TDL

watch for at your course over the next two weeks. This is in addition to the disease alert emails sent out to contract members, which warns them if weather conditions will be conducive for a damaging outbreak of disease such as Pythium blight. Complimentary "University of Wisconsin Turfgrass Research Reports" are also mailed to those contract members who request it, keeping you up to date on the latest and greatest ways of managing your turf.

The fee system is also set up to allow for flexibility in membership depending on the financial capacities of your facility. For each \$100 in membership you sign up for, you get one sample diagnosis with complimentary report. For example, a \$500 membership entitles you to up to five sample submissions with report throughout the growing season. For those who become \$1,000 contract members unlimited samples may be submitted, which is perfect for municipalities or ownership groups that operate several golf courses.

If you are interested, please fill out and return with check the contract membership order form provided on the following page. For any further questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (608) 845-2535 or email at plk@plantpath.wisc.edu. And a heartfelt thank you to the 2007 TDL contract members for all of your tremendous support.

Thank you to the 2007 TDL contract members!!!

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Ideas That Evolve Into Practices

By Pat Norton, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

H ow many new ideas are superintendents bombarded with... seemingly every week? How often are new ideas suggested by a sales rep? Presented at a seminar? Ideas are constantly being thrown about in conversation...or passed across the desk during a sales call...as the mail is sliced open...or discussed over the phone.

My personal favorites are the ideas that are chipped into the pot from fellow employees or members...with their two cents worth concerning their ideas for the golf course. "Oh swell. A new tee...where? Revisions to the mounding left of no. 7 fairway...how big? And for how much?" Or...another favorite...the idea of 'bugs in a jug.' The beneficial bacteria in this series of applications are supposed to enhance and complement the naturally occurring, millions and billions of already present, free bacteria now occupying every square inch of the soils of this golf course... "The beneficial bacteria in that gallon jug are supposed to do what to my ponds??? For how long??? At what price??? Over what surface acrea? Supported by whose research?"

Other ideas are simply mandated by an owner at a weekly meeting...which either means that there is no choice...simply get it done...or try to become an instant attorney and argue the case against that seemingly innocent idea.

The bombardment of ideas is never ending...and neither is the process of deciding which is a valid idea and which is not. It all becomes a process of filtering through the ideas like a net skimming the debris from the surface of a pool. I sometimes feel like a traffic cop deciding on the ultimate fate of ideas. Other times I feel like a bouncer at a bar...good ideas get into the club...while rotten ideas get bounced into the wastebasket...and dumpsterized with the rest of the garbage!

Any good golf manager is well seasoned when it comes to sifting



GOLF IN THE FLATLANDS

through ideas. A skilled golf manager is usually seasoned and roasted to the point of toughness...which is a job requirement these days as the bombardment of new, fresh turf ideas continues its onslaught...

It sometimes makes me feel as though I am running around with a shield emblazoned with our club logo...defending the homeland that is our golf course...while Excalibur in my other hand slashes and destroys all of those bad ideas hurled at us across the blood soaked fairway battlefields of northern Illinois. The good ideas, of course, are spared a bloody death...cleaned up...and admitted into the maintenance hall of honor for an audience with the superintendent king/queen.

I will admit that there are a few ideas that I viewed with skepticism for quite a long time that have now soaked their way into the consciousness of this golf course and have evolved into standard operating practice. The really bright superintendents probably adopted these simple measures long ago, but I am sort like that opossum that cannot quite figure out that headlight/nighttime/oncoming car thing...and keeps getting squashed out on the road.

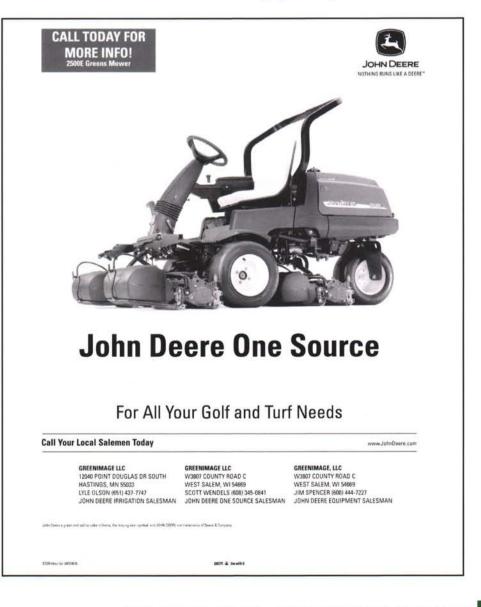
About five hundred years ago...or maybe five years ago...I was approached by a golfer/ag fertilizer dealer concerning the idea of spraying liquid slow release on our bent grass areas as the exclusive means of providing nitrogen to the turfgrass. He maintained that many of his lawn care dealers were doing the same thing with great success and for a very low, low, low cost. I had always taken the view that liquid fertilizer was a good accessory for specialty use...but could never replace organic blend, slow release N products as the fertilizer of choice for bent.

