



MIDSEASON UPDATE

By Bob Vavrek, Agronomist
USGA Green Section

As expected, the unusual weather patterns this season have had a considerable influence on the condition of turf at golf courses across the Region. The direct and indirect effects of a mild winter, little frost development in the soil, and warm temperatures in March are still apparent well into summer.

Relatively little winterkill to *Poa annua* occurred last winter compared to more severe and extensive losses of turf in 1996 and 1997. There was, however, a fair amount of snow mold activity this spring, which persisted into June on several courses. Consequently, the pressure from golfers to accelerate the recovery process was intense if you were one of the unfortunate few who experienced significant winter injury. No surprise here — courses that utilized temporary green recovered much faster than courses where golfers chose or demanded to play the damaged greens. Strange how the golfers' tune changes in July and August when the putting surfaces are still extremely thin and bumpy.

A bumper crop of weeds may also be an indirect effect of the mild winter weather and early spring. Clover, dandelions, and plantain on fairways/roughs, along with chickweed in greens have been especially troublesome. Even crabgrass has made a comeback this summer. Everyone seems to favor Confront for clover control, and to be honest; the 1-pint rate really performs well in Kentucky bluegrass roughs. However, consider this formula I developed after a half dozen visits to concerned superintendents this season:

Confront + Bentgrass Fairways + Heat Stress = Crispy Turf + Grumpy Golfers

Many superintendents also believe that the playing surfaces have more *Poa annua* this year, perhaps due to the high survival rate of *Poa* over the winter. As a result there has been a considerable amount of Turf Enhancer and Primo being used to knock that darn new *Poa* out of the greens. At the same time, the superintendents at courses that experienced winterkill can't wait for that wonderful, beautiful *Poa* to fill into those thin spots on greens and thus avoid potential unemployment.

Many of the Weeping Willows and Silver Maples that were overplanted on many golf courses after American Elms were decimated by Dutch Elm disease were toppled over by high winds this summer. Some huge uprooted willows were only 30 years old, much to the surprise of golfers who firmly believe the trees were there and an integral part of the layout, back in the 20's when Donald Ross designed the course. Hopefully, golfers will realize that trees are not a permanent golf course feature. Renovating a fairway bunker is much easier than replacing a mature tree that "makes" the hole.

Who knows, maybe the damage to trees on many courses will result in more thoughtful long range planning for the future. Maybe more money can be allocated for maintaining the trees already on the course, instead of simply adding more and more trees to the layout. Maybe high quality native trees, such as Burr Oaks and White Oaks, could be carefully blended into the design of the course instead of overplanting with fast growing shallow rooted species such as Cottonwoods and Willows and Silver Maples. Maybe a little open space on the course is good. Maybe I'll break 80 this year, too!

Heavy early season play has taken its toll on the superintendents and maintenance staff at many courses visited this summer — Memorial Day seemed like the 4th of July and the 4th of July seemed like Labor Day. What effects the heavy play will have on the condition of greens and fairways by the end of the season remains to be seen. One thing for sure — Labor Day will seem like Christmas Eve. 🍷

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SHIKITARI

By Steve Millett

Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Shikitari literally means "what we have come to do." In other words, it's the time-honored customs and practices of everyday life in Japan. Since arriving here for the National Science Foundation's Summer Institute, I have experienced many aspects of Japanese shikitari, and often, my American shikitari clashes with that of my Japanese hosts.

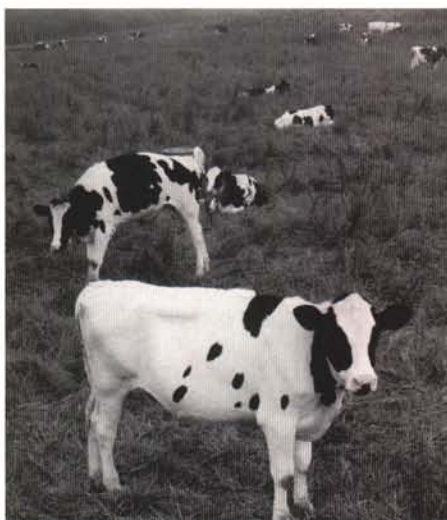
My first big struggle was bowing instead of shaking hands. How deeply to bow is a difficult thing for Westerners to understand, so I began just nodding slightly instead. I came upon this compromise in the writings of Walter Mondale, former vice-president and ambassador to Japan. We both agree that there are so many rules to bowing, called *ojigi*, that it seems silly for an American to even attempt it. The Japanese understand this. *Ojigi* is still very common at shrines and temples, but the practice continues to change. The practice of bowing at a ninety-degree angle toward a picture of the Emperor officially ended when the Allied Forces occupied Japan after World War II.

