



## A POTPOURRI

*"A potpourri of random thoughts from a random man."*

By Mark Kienert



A very warm welcome to Dr. John Stier and his family from our family of golf course superintendents here in the Badger State. If you attend any Badger vs. MSU football games in the future, John will be the one looking like the "Yule tide" kid all decked out in red and green I'm sure. The WGCSA is looking forward to years and years of applied research data that you can generate, complementing the staff members already in place.

Red and green are the colors that remind me of one of my favorite television shows, "The Red Green Show" found on PBS. Who hasn't used a roll of duct tape to quickly make a repair to those ever so comfortable mower seats? One of my favorite episodes was when Red was going into the compost business and was going down to the golf course at night to remove the top 12 inches of topsoil from a par 5 fairway to mix with all the refuse from the lodge. Just the thought of Red placing a plow blade on the front the Possum Lodge van for the purpose of rolling back the sod almost caused me to split a gut. He informed viewers that golfers would never miss the soil because the fairway would be only a foot lower! Great humor! Check it out if you haven't seen the show yet.

Humor on the golf course has always played an important role in keeping the crew's minds sharp and the day from becoming a tedious bore. I can recall the times when we had one person who ran from tree to tree back in the days when we still used rotary trim mowers and hand clippers to groom the trees around the golf course. "Why?", you might ask. To get the job done in one day, so that he wouldn't have to mow for more than two days in a row. (By the way, it worked.)

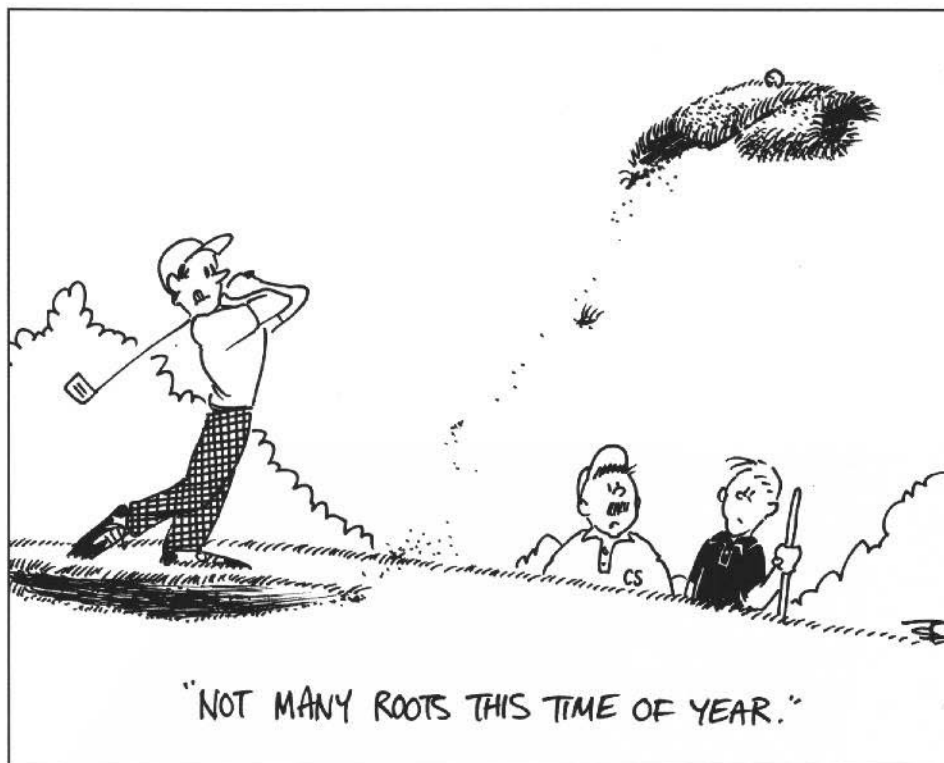
My former mentor, Mr. Danny Quast, would always regale us with the stories of LD 'borrowing' bikes to

get to work. "Did he ever return the bikes?", you might ask. "Well, no," as the story goes. LD just tossed the bikes down a steep ravine adjacent to the course making it to work on time each day. It seems when the authorities finally found out about all the theft, there were over twenty some bikes in the ravine. The guy had to get to work on time. Seems LD had a slight drinking problem and had lost his license.

One of my favorite episodes came earlier this spring when one of our typical good humor guys spray painted Mr. Smiley face on the others' coveralls in a rather noticeable location while planting flowers up around the clubhouse. The perpetrator did not own up to the prank until three days later. This employee was the 'butt' of one of the funniest practical jokes I have witnessed in some time.

Did anyone notice or did anyone care about GCSAA's recent deal with the footwear company Etonic? Earlier this year, I was in the market for a new pair of golf shoes and I was seriously considering the new line of spikeless shoes offered by the Etonic Company for my own personal evaluation. I've always felt that golf course superintendents should be the ones to evaluate these shoes for their effects on the turf, most notably our putting greens. But because we don't sell them, we don't get them. These would be our version of the 'teaching shoe.' I have to tell you that I changed my mind rather quickly about the entire Etonic line when I bailed out our pro shop staff by changing countless metal spikes to those of the non-metal variety when they were very short staffed in May. (Who wasn't?)

