THRU THE GREEN

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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MISDIRECTED GOOD INTENTIONS CAN SPELL TROUBLE:

The greatest challenge ever to our careers, our industry, and our game is racing toward us with the speed and power of a bolt of lightening. That challenge is the concern for the environment. And these thoughts are directed toward representatives of every aspect of the golf industry - club leaders, superintendent, golf professionals, managers, architects, golf course builders, trades people, researchers, and players.

I take great pride in calling myself an optimist. I admire people who, when you ask them how things are going, answer with an emphatic "Good!" Perhaps it is this optimism that leads me to believe that the entire environmental issue (which many of you may see as a threat at this time), will actually benefit our game and industry in the long run.

However, I also believe that we are in for some very tough times at first. While optimism is wonderful, pessimism suggests that many of us will not be up to the challenge. Let me share my perception of the near future that is blended with optimism, pessimism and what I hope you will agree is a great deal of realism.

In the near future, the number and amount of pesticides available will decrease tremendously. No amount of lobbying will prevent this. Public perception, whether right or wrong, is growing that **ALL** pesticides are bad, and those who use them are harming the environment. Once this occurs, some superintendents will find the "tools" they have relied on so heavily in the past are no longer available.

Not all superintendents are good turf managers. There are those who are able to keep their courses in good condition because they can apply enough pesticides and spend enough money to compensate for a lack of turf management skills. There are also many who actually cause more problems on their courses than they correct. Some apply chemicals as nonchalantly as they do water. Their "preventative program" includes applying products to protect against virtually every known turfgrass pathogen. Imagine what would happen to your health if your physician used this same logic.

Invariably, it is this superintendent who finds his greens suffering one crisis after another. His response is to apply even more chemicals on a curative basis. This superintendent and his course are truly chemically dependent. When allowed to progress far enough, this vicious cycle of events often results in the failure of large area of turf and eventual replacement of the superintendent.

ARE YOU CHEMICALLY DEPENDENT?

Because the science of our industry has not yet progressed to the point that we can completely eliminate pesticide use while meeting the demands of the player, even the best turf managers are likely to experience problems when pesticide restrictions are significantly increased. However, their course will fare much better than most and will serve as a clear indication of the value of a skilled superintendent. His stock will rise significantly. Those of you who fall into this category will gain from the demise of your less-skilled colleagues.

Soon a superintendent will not be able to apply pesticides based only his perception about when they should be applied. The leadership of golf clubs will determine when and if applications can be made. Their decisions will be based upon reducing the club's liability to the extent possible. The risks of lawsuits will be given much higher priority than the superintendent's assessment of the risk from pythium and brown patch. The first reaction to reduce the club's legal exposure will very likely be to require all pesticide applications to be made when the club is closed. While this may seem a blessing at first, since more superintendents would love to see their courses closed one day each week, it is likely that such a restriction would actually backfire in terms of reducing pesticide use.

Superintendents would find themselves applying pesticides based strictly on the calendar rather than on actual need. If brown patch pops up on Wednesday, how many superintendents will be able to wait until the following Monday to treat? Since most feel they cannot, the natural reaction will be to treat every Monday to ensure problems do not arise during the mid-week.

In the not-to-distant future, the cost of applying pesticides will skyrocket. The products will cost more due to testing expenses, labeling

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