After all the bowing is completed, it's time to exchange business cards. Sounds simple enough, right? Well, there is proper etiquette for *meishi-kokan*. For instance, you must accept a business card offered to you with both hands, looking at it thoughtfully and carefully. It is considered an insult to stick the card immediately in a pocket or to write on it in front of the person who gave it to you. Business cards are such an important part of Japanese business culture, stores sell card books, so your *meishi* are available for quick reference. In this culture, contacts and appointments are set up through mutual acquaintances, making networking of vital importance.

Honorifics are very important. If you don't know what honorific means, don't worry. It's not a common concept in America. The word means showing respect or honor,



I enjoyed a soak in a volcanic hotspring near the active Mt. Iwate.



Japanese dairy cows looked a little skinny.

and in Japan, the respect is displayed in addressing someone. Adding *-san* to someone's last name denotes respect. Wives call their husbands *shijun* in front of company. It means master. The first time I heard a woman address her husband that way, I laughed out loud! There is a pervasive, male-dominating atmosphere in Japan, and women tend to be very submissive. This could be



The Japanese Raccoon-Dog was everywhere and always reminded me of a drunken and obese Bucky Badger. The animal was a symbol for food and drinking.



The 1998 Kanken baseball team took fourth place in the Japan Institute Tournament. That's me third from the left in the front row. I was the first foreigner to ever play in the tournament.

why some Japanese men are afraid of American women.

Eye contact is sometimes avoided during conversation. There was an etiquette book written in the Muromachi period (1338-1573) that specified certain levels of eye contact in accordance with the social status of the person being addressed. Speaking Japanese is enough of a challenge without all these added factors!

Conversation, also known as practicing our Japanese, is the main activity at tea time. In the laboratory where I've been studying, the Matsumoto-san Lab, tea time is every day at 3:30, always ending at 4:00. We usually drink green tea, or very strong coffee (can't wait for a cup of Steep 'N Brew!) with some Japanese sweets, usually made of beans and rice, beautifully decorated and assembled. Lunch time is announced with a bell and everyone heads to the cafeteria for a bowl of curry rice or tempura set. It's a quick lunch, because some take naps and others want to exercise.

Walking around the Institute, a popular lunch-time activity, also comes with many rules. One must wear flip-flop shoes. I had to change out of my hiking boots and in to flip-flops to walk the grounds. I have to wear different flip-flops in clean areas like the sterile hood room. Then there are the flip-flops for going to the bathroom! You must leave the flip-flops right outside the toilet and always leave them pointing toward the stool.

Speaking of bathrooms, there are two types of toilets in Japan: Western and Japanese. The Japanese toilet is

basically a hole in the floor that you have to squat over. These toilets scare me. I tried to use one in a public bathroom once, but chickened out at the last minute when I had a vision of falling over while squatting and getting my pants all wet and having to explain what happened! Needless to say, these toilets are not conducive to one's morning constitutional and I almost injured myself in rural Hokkaido trying desperately to wait until we returned to the hotel and a



My teammates constantly challenged the "American-jin." I was victorious in my arm wrestling matches until I fractured my thumb in practice.

