

# OUTLOOK

By Bruce F. Shank, Editor

## Verdict Is In on Bentgrass At Last Year's Western Open

A panel of experts led by Virginia Tech's Dr. Houston Couch has reported its conclusions on the embarrassing decline of Toronto C-15 bentgrass prior to the Western Open last year at Butler National. The study has to have been one of the most extensive ever in U.S. golf history.

The early theories that the decline was caused by the fungal diseases, cool-temperature *Pythium* or red leaf spot were ruled out. Couch reports that the Toronto failed from root and crown diseases. Low iron content in the soil, high humidity, cool temperatures, high sunlight, poor drainage, and alkaline soil may have contributed to the disease, but the suspected incitant is now bacteria-like organisms called procaryotes. The infected Toronto was also traced to one sod nursery, Warren's. Parasitic nematodes, pesticides applied, and fertilizer used were also termed innocent.

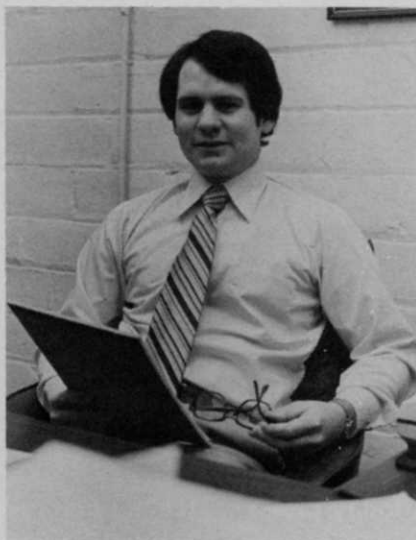
The study proves turf management is more than a simple trade and research is far from complete on many aspects of turfgrass health. In addition, it highlights what cooperation among turf groups can accomplish. In this case the GCSAA, USGA Green Section, Chicago Superintendents Association, and the Chicago District Golf Association donated time and money to the cause. Virginia Tech, Ohio State University, and the University of Illinois should be recognized for their continued support of turfgrass pathology.

As public dollars for research shrink, associations and foundations will have to pick up more of the bill. Objective research performed by specialists outside of chemical company influence must continue. Not that chemical companies would be dishonest, but they go only as far as the profit does. They have stockholders, don't forget.

There is a case against large in-

vestments in research to solve rare instances. The Butler case has to be considered a rare instance for now. Many courses have renovated Toronto greens to Penncross or Penn-eagle. This, however, may be an incomplete solution with only short-term benefits.

The answer is "science." Is turfgrass management a science? In science you don't stop until all events can be repeated exactly and all reasons for the events are fully understood. Clearly we have not achieved this position yet. The practical benefits of knowing all turfgrass factors may appear limited from a curative viewpoint. But



the reason a superintendent or landscape manager is hired is to prevent disasters, not merely repair them.

To prevent disasters you have to be a scientist. That should be the goal of the modern turf manager. Basically, that is the position we take and try to support by our editorial coverage of turfgrass. We laud the efforts of the participants in the Butler situation.

## Readers Grade Weeds For What Interests Them

The results are in from the *Readex* study on the March issue of *Weeds Trees & Turf*. Thanks to your responses, we can better meet your industry journal needs.

Few people trust self-promoting surveys. In the case of *Readex*, the research is performed by an independent firm specializing in publication performance, Reader Interest Research, Inc., in St. Paul, Minnesota. This firm has built a large data base on industry publications. It can detect weaknesses based upon comparisons with many other industry publications.

If you were not asked to participate in the March study and have comments to make on the magazine, you have two choices. The first is to wait to become part of a future *Readex* study (the group changes each time). Or, you can write to me in New York. Your comments are always welcome. August will be the next *Readex* issue.

Average readership of national industry magazine features is 56 percent according to the *Readex* data base. The March features on turf weed control and fertilization received more than 80 percent readership. Only two out of 11 features fell below the 56 percent mark. Overall, 74 percent of the readers read the entire magazine spending more than one hour.

Typically a good advertisement will receive less than 20 percent readership, depending upon the size, color, and design. Nearly 50 percent read the PBI/Gordon ad on Trimec in the March issue. Nearly 46 percent read the Monsanto ad on Roundup. The Diamond Shamrock ad on Dacthal received 42 percent readership. Jacklin Seed Co., Ciba Geigy, Union Carbide, and Estech all had scores over 30 percent.

Obviously you're interested in weed control and fertilization during March. This, combined with market knowledge and common sense, helps us plan editorial content to best meet your needs.

The point is *Weeds Trees & Turf* may be the oldest magazine serving the landscape markets, but it is also the most current because it invests in research to meet your needs.