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The biggest problem, as I see it, is that the shank size used by Etonic is just too small and is recessed to the point that the plastic spike does not get a good grip in the threaded socket. I cannot tell you how many of the beige spikes I have found on the golf course, almost all coming from this brand of shoe. Nike also offers a small shank spike size which is a pure nightmare to exchange. My guess is that the shoe company is telling the spike manufacturer that your shanks are too short for our shoes and the spike company is telling the shoe company that your shank holes are too small for our shanks. If I were judging this finger pointing, I would take sides with the spike manufacturers. This is a problem that gives tremendous ammo to the nay-sayers of the spikeless revolution.

PS: For those of you still waiting to make the conversion, your job will be made easier as the Wisconsin State Golf Association banned the use of metal for tournament play in 1997. I cannot tell you how many members of Bull's Eye have come up to me and remarked at the tremendous difference in green puttability this year. I can also tell you that during my watering tour on Sunday nights of the fact that the greens appear "morning mower fresh!" Too many times in the recent past, I would head home almost sick to my stomach by the appearance of a spiked mess around cups after a hard day of weekend play. What a difference. My thanks to all of you who offered leadership and

fought the battles first in your club. It has made all of our jobs easier.

Speaking of spikeless, GCSAA finally made a stand on a political issue by endorsing the spikeless movement. This is perhaps the first baby steps of what I hope will become a more vocal effort by Lawrence on all of our behaves. This in my mind was an all too easy one and somewhat after the fact, but much appreciated none the less. How about sending a message to tire manufacturers to make a "soft-tire" for all of those horseless chariots that our members are so fond of? I will be adding another 1000 feet of ugly gravel cart paths to Bull's Eye just to counter the wear. Wish I could afford asphalt.

Wouldn't it be great if all equipment manufacturers were required by law to send you service bulletins and updates when the manufacturer made changes to parts to beef them up in response to field failures? We purchased brand new mowers whose grass shields vibrated apart. The new part was gratefully sent to us at no charge as it was covered under dealer and manufacturers' warranties, but the part was constructed differently from the original. The new part was a vastly superior upgrade over the original design. This reminds me of the "old" Volkswagen bug commercials that always told you that there were 97 improvements made to the car, yet it always looked the same on the outside. To think that I always wanted a '67 Volkswagen convertible for my run-around car. Can't wait until the new 'bug' arrives.

Have you ever thought of what your perfect or "ideal" golf course would be? Aside from the obvious agronomic aspects for good golf course conditions, I thought it would be fun to possibly list some not so obvious choices for your consideration. On my "ideal" golf course, trees would not die. If I wanted a treeless golf course, I would have taken a job on one of those prairie golf courses. The way I hit the ball today, my game would be best played on a golf course wide enough for a 747 to land. There isn't one day that goes by that I'm not noticing a dead tree or one in a serious state of decline due to some environmental stress.

The golfers would actually repair their own ballmarks plus two others.

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The standing joke around Bull's Eye Country Club is that my ideal golf course would have an optimum play level of zero. I can tell you from experience that during the drought reconstruction of 1988 when the course was closed to play, there wasn't one ball mark blemish on my greens. What a beautiful sight, one that many of us will only see in our dreams.

Members would be more understanding and would actually listen to you without their self-centered logic entering the picture at some point in time. I have always wanted Monroe to write a column on 'real members,' but he says that it would be too easy, like "shooting fish in a barrel." Boy, could we have fun comparing notes on some of our most unusual demands or complaints if we did. My all-time favorite demand comes from the public golf course I maintain. I get to work only to find a message on the answering machine stating that there were small biting bugs everywhere covering the fifth fairway and that I should do something about

them. I travel over to that fairway only to find nothing, as you might suspect. This reminds me of the member who says that there is a bees nest out on number 16 and not tell you precise location on the nest portal. Where do you start looking?

I have been a disease scout for the TDDL for a little more than three months now. I can tell you that it has been a real educational experience for me. One item that I recognized for years, but didn't really appreciate, is the swing from a *Poa annua* stand to that of bentgrass. I chose to monitor soil temperatures using an obvious *Poa* patch located in the center of my nursery green. By the middle of July, I began to notice that this patch was dissolving in a sea of bentgrass and by the first of August, the *Poa* had virtually disappeared. The patch had disappeared. The only thing still present to help me locate the exact spot is the small plantain lily weed inches to the west.

Now if we could only get through winter without the typical snowmold

or ice damage that can cause so much winterkill. That would make it an easy year to grow grass.

A lot of our winter kill can be attributed to the phenomenon of "global warming." Some disagree that this event is even taking place. I have to wonder though, as I have a candle spurt of growth on what used to be a four-foot white pine that is almost 36" taller. Talk about making up for lost growth after our unusually cool dry spring. This also supports a report that corn in the state is 19 inches taller than average for this time of year. Corn in this part of Wisconsin was at or slightly below average vs. the traditional "knee high by the fourth of July."

Here's to a great fall. Let's hope the weather is conducive to record aerification, cleanup and recovery times. Then we can look forward to our 'off season' of educational opportunities, 40-hour work weeks and football weekends. Remember, only 886 days until the year 2000. 🍂

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