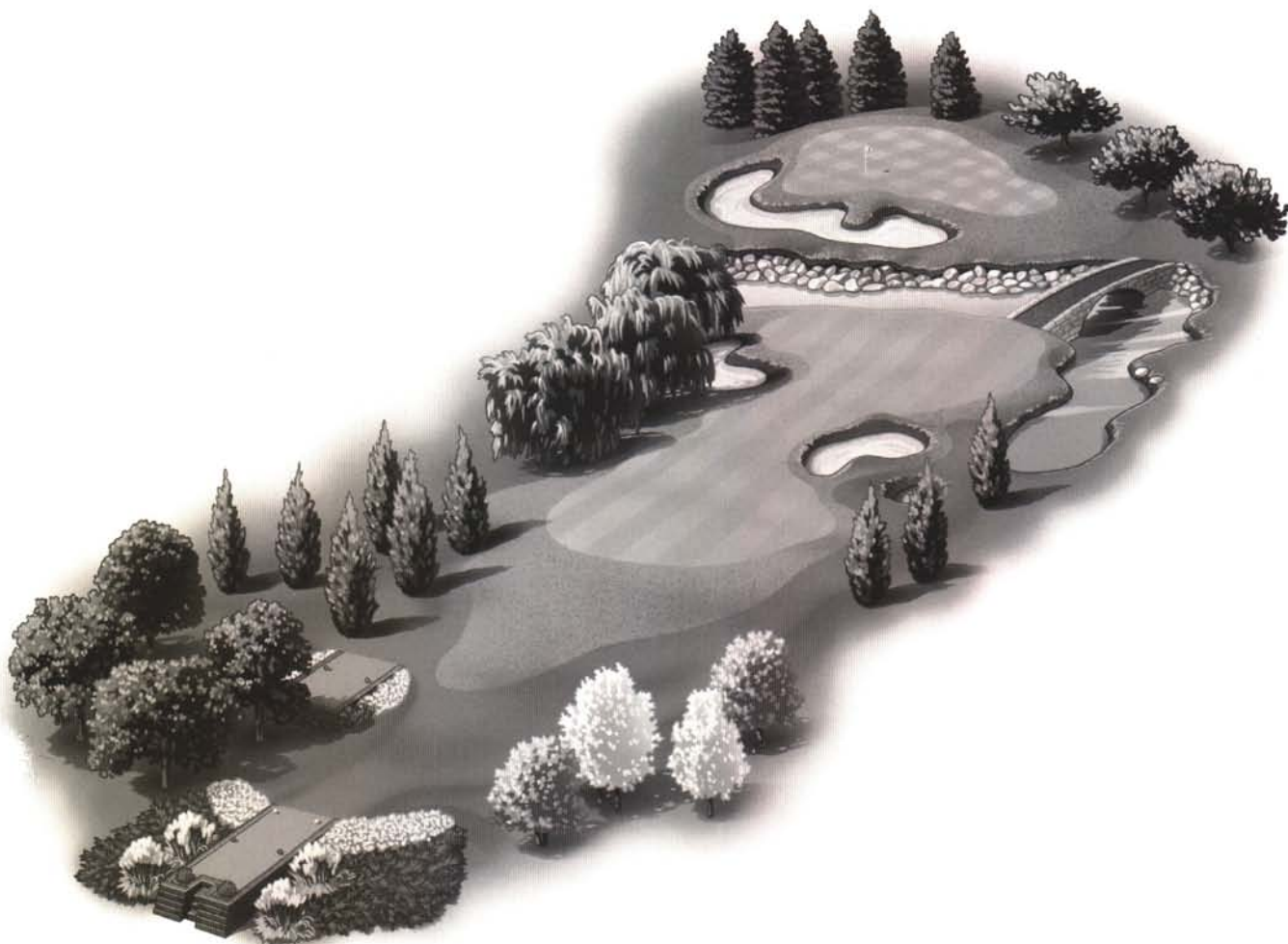
Western toilet. It was right after reaching that Western toilet that I paused to think about what a lucky man I am.

I have been so fortunate to have been selected for this science exchange. I have learned so much about myself, about Typhula snow molds and about Japan and its people. Hopefully this Japan/Wisconsin snow mold bridge of knowledge will continue to strengthen after I'm gone. 🌱



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The Too Efficient Superintendent

By Pat Norton
Nettle Creek CC

Isn't it interesting to note the similarities between operating a golf course...a drug store...fast food restaurant...or practically any other type of small business?

Because I'm very involved in our very busy public golf course...I get to see and observe all facets of our business. And though I'm not directly involved in either the golf shop or the restaurant, I see enough to know what's being done correctly or sometimes, incorrectly.

