answer.

I tell them, "He likes to lick his golf balls when there's fertilizer on the greens."

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