After repeated sales calls...this

fert dealer obviously thought that I was an absolute idiot...and that nothing could dent that tough, thick, seasoned shell known as the male human skull. And I, by the way, did feel totally smug and proud that I was able to fend off and resist yet another 'idea assault' and had maintained the integrity of my reputation...as a guy with a skull thick enough to repel pretty much all incoming ideas.

Life went on...as did the seasons at beautiful Thick Skull CC. As with all ag/turf inputs, fertilizer started to compare in price to precious gold. Nitrogen started to reappear in the precious metals section of the Periodic Table of the Elements. Sulfate of potash became a family heirloom and began to show up in safety deposit boxes at banks everywhere. Fertilizer prices kept climbing skyward as farmers worldwide responded to the audacity of people everywhere demanding to be fed. They obviously do not know just how important golf really is...but, I digress.

One day I noticed a familiar voice and face playing the 19th hole here at NCCC. I hadn't seen Garret for about two, or maybe two hundred, years. He had just finished golfing here at Thick Skull...was enjoying himself thoroughly having a brew...and in I



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walked. He asked me to lower my shield and sheath my sword...which I gladly did due to the heat, the humidity, and the hour of the day. After buying me about fifteen beers, he eventually asked if I would ever reconsider liquid fertilization. I responded that I had been reconsidering it all for the past 24 months...could think of nothing else...and was ready to let the idea of liquid fertilization evolve into practice.

Even though I was ready...after all of those months...to accept liquid nitrogen fertilization from an ag dealer...my dry fert *turf sales* rep...was not. He obviously thought, and still feels, that a 50% slow release liquid 20-3-5 containing 4% Fe(1500 gal bulk delivery @ \$4.10/gallon) could never be the basis for nutrition of Penncross tees, greens, and fairways. At the time, I somewhat agreed with him. Fifteen hundred gallons is quite a bit of material to dispose of should it have a propensity to be phytotoxic to bentgrass. And although reasonably priced, the total cost shot past \$6000...enough to prohibit duplicate purchasing of dry material.

But, it was one of those ideas that kept evolving itself over time...trying to figure out the best method of penetration. Once adopted...this idea has proven itself to be a total success. There is absolutely no phytotoxicity, is economical, and results in fabulous looking bentgrass. This liquid fertilizer has become the basis for every tank mix that we spray...whether used by itself, or tank mixed with fungicides, herbicides, growth regulators, or wetting agents. It is the only fertilizer source used over the past two seasons on 33.5 acres of bent fairways, bluegrass fairway collars and aprons, and our bentgrass tees. We do spray other fertilizer sources on greens...but this product is used extensively there also.

I vividly remember Wayne Kussow advising the audience more than once or twice that if soil tests show high levels of K...why keep applying more of the stuff? All of our soil testing over the years has shown our fairways to have high levels of P and K...so a high N liquid product fits here perfectly. We like to keep to the basics here at Thick Skull....

Another idea that has evolved into practice here is DryJect. When I first heard about DryJect a few years ago, I was not interested and very skeptical. Bringing in a contracting team to aerify these greens after many, many seasons of traditional core aerification didn't make much sense to me. The cost of the contractors, the silica sand(UniPar), and the trucking from up near Rockford led me to believe that it was all beyond the limits of our maintenance budget.

After thinking it through for a few hundred years...light began to filter in...and we decided to try a small area for a demonstration. DryJect Chicago is actually located here in Morris...and they were very anxious for a chance to show us their stuff. The guys from DryJect showed remarkable patience with me as I muddled my way through the process of letting this good idea evolve into practice. We honestly didn't see great results from their demo...probably due to it being too small an area. Better results would show up in a situation in which half of three or four greens were DryJected and differences judged over a growing season.