For example, our golf operation and golf shop really hum with people and the business that they bring with them. Golfers/golf patrons never wait for any length of time before they are helped with whatever they need. Customer service/satisfaction is one of the really important aspects of our business.

On the other hand, our new clubhouse with its idea of 'fine dining' and high prices is experiencing all sorts of management and operational problems...is causing lots of resentment amongst our members and golfers in general...and is destined for failure, I'm afraid! We have screwed up a good situation by building too much of a clubhouse! Does this sound all too familiar, Mr. Superintendent? Personally, it's the second time that I've been through this ordeal...once was enough, thank you very much!

And just why is it that golf course owners don't listen to their management experts enough? I suppose for the same reasons that hamburger chain corporate owners don't listen to their store managers...and think that, as owners...they have all of the answers.

This idea of *customer service* used to be sort of vague to me...and probably a lot less important. Aren't all similar types of businesses pretty much the same? Isn't one McDonald's just like another? In most ways, yes they are. In other significant ways each store is unique.

Our family knows, for example, that the McDonald's here in Morris

has great service, the employees really hustle and are friendly, and the place is always very clean and constantly being cleaned. Hence, we enjoy going there. Don't we all have certain expectations upon entering any McDonald's?

An extreme of sorts is the McDonald's near the Joliet Mall. We've gone there half a dozen times over the past four years...they do have a really cool PlayLand...but this place is always dirty and waiting for service is a certainty! Everybody knows that feeling, I think...the typical family comes in off the road...and runs into a roadblock in the form of slow moving lines and apathetic employees. But the fault only minimally lies with the actual employees...so I never complain directly to them. The problem with it all is poor management.

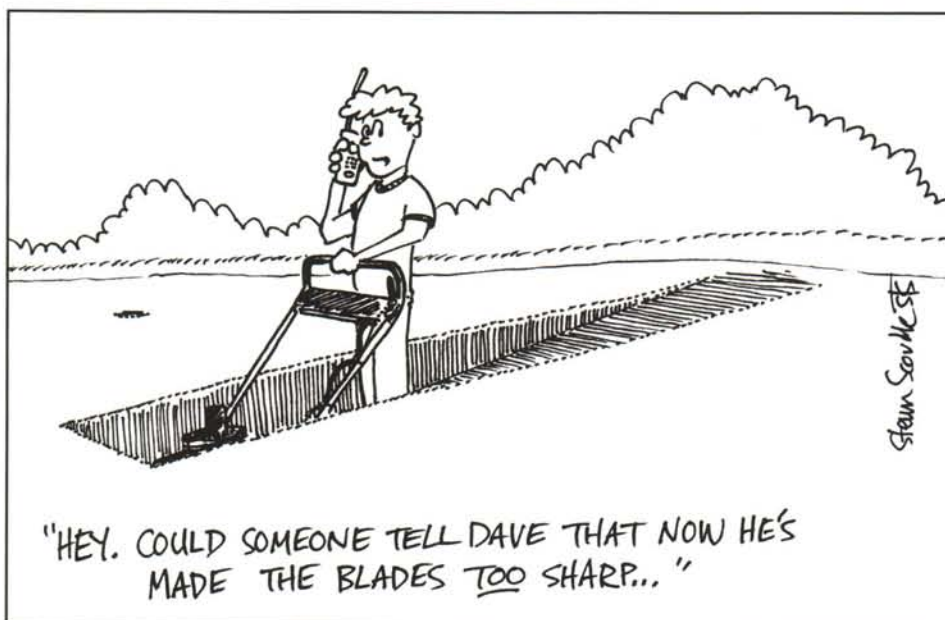
Poor management permeates these places, I think. Some small businesses have a very warped sense of proper management strategies. Let the customer wait because we're ultraconcerned about our labor costs? Understaff constantly so that the tables, floors, and windows are rarely cleaned and the customer has

to ask for a washcloth to clean off a place for his family to sit? They are basically managing to avoid losing money instead of managing to make money!

The smart corporation is not as concerned with zealously controlling expenses as they are with doing everything correctly so that the customer is always impressed and totally satisfied. This attitude is what brings people back to any establishment...repeat business, right?

