

STRICTLY GOLF



Superintendent Bill Black is proud of the way his crews handled heavy rain last summer, not to mention the stone bridge, shown here, they built themselves.

Congressional C.C. goes to great lengths to handle heavy rain

■ An extremely wet summer was not conducive to maintaining golf courses in the East and Midwest last year. It meant that superintendents had to go that extra mile to provide playable conditions. That was much the case at the prestigious Congressional Country Club, where U.S. senators and congressmen, and business leaders, are among 1,700 playing members.

"Last season started out as a super summer because there wasn't any humidity," notes superintendent Bill Black, who's been at Congressional for 13 years. "But it turned out to be an extremely wet and humid summer."

When conditions are wet for any length of time, certain problems are sure to pop up, as they did at the Congressional:

● "Cutting to almost 1/8th of an inch can have an effect on golf courses," notes Black. "We end up having certain diseases and algae." He uses Fore, Manzate and Dithane, along with heavier doses of Daconil. "They don't control the diseases, but they check it," he says.

A disease-related problem particular to the Congressional was drainage. Sand bunkers became black-layered because of all the moisture, which plugged up drainage. So Black's crews had to dig up all the sand and clear the drains.

● "There are days you have to restrict golf cars, too," Black further notes. "We didn't allow golf cars over Labor Day Weekend. It's not something we like to do, but the members are generally

pretty considerate."

● Bunker washouts are the most difficult problem to deal with. "Fridays, the bunkers are in great condition and you're ready for the weekend," he says, "and then a big storm hits on Friday night. It's impossible to get them back in shape."

He noted that workers once spent 50 man-hours on a Saturday pushing sand back up into the bunkers, "and you couldn't tell we did anything."

Despite summer's rains, Black and his crews kept Congressional Country Club's ryegrass and bermudagrass fairways and Pennlinks greens the envy of area golfers. It has been the site of seven Kemper Opens and will host the 1995 U.S. Senior Open and 1997 U.S. Open. It is also (former) Vice President Dan Quayle's home course.

Black, a Penn State University gradu-



Overcast weather and a light drizzle, typical of last summer's weather, doesn't keep crews from mowing the Congressional's greens.

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ate, has been on golf courses virtually his whole life. As a five-year-old boy, his backyard and playground was Hershey (Pa.) Country Club. He was superintendent at Fountainhead Country Club in Hagerstown, Pa., for 13 years before coming to Congressional. He has easily adapt-

ed to his current surroundings.

"We have 500 acres I can roam around on," he says. "It's difficult to hide in your own world any more as a golf course superintendent, anyway."

"The exposure I have with a different cross-section of people is something I

value very much. In a normal job, you don't get to meet doctors, lawyers and senators.

"You get a nice, crisp day when the sky is blue, the grass is green...there's nothing like it."

—Jerry Roche

Management practices, not turf species, are key at this 'course of a different texture'

'Zoysia...a good grass for both high and low handicappers...has a kind of bounce to it,' says Dick Stuntz.

■ What might work for one golf course superintendent might not work for another. Likewise, what might work for maintaining one type of turfgrass might not work for another.

Alvamar Country Club in Lawrence, Kansas, is perhaps the prime example of this golf course truism. There, superintendent Dick Stuntz maintains zoysiagrass fairways and Cohansy bentgrass greens, two highly unusual grasses for this part of mid-America.

Yet, using state-of-the-art management practices, Stuntz has shaped Alvamar's 18 country club holes into one of the finest and most-honored courses in the nation.

"Alvamar has had zoysia fairways and tees since its inception in 1968," notes Stuntz, "so it was a major concern to change the grasses I was tending when I came here in 1983." He credits his zoysia education to Roger Knoll, the superintendent at Old Warson in St. Louis. "I took a zoysia lesson from him," Stuntz says. "It took some time and work."

The most difficult aspect of having zoysia is not its maintenance but its establishment—from sprigs, not seed or sod. Yet the positives—at least here, 30 miles west of Kansas City—far outweigh the negatives.