Over the years, we had tried out many different versions of greens aerification. In the past, we core aerified spring and fall...to the dismay of springtime golfers, golf staff, owners, etc. We quickly modified our program into solid tine spring, core aerify fall...which evolved over time into possibly solid tine spring and fall...and then a few seasons when we did nothing in the spring...and solid tine fall. A general decline with declining results...the emergence of more and more algae...and a bit of moss...as we continued to



cut and maintain Penncross as though it really could tolerate repeated seasons at .125 cutting height.

We initially DryJected all of our greens in mid-May...using four machines and about forty tons of UniPar. Within two or three weeks...remarkable things were happening. Greens filled in and became much denser...with the algae getting crowded out! Our greens looked healthy, dense, and uniform!

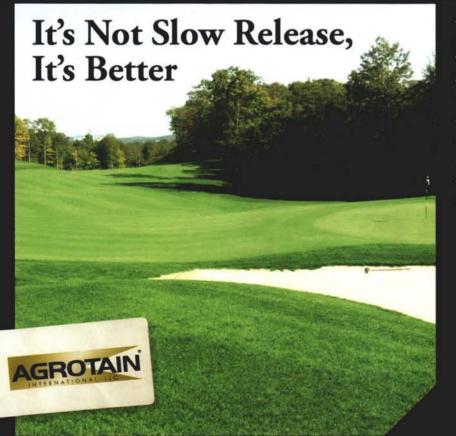
The science behind this is simple. As high pressure water injection sucks the sand down into the hole...the lavering that I had let build up over too many years of aerification and topdressing inconsistency is broken up...creating thousands of channels for water, oxygen, and root infiltration. Golfers noticed quite quickly that our greens were markedly better, and once they pointed it all out to me...even I could see the obvious improvement in our greens! DrvJect is a most excellent maintenance practice...especially on these native soil greens.

We repeated the whole thing in late October...for another \$5,800. Not that we had the money just lying around or could even really afford the cost. Basically, we got the green light because our owners wanted the course at its best to show to possible buyers...*kind of like cleaning up the cows before auction*. Golf and outing schedules force guys like me into much later aerification dates than are desirable...but with this process there is no muss, no fuss, no plugs to clean up, minimal sand to drag in...and the job is complete!

We all know that each golf season is different and that change is inevitable. Our elderly owners did not find a buyer for this place...so for them...they did the next best thing. They decided to lease the golf course out to Tim Miles Sr. and his company GolfVisions. So I will soon be an employee of his company and be experiencing some interesting changes...which is fine with this veteran superintendent. I look forward to working for a company that manages or leases ten courses versus a single course owned and operated by relatives.

Be it ideas and practices involving greens aerification, fertilization practices, or anything else out here on the course...a company that specializes in golf course management interests me greatly. Myself and the others here who are going to work for GolfVisions will fit in beautifully. We will find out in 2008 what really is required to make this golf course operate profitably...and wonder aloud why it was that...for all of these years...we did not or could not...achieve that elusive goal of profitability.

Probably...we need to have more good ideas evolve into standard practices. \checkmark



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An Emerald Intruder

By P.J. Liesch, Department of Entomology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Wisconsin is well known for a lot of different reasons, ranging from our brats and beer, dairy industry, numerous farms and our sports teams, to the North woods and our terrific outdoor recreation. Many would agree with me in saying that the outdoor recreation is perhaps the top offering of the state. I've gone on many road trips to visit friends and family throughout the state, and there's usually a golf course just around the corner. Courses such as Lake Arrowhead in central Wisconsin, the top-notch courses at Kohler, Hawk's View in Lake Geneva, and even the course at Peninsula State Park in Door County come to mind when I think of all the places I've visited throughout the state.

While playing a round at any golf course, you may think of the open fairways and greens as the most important part of the game-and without a doubt, they are when you're worrying about your score. However, other aspects are perhaps even more important when it comes to the overall experience of the game and the aesthetics of the course. Bob Ryan, a columnist for the Boston Globe, once eloquently described golf as "a passion, an obsession, a romance, a nice acquaintanceship with trees, sand, and water." From my own experience, the trees on a course can have a subtle, yet powerful influence upon the appearance of the course and your experience there.