Actually, management can get caught in the middle also in this negative situation. Managers work for profit driven corporations, don't they? So what comes first...the customer or controlling expenses to the extreme? Hey, folks, our little golf course is also a profit driven corporation...but we realize fully that unless we give our patrons more value than they expect for the price paid...they will not return!

As a negative example, on this very warm Sunday in August...wife Susan and children Megan and Tommy decided to first go catch some lunch at the local Burger
(Continued on page 26)



(Continued from page 25)

King...and then do some shopping at the new SuperWalMart in town. We chose Burger King this day for whatever reason...but after our experience today I'm not sure that I ever want to return!

In contrast, the local McDonald's enjoys a great reputation...while our local BK has such problems that I'm amazed that we do return! After waiting in line today for 15-20 minutes, we began talking with our fellow unhappy customers.

Coincidentally, everybody had the same opinions of the situation and had anecdotes to tell about past BK experiences. I am usually a patient guy, but after awhile I got a little bit worked up! Wait, wait, wait...only to discover once again that there wasn't a totally clean table in the place, the floor as usual was littered with old french fries, napkins, and other assorted trash.

Burger King has an interesting setup also. Unlike at Wendy's, where they have a special self serve station for napkins, catsup, salt, pepper, straws, et al... that people tend to forget...BK controls its costs to the extreme in this department also. The forgetful customer has to stand in line again...or try somehow to get the frazzled workers' attention...as they desperately try to fill the incoming orders...in order to get the extra napkins, straws, or whatever...that people usually need.

Upon finally receiving our order we noticed the corporation plaque on the wall and the 'team mission statement' next to it...*"Burger King will be the number one hamburger chain establishment in America in terms of customer satisfaction and individual store profitability"*...it all had a certain amount of obvious irony to it all.

The loose link between all of this

and the title of this piece is the fact that we in the golf turfgrass world are also in the business of customer satisfaction. Our customer is the golfer or member, and our product is the golf course.

Our job is to create and maintain golf course playing conditions that are consistently good and clean...just like McDonald's is consistently good and clean. Golfers have certain expectations when they patronize ours or any other public golf course...nicely conditioned greens.. beautiful fairways and tees...a clean and tidy layout...and a friendly, helpful staff both inside and out on the course.

The problem is that sometimes we find ourselves trying to be too efficient...just like the BK corporation. Each and every day out on the course we plan and organize projects, daily chores, repairs...and always with an eye on the man-hour clock and the fact that as the weekend approaches...OT looms on the horizon!!!

To avoid the OT bugaboo, I usually a) kick my people off the property early on Friday, or depending on my mood, b) decide to bite the bullet...get the course looking great on Friday/Sat AM...and incur too many hours of overtime.

Of course, by Sun morning as I am figuring out timecards for the week...and forgetting how critical it was to work the overtime...and forgetting how nice the course does look for the weekend...and fretting over my weekly labor costs!

So, at times I am just like those management types that I despise...trying to do too much with way too little...and taking for granted the fact that golfers do notice when things on the course aren't quite up to snuff!

I had an interesting conversation once with a friend of mine in which

we realized the fact that our *total* course hourly labor budget was about equal to what his course was spending on just his two key men!

To me, that was a real eye opener...in the sense of what we were trying to accomplish at our golf course...which probably is just plain unrealistic. I've also compared that labor budget to the figures provided by fellow superintendents at other, better known public courses in south ChicagoLand.

Again, we spend quite a bit less on our employees...we have no full-time mechanic or assistant superintendent...and operate with many, many first year people that stay for one, two, or three years at most before moving into a real job at one of the industries in our county!

Then, the too efficient superintendent enters the fray...thinking all the while that he can handle the situation and still provide comparable conditions to those found elsewhere. His day consists almost entirely of crisis management...running around the property trying to stop that new employee that's spotted way *out there* operating some piece of machinery incorrectly...before said employee either runs over some female golfer or runs the darn mower into a tree.