"Zoysia has a kind of bounce to it," Stuntz says, ticking off a number of favorable characteristics. "Its dormant play is much better than bermudagrass. It's got a golden dormant color. It's a good grass for both high and low handicap players because it's coarser and the ball sits right



Dick Stuntz likes the look and feel of zoysiagrass tees and fairways, and Cohansy bentgrass greens. The golf ball easily sits upright on the zoysia (right).



up on top of it."

Cohansy is, Stuntz says, "a very sensitive bentgrass." It is finer-bladed and more upright, and it has a more consistent texture than Pennncross, the accepted industry standard, Stuntz observes. Though Cohansy is highly pythium-tolerant, pesticides mixed from emulsifiable concentrates (ECs) will damage it, he continues.

The zoysia fairways and tees are mowed at 7/16ths of an inch. The Cohansy bentgrass greens are mowed at 6/64ths of an inch to provide stimpmeter readings approaching 10, even for the Kansas Open, which has been played at Alvamar since 1975.

"The demand for faster greens has made our profession more of a profession," Stuntz says. "It's all relative, but the expectation of the golfer from 1967 until today is like two different ballgames. If this course were maintained like courses of the early to middle 1970s, I'd get run out of town."

He blames televised golf tournaments and the advent of the stimpmeter, which can quantitatively measure green speed, for golfers wanting faster green speeds.

This demand has necessitated lower cutting heights, which in turn causes an increase in *Poa annua* infestation. Stuntz's answer to poa encroachment might be applications of Scott's TGR, a turfgrass growth regulator that has shown in university tests to affect poa.

"But Cohansy is very sensitive, and Scott's TGR is touchy stuff," the veteran superintendent notes. "So I'm going to be right there when we do the mixing and applications."

The Alvamar complex (which also features an 18-hole public course with another 18 holes on the drawing board) maintains a three-acre Cohansy nursery.

Owner/president Bob Billings, who played basketball at the University of Kansas with Wilt Chamberlain, keeps communication lines open—out of necessity. One of the country club's members is David Robinson of the NBA's San Antonio Spurs, who owns a home along one fairway. He and other basketball stars, like Chicago's Michael Jordan, play some of the 30,000 rounds at Alvamar each season. And the adjacent public course plays host

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to an additional 45,000 rounds annually.

"I get five compliments for every one complaint," notes Stuntz, a 1975 Iowa State University graduate. "I focus on the negative and try to figure out how to correct the complaints. You can accomplish all your agronomic objectives and still lose your job if you don't communicate."

—Jerry Roche

An opinion: green speed kills

To the editor:

I would like to reply to Jim Prusa's article which appeared in your August issue.

Jim says "the best superintendents set very high standards for themselves and demand the same from those around them." This is very true and typifies the qualities of the golf course superintendent. He or she is very dedicated, strives for the best playing conditions, and is very much a professional.

However, I strongly disagree with the statement Jim made when he said, "Let's stop searching for ways to lower our standards." Let's define what the standards are!

When the standards are excessive speed on greens which relate to mowing heights of 1/10th of an inch or less, then I feel that the standards are wrong. What is happening is that many of the golfers expect day-to-day conditions at our courses to be like those at a major PGA tournament. This relates to conditions which bring about a decline in the quality of turf found on the greens: thin turf, algae, ball marks and old cup plugs not healing, disease, and an increase in labor to hand-water and "babysit" all the greens. Even the USGA Green Section is preaching the evils of excessive green speed.

The quality of playing conditions on golf courses has greatly improved in the past decade due to the professionalism of the golf course superintendent. I am very confident that these conditions will remain at the highest level in the future.

However, common sense still has to prevail when the expectations of the golfers reach a point which relate to the decline and health of the turf. As one golf course superintendent related, "Speed kills—the green or the golf course superintendent, or both."

—Dave Fearis, CGCS
Blue Hills Country Club
Kansas City, Mo.

WHAT'S NEW IN COURSE MAINTENANCE

Wastewater symposium in Newport Beach, Calif.

FAR HILLS, N.J.—The USGA, in cooperation with four other golf organizations, will co-sponsor a Golf Course Wastewater Symposium on March 4-5 at the Newport Beach (Calif.) Marriott Hotel.