As I mentioned earlier, Wisconsin is famously known for our trees and woodlands, yet there has been a growing concern over the past few years over the health of our trees-particularly our state's resource of ash trees. This is due to the imminent threat of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), more simply known by those who work with it as EAB. Recent estimates of over 717 million



ash trees show that we've got a lot at stake here in Wisconsin. Ash trees can be highly valued for their strength and hardness and are commonly used to produce tool handles. In addition, anyone that has ever played baseball or turned a bat on a lathe will have a certain appreciation for the hardness and durability of ash wood.

Having two years of experience through UW-Extension as a field surveyor looking for the Emerald Ash Borer, I know the challenges of finding this elusive pest on a firsthand basis. As it turns out, I'm originally from southeastern Wisconsin, where many of the golf courses that I grew up playing on are loaded with ash trees. I remember one unpleasantly warm July day inspecting a suspected EAB infestation on a golf course in southern Wisconsin. Afternoon golfers would drive by in their carts, ask what I was doing, and after a brief explanation of my task, they'd respond along the lines of. "it'd be a real shame to lose the trees on this beautiful course."

At the current moment, EAB has been found in seven states, with Michigan and Ohio being the epicenter of the epidemic. To date, EAB has NOT been found in Wisconsin, but EAB seems "ready to pounce" as there are now infested trees within 40 miles of our southern border. After I finish describing this nearly unstoppable pest to groups such as the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association and Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, I usually elicit at least one comment from the audience of, "so should I just cut down all my ash trees?"

While it's true that at this point we have no guaranteed way to stop the Emerald Ash Borer, we're far from tossing in the towel. The multi-state effort to combat the spread of EAB has been successful in reducing or eliminating the spread via nursery stock, ash products, and shipping materials. In fact, despite regulations and the threat of fines, the movement of firewood by campers and hunters is really the main concern regarding the spread of this pest.

When EAB is found in Wisconsin, the state is considering several management options including eradication in hopes of quickly "snuffing out" any infestations before EAB becomes firmly established. However, this approach has been highly scrutinized, and as more research is completed, a shift from eradication to other management strategies may occur. Consequently, leaving open the possibility of using chemical controls (insecticides) against EAB.

At this point in time, insecticides are not being recommended from an eradication perspective especially since the success rates in the insecticide trials can vary dramatically-far from a magical solution to the problem. In addition, it would literally be too cost prohibitive to treat all the ash trees in a woodlot or a forested area. However, it's important to note that there have been some insecticide trials showing promise, and we may be able to protect individual trees in our yards and on our golf courses.

Those interested in more information regarding EAB in general or the use of insecticides against EAB are encouraged to visit the Emerald Ash Borer link under the "Outreach" heading on the UW-Madison entomology department webpage:

http://www.entomology.wisc.edu/ Editor's Note: P.J. Liesch is a graduate student in Dr. Chris Williamson's lab. ¥





By Rob Schultz, Sports Writer, The Capital Times

It's appropriate that Steve Stricker and Jerry Kelly will celebrate their induction into the Wisconsin State Golf Association's Hall of Fame during separate dinners this month.

Wisconsin has been lucky to be the home of the two successful PGA Tour pros. What has made their stories so special is that their lives include so much more than hitting a golf ball.

On a personal level, Stricker and Kelly are tremendous family men who cherish their time with their wives and kids. They are involved in their community and provide great help to local charities like Very Special Arts and Vilas Park Zoo.

On a professional level, their most

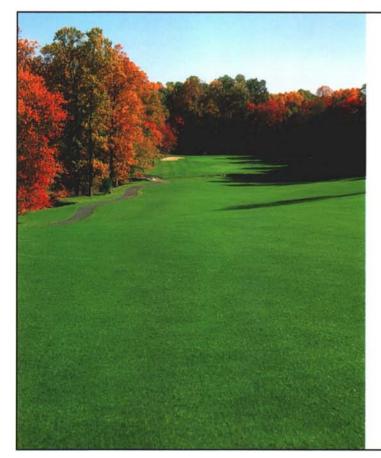
extraordinary deeds are how they've struggled - most of the time right out in the open for all of us to watch and critique – to overcome their shortcomings in their games to become among the best golfers in the world.

