

Criticism--

(Continued from Page 9)

system of justice, criticism is best dispensed quickly.

Criticize In Private

The reason Ruth stops on her way into Robert's office is that someone else is in Robert's office. Ruth instinctively knows that it is inappropriate to criticize Robert in front of another staff member and without the benefit of a quiet, extensive, closed-door session in which he can air his viewpoint. Ruth also knows that discussing one employee's shortcomings with another is a disguised, malevolent form of criticism. Conversely, she is quick to praise, particularly in the earshot of others and, thus, is perceived as a supervisor who communicates with style.

Receiving Criticism

You're not the only one who feels the need to criticize. On occasion, your staff does too. Their criticism may be muted, concealed or disguised in the form of a suggestion. Whether you call these criticisms, complaints, grievances or suggestions, it is helpful to follow this four-point system:

* **Be courteous.** Treating employees with courtesy while they are offering feedback greatly affects their attitude. One way to convey your concern is to take notes of what they say and then repeat the essential elements so the employee is assured that you have full comprehension. You may even wish to thank the employee for bringing this item to your attention and let him or her know that you'll give it fair consideration.

* **Gather information.** Review the complaining employee's record, if only to determine that the employee is not a "chronic complainer." Is he or she frequently absent, non-productive, uncooperative or a poor performer? Realistically, this will color your perception of and reaction to the problem addressed.

* **Take appropriate action.** If the criticism or suggestion is justified, tell the employee what you intend to do to improve the situation. If the complaint is unjustified, be firm and calm in telling the employee so. Another possibility exists. The suggestion or criticism may involve something that you cannot change. This may take some explaining, but take the time to do so.

* **Follow up.** When the employee's grievance or suggestion is valid and helps you to better execute your responsibilities or helps the department or organization in some way, let him or her know it in a week or two. Often, employees' suggestions can improve overall efficiency.

James O. MacDonald, in *Management Without Tears*, offers some suggestions on handling chronic complainers. MacDonald

advocates a put-up-or-shut-up approach. This involves asking the complainer to prepare a written analysis of the problems and to propose solutions. If the complainer doesn't follow through, you can then convey the message that next time you will request a written analysis again. If the complainer does submit a written analysis, you can evaluate it on its own merits. MacDonald views this as a no-lose situation.

The hallmark of a successful supervisor is being able to effectively give and receive criticism. It has been said, "You're as big as what irritates you." If you let the small grievances and complaints of your staff get to you and every staff has them then you'll overreact and needlessly spend energy on brush fires while missing forest fires. If you establish a supportive, cooperative framework in which criticism can be both dispensed and received, then your employees will perceive you as an effective communicator and a highly effective supervisor.

Keys to Constructive Criticism

- * Criticize early in the day and early in the week.
- * Offer a few casual remarks to an employee who's been criticized earlier in the day.
- * Avoid criticizing when you're angry.
- * Listen to what the employee has to say.
- * Dispense criticism as swiftly as possible.
- * Criticize in private and let the employee have a chance to explain.
- * Be courteous when handling employee complaints.
- * Take notes as to what's being said and then repeat essential elements to assure full comprehension.
- * Gather information to determine if the employee is a chronic complainer.
- * Take appropriate action, i.e., change and explain, explain if the complaint is unjustified or explain if nothing can be done and why.
- * Follow up on the employee complaint a few weeks later by thanking them if operations have been improved.
- * Handle the chronic complainer with a put-up-or-shut-up approach.
- * Establish an environment in which both giving and receiving criticism can occur without being disruptive.



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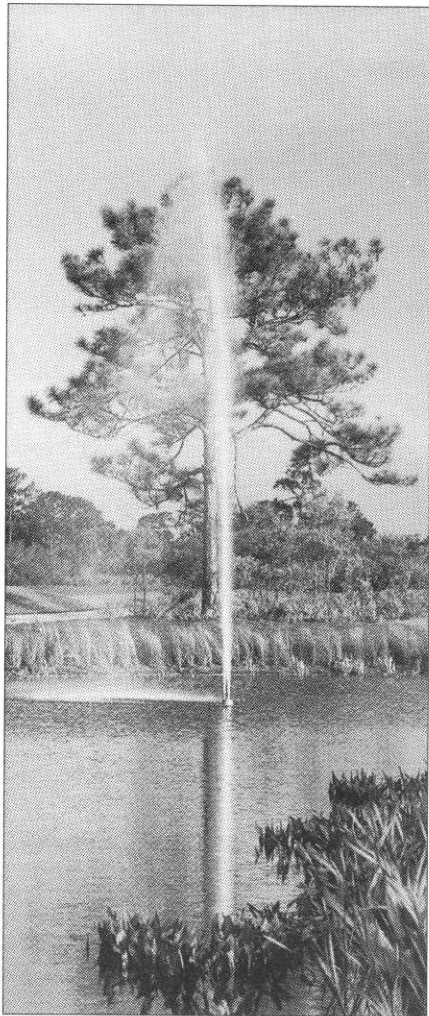
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Rain, Rain Go Away!

