



So Abler's Gone...What's Next?

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As many of you already know, Steve Abler has taken a sales position with Syngenta and is no longer the manager at the Turfgrass Diagnostic Lab. As some of you may also know, I am his replacement. For those who do not know who I am or those who I have only spoken briefly with, I will use this article as a more formal introduction.

I graduated from UW-Madison's undergraduate turfgrass program this past May with majors in horticulture and soil science. I am currently pursuing an M.S. degree in plant pathology at UW-Madison under Dr. Geunhwa Jung, while simultaneously managing the Turfgrass Diagnostic Lab. I became interested in the golf course maintenance profession during my summers off from high school while working at The Bog, near where I grew up in Grafton. Enjoying the work and the outdoors, I decided to pursue turf management as a career once I arrived in Madison (after an initial major selection of bacteriology...poor choice). I worked as an intern two summers ago at the Meadow Valley course of Blackwolf Run under Ron Bierwirth, and also had the privilege of being on the crew of the PGA Championship that was held at Whistling Straits that same summer.

I was just beginning my search for an assistant superintendent position when Geunhwa asked me if I was interested in the possibility of further studies. After a little wavering and few job openings, I accepted Geunhwa's offer and preparations were made for me to work out at the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility doing research and aiding Steve Abler at the TDL. I worked closely with Steve this past summer, learning as much as I could on disease diagnosis and the efficient manner in which he coordinates the lab. While all the heat and humidity caused havoc on many area golf courses, it proved a great way for me to see a full range of diseases that we may not see in Wisconsin every year. I even got a few week test run on managing the lab myself this past summer when Steve's wife Becky gave birth to little Matt, who properly was watching the US Open at Pinehurst when we arrived at the hospital for a visit.

Steve did a great job of building the TDL into an accurate and efficient tool for turf managers to use when a problem arises, and I intend to keep it that way. There will be no major changes in the structure of the lab at this moment, but that is not to say that none will be made in the future. If you have a sugges-



tion on how the lab can better serve you as a turf manager, please do not hesitate to let me know. This lab was created to serve you in a timely and accurate manner, and it is supported by you in great numbers. Being 22 years old and a recent graduate, I doubt I will have an immediate answer to every one of your questions. But great minds such as Dr. Jung, Dr. Stier, Dr. Williamson, and Dr. Casler are here for assistance when needed, and I can assure you an accurate answer to all of your questions will be given in a short amount of time.

One thing I would like to ask of those of you that submit samples to the TDL this upcoming season is to please send or bring in pictures of the symptoms in relation to the surrounding environment. There are often several different types of fungi on samples submitted, and descriptions or drawings can be hard to decipher. Pictures can be especially helpful in determining if abiotic factors such as traffic or shade are having a significant effect on the decline of your turf. Pictures can be sent digitally to plk@plantpath.wisc.edu or mailed along with the sample.

Contract memberships with the TDL are also still available for 2006! Please contact me by email or at (608) 845-2535 if you are still interested. Stay tuned for further updates from the TDL about any disease developments and also the dates for the 2006 Snow Mold Field Days. I look forward to working with all of you this upcoming summer, where hopefully we are discussing how green your grass is, how happy the golfers are, and how little work I have to do! ♣