It would be difficult to come up with better examples of great Wisconsin values. George Bailey has nothing on Stricker and Kelly, whose wonderful lives have touched many others in positive ways.

"People laugh at us about those values, but in the great scheme of things, that's what is important," said Madison's two-time U.S. Open champion Andy North, who knows Stricker and Kelly as well as anybody. "Anybody would be proud to have those two as their kids," said North, who then added while chuckling, "Sometimes you want to smack one of them, but that's part of having kids."

On the surface, Stricker and Kelly seem to be polar opposites. Stricker, 40, whose Hall of Fame dinner was at Cherokee Country Club, is quiet and introspective, well-mannered and polite. If the PGA Tour had a Mr. Congeniality award, he'd win it every year.

Kelly, 41, whose Hall of Fame dinner was at Maple Bluff Country Club, is boisterous and wears his emotions on his sleeve. A former hockey player, Kelly walks a golf





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THE SPORTS PAGE

course looking like somebody who is craving a chest bump or a cross check. The galleries love him for it.

Truth be told, Stricker and Kelly are very similar golfers and that helps explain why they are good friends.

Their paths didn't really cross until they both reached the PGA Tour. Stricker, who grew up in Edgerton, dominated junior golf events and went on to become an All-American golfer at the University of Illinois. Kelly spent much of his youth playing hockey and didn't compete in many junior events.

After Kelly graduated from the University of Hartford in 1989, he focused only on golf and was hell-bent on making the PGA Tour. Few gave him much of a chance. After all, he had rarely won any tournaments he had played in. He didn't even win the Madison city men's tournament. That still irks him today.

But Kelly was the picture of persistence. Despite a sometimes balky swing, he worked on his game while he played mini-tour events few have even heard of and got a boost when he won the Wisconsin State Open in 1992.

After he hit a few million more balls, Kelly made it to the PGA Tour's new Hogan Tour, which is today's Nationwide Tour. By 1995 Kelly had won two events on that tour and was named its player of the year. Graduating to the PGA Tour, Kelly nearly won the 1996 Greater Milwaukee Open, losing to Loren Roberts in a playoff.

Kelly kept at it and nearly won the GMO again in 1999 before being overtaken by Carlos Franco. He made over a \$1 million for the first time in his career in 2001 and then finally won - at Hawaii and the Western Open in Chicago - in 2002. He's been among the top money-winners on Tour ever since.

Meantime, Stricker reached the PGA Tour in 1994 and quickly established himself as one of the young golfers to watch. Gifted with a beautiful swing, Stricker won during just his third full year on Tour - at the Kemper Open outside Washington D.C., and at the Western Open in Chicago in 1996. He finished fourth on the money list that year.

But instead of maintaining or bettering that performance, Stricker's game began to gradually slide until he lost all confidence in his swing and was starting down from the edge of the abyss.

Stricker lost his fully exempt card in 2004 and struggled through that year and 2005 before he became the picture of persistence, too. He spent the early months of 2006 hitting thousands of balls into the snow from a heated three-sided trailer at Cherokee. Always working alone, he didn't venture out from that trailer until he figured it out.

Stricker was the PGA Tour comeback player of the year in 2006 with seven top-10 finishes that helped him

end up 34th on the Tour's money list. It got even better this year after he won the Barclays and then gave Tiger Woods a run for the money before finishing runner-up in the inaugural FedEx Cup playoffs.

So Kelly and Stricker both used persistence to get through the worst of times. The only difference is those times occurred at different points of their careers.

"Welcome to sports," said North. "There are very few in sports who haven't had to go through that."

Young golfers, as well as many young people in general, can't get out of their own way these days without first seeking advice from mentors, parents, bosses or whoever they decide to call, text or email for help.

Stricker and Kelly are old-school men who have worked hard to know precisely who they are, what they are about and what they want. Thus, they don't need anybody's approval for anything. When time's up and a decision must be made - whether it's figuring out the line of a putt or joining a business venture - they make it and don't look back.

The two Wisconsin Tour pros bring to the table their own recipes for success that they each worked on alone until they were certain they worked. Those recipes, which include large portions of perseverance and confidence, will keep them winners no matter what they decide to do.

That's what Stricker and Kelly have in common. That's what separates them from so many others on the golf course and elsewhere. That's why they were inducted into the WSGA's Hall of Fame.

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