

for chronic Necrotic ring spot and *Pythium* infestations. Last year, in an effort to understand what was happening, I had made the correct visual diagnosis of a *Bipolaris* infection, but then failed to make the more important diagnosis of a heavy Anthracnose infestation, which turned the turf stand yellow. When I did a more thorough job of examining the current grab samples, the characteristic Anthracnose spores were obvious. As is often the case, the fungicide that I had used to control the *Bipolaris* was not effective against the Anthracnose infection.

These mistakes can cost dearly

Luckily, I will not lose these homeowners as future clients, but it will cost me about \$500 to repair the damage caused by my over-inflated ego.

If these problems had occurred at a golf course with damage to several greens, the cost to repair could have run into the thousands of dollars and perhaps left me seeking alternative employment.

Why did I miss these three problems

In looking back at these three problems for a common thread, I came to the conclusion that my failures were principally in two areas. The first was a failure to closely examine what was happening because of the

amount of time it would have taken. I fell into an easy trap by accepting the most obvious possible solution. The second failure occurred because I was afraid that my previous diagnosis was inaccurate, or that if it was indeed accurate that I had failed to make a corrective action in time to control the problem. In other words, I was trusting my instincts when I should have been examining the problems scientifically.

If you find that you are failing your clients or more importantly that you are failing yourself, then it is time step back and find out why you are failing. Perhaps you too are relying more on instinct and less on scientific examination. That is a problem faced by many turf grass managers who believe they have already "seen it all." In other words, turf grass management remains a science and not an art so we must abide by the rules of science when forming conclusions or diagnosis.

In the near future, as common pesticides become even more regulated as to the circumstances allowing proper usage, this kind of seat-of-the-pants diagnosis with sloppy procedure may get you more than an unhappy customer, an angry greens committee chairman, or a feeling of embarrassment and disappointment. You might even find yourself answering to a state or federal regulatory agency. ■

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November Issue

Biological soil management

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Have a question on any aspect of
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