By **BOB VAVREK**
USGA Agronomist

So much for drought that was predicted for the northern Midwest. By mid-July, many golf courses have already experienced twice the average rainfall for the entire season. The rain has come in manageable ½-inch to 1-inch increments for the fortunate few. Others have been deluged with multiple 3-inch to 5-inch cloudbursts, which often occurred within a 24-hour period.

Frequent, heavy rainfall affects the playing surfaces in a variety of ways. Sand-based greens and tees frequently appear chlorotic as nutrients are pushed below the reach of shallow roots. Root dieback has been a common concern where the upper soil profile has been waterlogged for extended periods of time. *Poa annua* playing surfaces seem to have suffered the most. The hot, rainy weather promotes disease activity and wet wilt. *Poa annua* greens have seen-sawed between soggy and wilt conditions within a matter

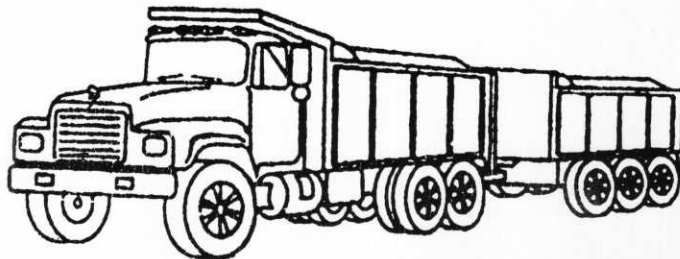
of hours.

Don't be afraid to pull out the spiker and/or aerator to address these problems. Quadratine aeration has already helped many golf course superintendents dry out mushy greens and promote a healthier balance of air and moisture in the root zone. A spiking operation every Monday morning can work wonders.

Weak, shallow-rooted turf needs to be irrigated carefully. Forget about deep, infrequent irrigation cycles on *Poa annua* greens until soil temperatures moderate and the root systems regenerate. Rely more on judicious hand-watering and less on the automatic irrigation system.

Well, at least the roughs look great.

What will be the end result of the soggy summer...stay tuned for the next update.



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MGCSA Notes...

A survey was printed in the June issue of *Hole Notes*. Please help out one of your members in his preparation to talk to his Board about year 'round employment. Your input is essential. You may e-mail your answers to scott@mgcsa.org or fax them to the MGCSA office at 952/473-0576 or just give the office a call at 800/642-7227.

* * * *

Penn State Launches Turf Web Site. Penn State's Center for Turfgrass Science recently developed a website for program information. The site contains educational program information, research reports, outreach activities and faculty, staff and graduate student contact information. The site address is turf.cas.psu.edu/.

* * * *

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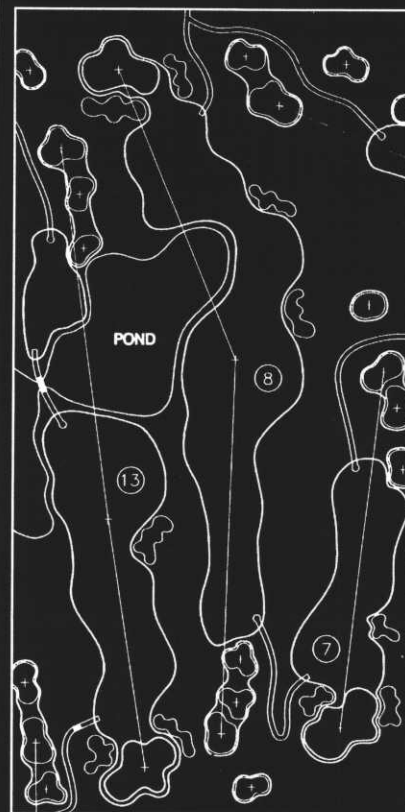