Or else it's the constant *hands holding* of these new guys..."let me show you just what tools you'll need for this job, fellas...so just let me pick out the proper shovels and rakes for ya'll...and even though I can see that you don't really understand your assignment...get going anyhow...so it's almost like...***you'll need this much toilet paper to do the job correctly, my friend...!!!***"

The too efficient superintendent is also characterized as being always there...meaning out at the golf



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course. There is never any time off to enjoy even a monthly meeting...a field day...or a day off with the family...which leads to some serious burnout by late August.

The too efficient superintendent...in a tough year like '98...feels like he's constantly on the MultiPro 5200...spraying something...somewhere...with impatient golfers always just a hole behind...I am seriously checking into the Bioject as a means of getting some control over the disease pressures...way too hectic this year trying to keep ahead of dollar spot, brown patch, pythium, and take all patch.

The too efficient superintendent also tries to *get by* without a proper assistant...who would have the same zeal for the golf course. Instead, he relies on the long time college student employee...who basically knew how to do quite a few things...and who this summer discovered something beautiful called a *hot summer romance...which affected his work...at times...just a bit!!!*

Actually though, these summer romances amongst young people should never be discouraged... they make for great entertainment as the

young buck drags into work...late, bleary eyed, and totally hung over...again.

The only rule is that at some point the young lady gets properly introduced to the boss so an assessment can be made as to the worth of the inconvenience caused...which in Tims' case seems to have been well worth it...certainly for him, and even for us, I think...

It all brings back some very fond memories, eh what?

The too efficient superintendent also becomes just like that branch manager at BK...defensive over the lack of quality...or ready with reasons that sound too much like excuses for poor conditions. Actually, playing conditions are never poor or bad... because when prioritizing...the too efficient superintendent can usually provide very nice playing conditions... it everything goes as planned.

If any other variable, such as bad weather, trivial requests from superiors, irrigation problems, etc. pop up...there is no other choice but for these unforeseen problems to fall directly into the lap of the already overburdened, too efficient superin-

tendent. You see, he cannot admit that he needs help...when in truth...a helpful assistant could relieve much of the routine burden...enabling the superintendent to stay much fresher and ready to deal with unexpected problems.

It's sort of like the business owner insisting that he do everything himself...eventually he'll get so bogged down that he won't have any time or energy to deal with the potential growth of his company.

If you see yourself as a too efficient superintendent...always fading out at night before anyone else in the family...and really starting to hate arising in the mornings...do as I do. ***Be a party pooper and get more sleep!!!***

Then review your situation at the course...and honestly ask yourself about your future. Then get angry and vow to explore changing your life...and remember that all of that efficiency is usually taken for granted.

Let your superiors know just how "too efficiently" you operate their golf course...and find out from them if that's truly what they want from you.

You may be surprised at their reply. 🍷

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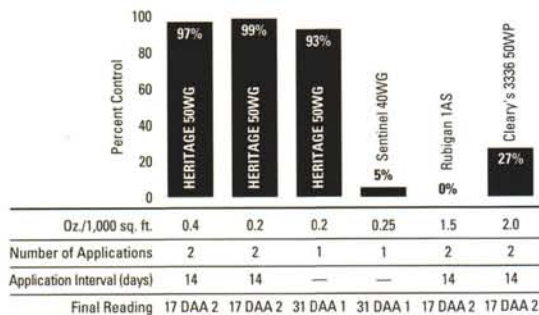
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Anthracnose¹ (*Colletotrichum graminicola*) on 80% Annual Bluegrass, 20% Perennial Ryegrass

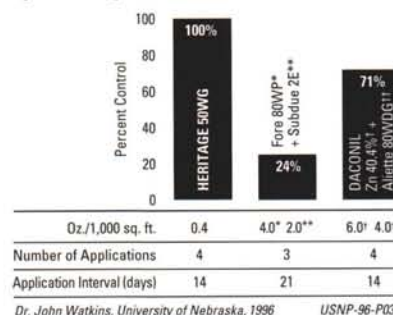


Dr. Don Scott, Purdue University, 1995

US 67-95-P354

¹ Also isolated from plots: 2 species *Rhizoctonia*; 3 species *Pythium*; and several species *Curvularia*.