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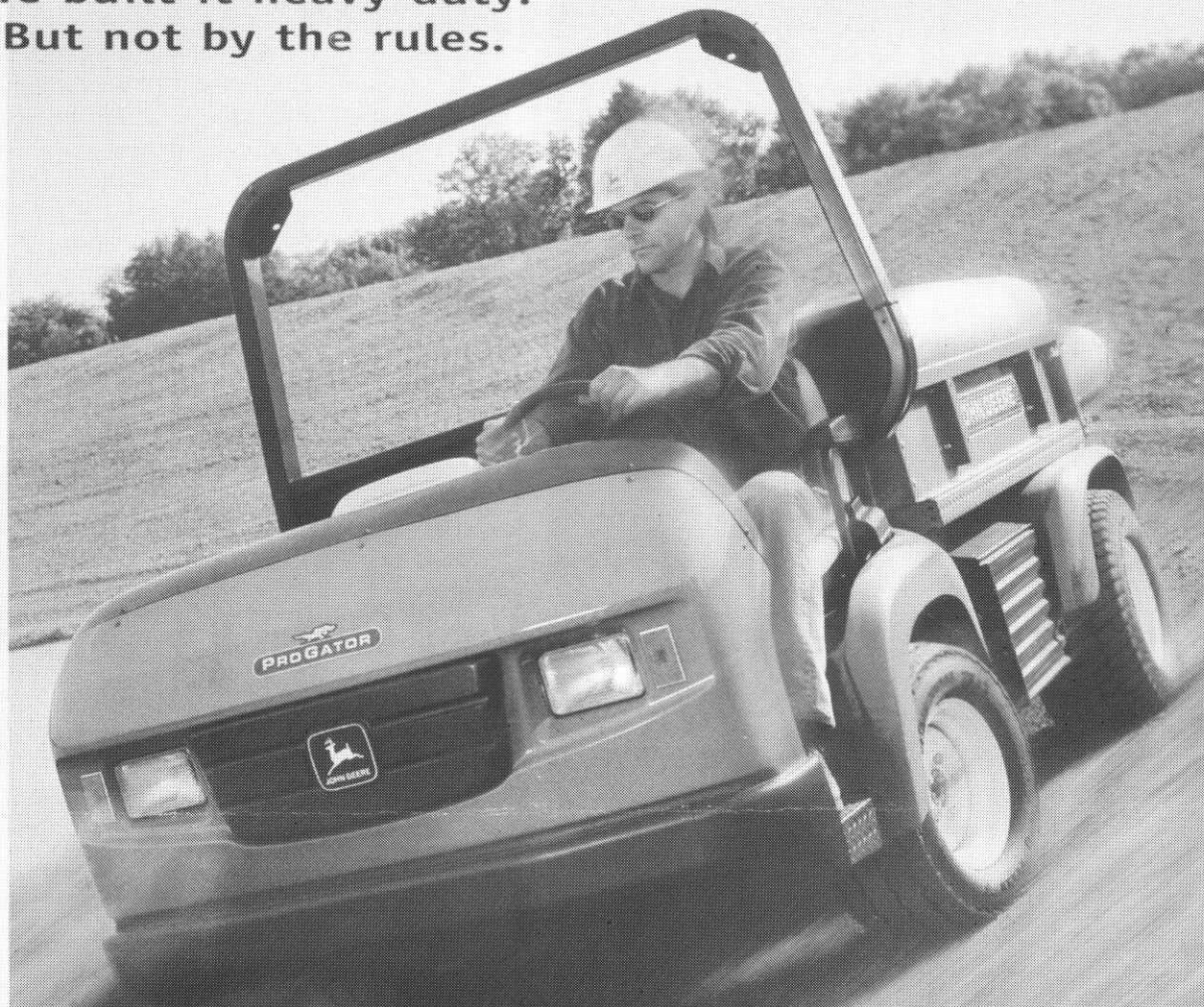


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Giving New Bunkers An Old Look

*A shortcut, stacked-sod technique can provide
a mature appearance for new bunkers.*

By **DARIN S. BEVARD**
USGA Green Section

Sand bunkers are an integral part of golf. They are hazards that catch errant shots, but their color and appearance also provide course definition and contrast. However, bunkers require a high input of manpower and resources for proper maintenance.

Today, as demands for improved bunker playability increase, more and more maintenance time and resources are needed to provide these conditions. Maintenance and golf activity impact the physical quality of a bunker. Over time, bunker faces deteriorate, bunker contours change and bunker drainage fails. Inevitably, the appearance and playability of the bunkers is severely compromised, and renovation may be needed to restore overall bunker quality. Often, the goal of bunker renovation is to restore the original architectural integrity of the bunkers.

At Rolling Green Golf Club, Springfield, Penn., bunker renovations were needed. The membership wanted the bunkers to be restored as closely to their original design as possible. More importantly, they wanted the bunkers to offer the playability and appearance of an aged feature in spite of recent renovation. With those thoughts in mind and armed with aerial photographs of the golf course from the 1920s and '30s, golf course superintendent John Gosselin set out to restore the bunkers to their original size and shape. Drainage problems were also addressed.

The initial phases of renovation were similar to those of any bunker project. The original contour and placement of the bunkers were estimated from the photographs, the bunkers were renovated, and drainage was installed. Then the regrassing of the bunker faces began. The goal was to provide an "eyebrow" effect on the top edge of the bunkers that could be seen from the teeing ground on par-three holes and from the landing area on par-four and par-five holes. The eyebrow was needed to prevent the appearance of a clean, new edge around the bunker. It was important that the finished product was consistent with the original character of the golf course.

The decision was made to use stacked Kentucky bluegrass sod to create the eyebrow. Rather than using full pieces of sod, the sod was cut into narrow strips about 6" wide. A soil ledge approximately 10" in width was created to provide the initial footer to begin stacking sod. Each strip of sod was positioned as closely to the outside edge of the

ledge as possible, one layer at a time. With each layer, soil was added and compacted between the sod and native soil. Tight compaction of the soil behind the sod was imperative to prevent the sod from shifting. Sod layers were added until the desired appearance was achieved. The number of layers varied from bunker to bunker. As few as three up to as many as 20 layers were used, depending upon the characteristics of individual bunkers.

The final step was to position a full piece of sod perpendicular to the stacked sod along the edge of the bunker. The perpendicular sod pieces provided a cap for the stacked sod. The ends of these sod pieces were folded under to provide the finished product and prevent the end of the sod from drying out. As the sod began to grow, the appearance of stacked sod was lost, resulting in the bushy "eyebrow" appearance. The result was nicely finished bunkers that appeared to have been in place for several seasons.

This technique is not for everyone. Its application depends upon the style of bunkering desired. Also, it is not known how quickly the narrow strips of stacked sod will deteriorate and require replacement. Nevertheless, this unusual technique results in newly renovated bunkers that don't look new.

Prior to renovation, the bunker edges were deteriorating. The bunkers had also become shallower as new sand was added over the years.

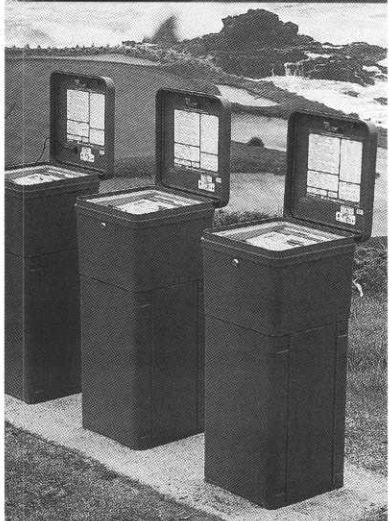
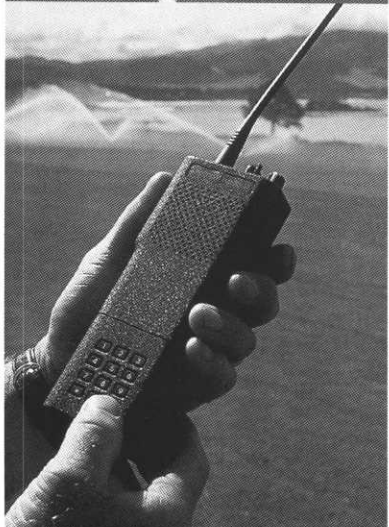
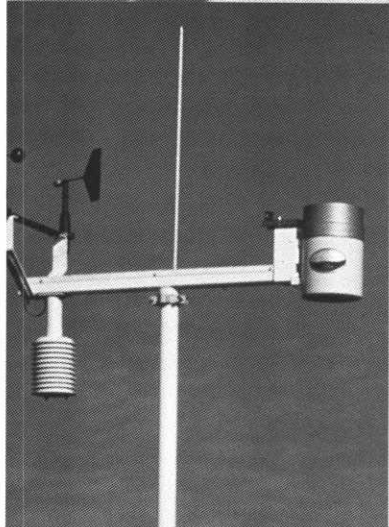
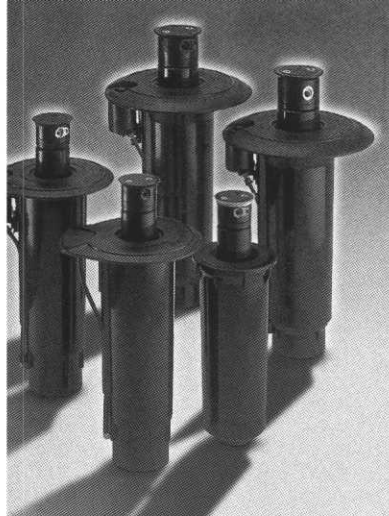
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The final step was to position a full piece of sod perpendicular to the stacked sod along the edge of the bunker. The perpendicular sod pieces provided a cap for the stacked sod.