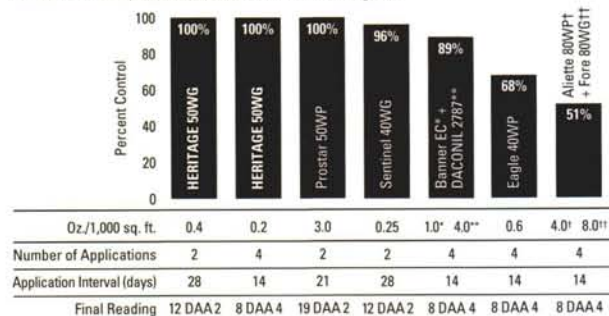
Pythium Blight (*Pythium aphanidermatum*) on Perennial Ryegrass



Dr. John Watkins, University of Nebraska, 1996

USNP-96-P030

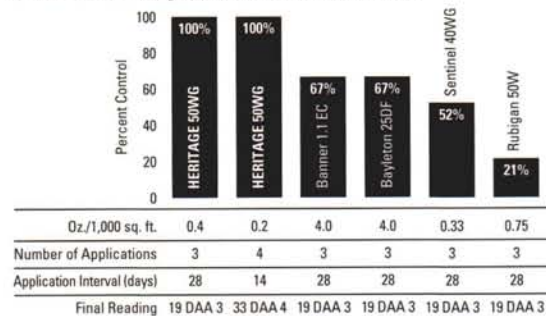
Brown Patch (*Rhizoctonia solani*) on Colonial Bentgrass



Dr. Pat Sanders, Penn State University, 1994

US 66-94-P356

Summer Patch (*Magnaporthe poae*) on Kentucky Bluegrass



Dr. Bruce Clarke, Cooke College, Rutgers University, 1994

US 66-94-P362

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The three day event was held at Jacobsen headquarters in Racine. Among their activities were tours of golf courses managed by WGCSA members — Mike Handrick's Racine CC and Ric Lange's Meadowbrook CC. Kenosha CC superintendent Scott Bartosh also participated.

The "faculty" also included WGCSA members — Danny Quast and Bob Vavrek. UW-Madison grad Dr. Milt Engelke of Texas A&M also lectured students.

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The Jacobsen 'Class of 1998'!



Mike Handrick gave students a few pointers on pin placement at Racine Country Club.



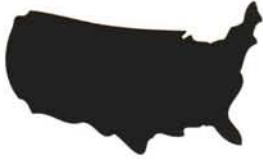
UW-Madison grad Jamie Johnson took a turn on the Ransomes 305.

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A Hazard is Always a Hazard

By David Finney, Golf Course Superintendent
Lakeview Resort, Morgantown, West Virginia

Editor's Note: This will be the third time Dave Finney has written for The Grass Roots. Previous articles have dealt with the US Open the last time it was held at Oakmont, and the rules of golf that come into play in golf course maintenance operations.

Dave is writing about rules of golf again. He has an unusual honor — he is the Rules Committee Chairman of the West Virginia Golf Association. The article here is very timely this time of year as many Wisconsin golf course superintendents embark on autumn construction projects; he had the superintendent in mind when he authored this piece, which originally appeared in the West Virginia Golfer Magazine. Thanks to Dave Finney! MSM.

Occasionally rules questions may arise when hazards on the golf course become unplayable for one reason or another. Here is some information that every superintendent may find useful with regard to hazards.

The rules of golf define a hazard as any bunker or water hazard on the

course. Let's consider what would happen if a ball landed in a water hazard that was under construction with the installation of new bulkheads, or a ball landed in a bunker that was completely washed out and in the process of being restored to its original conditional. Surely you would think there is some relief under the rules for situations like these, that temporarily alter the structure and playability of hazards.

Unfortunately for the golfer, a hazard is always a hazard, and there is almost never free relief from a hazard regardless of its condition, with one exception.

In the first scenario your green-keeping staff is installing new bulkheads within the confines of a water hazard, and a ball enters the construction area. Rule 25-1b addresses this situation, saying that the ball may be dropped without penalty in the hazard as near as possible to where it lay, in an area that provides *maximum available relief*. Take note that the ball must be dropped in the hazard, and the player is not afforded total relief from the construction, only *maximum relief available*, which by definition allows the player to drop on ground that is most nearly normal.

In order to gain total relief from the



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