Even prior to sand installation, the results of the bunker renovation provided a striking improvement over the old bunkers.

After renovation, the bunkers were slightly larger and deeper with distinct faces as a result of the stacked sod method employed. More importantly, the finished product fit in with the overall character of the golf course. ✂



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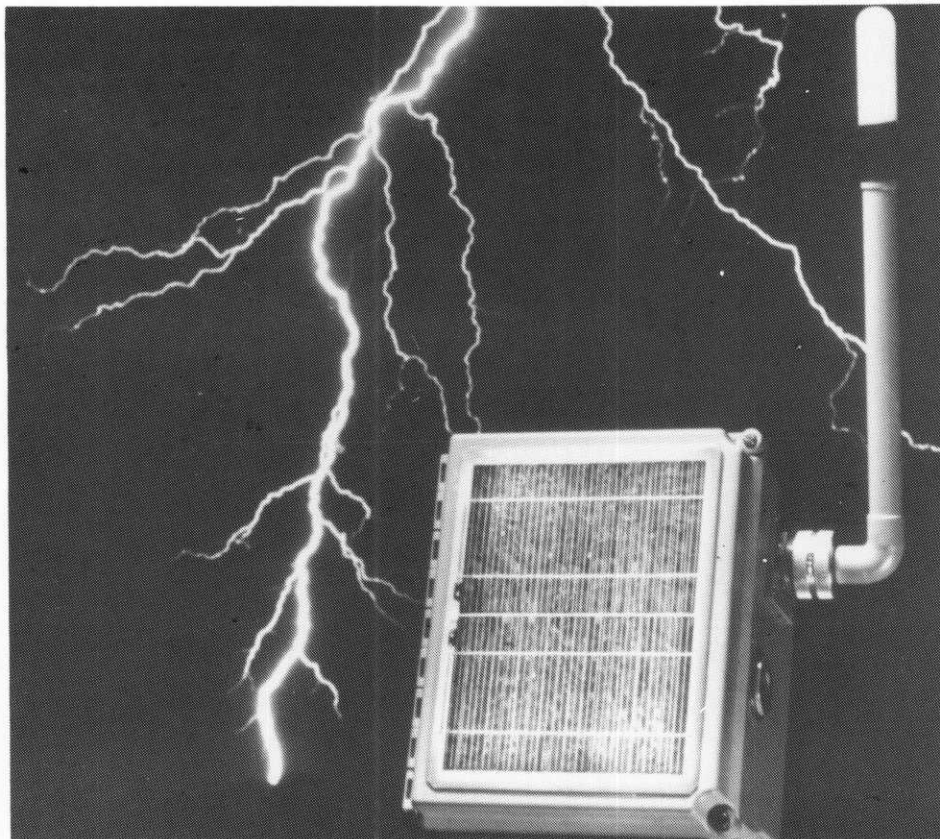
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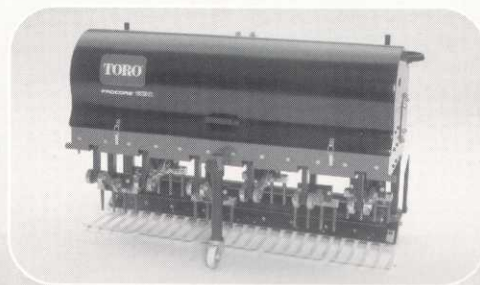
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