Effluent water from sewage treatment plants and wastewater from other sources have been playing an increasingly important role in golf course irrigation, as the use of potable water for irrigation comes under public scrutiny. The Wastewater Symposium will bring together turf managers, engineers, agronomists, architects, manufacturers and others.

For more information, contact Dr. Michael Kenna (405-743-3900) or Dr. Kimberly Erusha (908-234-2300) at the USGA.

Other sponsors are the American Society of Golf Course Architects, the Golf Course Builders Association of America, the National Golf Foundation and the GCSAA.

Hurdzan notes irrigation changes in greens design

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Golf course architect Mike Hurdzan sees some changes in golf course design on the horizon.

"It appears that there will be more irrigation around greens using two or three systems of sprinkler heads," he notes. "Instead of one sprinkler which applies water uniformly over a circle, the trend now is to recognize that greens have different water requirements than their surrounding collars, aprons or banks."

"Therefore, where construction budgets permit, one set of sprinklers is installed to water the putting surface, and another to supplement or separately water the non-putting areas around the greens. And in some instances, a third set of small lawn heads just to water green mounds."

This evolution is thought to have begun by Eb Steinger at Pine Valley about 20 years ago. It spread to Augusta National and "now is becoming commonplace on even modest budget public facilities," Hurdzan says.

Mechanics must know turf game

FAR HILLS, N.J.—Mechanics who work on golf course equipment must know the turf business, according to Tim Moraghan, agronomist for championships for the USGA Green Section.

Writing in "Hole Notes," Moraghan says "not just anyone should be assigned the responsibility of repairing and adjusting a cutting unit."

Moraghan says golf course mechanics must have a well-rounded understanding of his job, including:

- an understanding of the principles of mowing and its effect on the turfgrass;
- a basic knowledge of putting green agronomics;
- a "golfer's eye" and realizing the premium placed on putting quality; and
- conscientiousness and pride in the results.

"Your mechanic must have a thorough understanding of what will occur if the greens aren't up to speed," Moraghan notes.

Rutgers conducts turf schools

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.—Cook College of Rutgers University is offering three special turf schools next month: an advanced turfgrass management symposium (Feb. 8-9), a clinic on site analysis and modification (Feb. 17 and 24) and "Advanced Management Program for Golf Course Leaders (Feb. 22-26).

For more information, call (908) 932-9271 or write Office of Continuing Professional Education, Cook College, P.O. Box 231, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903-0231. For information via fax, transmit to (908) 932-8726.

Defeating the 'Rodney Dangerfield Syndrome'

by Arthur Jamison

■ Although I have been in this business for 10 years, I realize that there is still a lot to learn. But the one thing that continues to really bother me, and that is the basic lack of respect for the superintendent as a professional.

Golf course superintendents must be experts at fertilizers, pesticides, equipment, turfgrass, weather and planning. Add other topics and hundreds of subtopics, and we have more to manage than the average person could possibly imagine.

One day, we are involved in the decision of where we should spend \$500,000 in improvements, whereas the next day we're fixing the toilet paper holder in the restroom by the No. 14 green.

I certainly did not write my thesis in college on professionalism. Yet it doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that the golf course superintendent *does* belong among the top management personnel in his club.

Exactly where in the hierarchy does he belong? Should he be above the manager, above the PGA professional? Perhaps, perhaps not. But I know one thing: if a club had to operate without one key person, it would not be the superintendent.

So let's get back to the superintendent as a professional.

How do your members, department heads and golfers look at you? As the guy with the shovel in his hand? Or do they see you as the guy who has the secret ingredient for making grass grow?

A parable—I was told this story by one of my teachers in college (who, by the way, had his master's degree in horticulture):

After he'd graduated, he was working for his father, who owned one of the largest landscaping firms in the San Francisco Bay area. He was servicing an account one day and saw a flower bed that needed some weeding. As he was bent over pulling weeds, he overheard two businessmen comment that if this laborer would have graduated from high school he might have been able to acquire a better job.

What a perfect scenario for us superintendents! How many times have you gotten "that look" from a golfer? ("The poor guy; if he had at least finished high

school...") And I think, "how wrong you are." I am outdoors all day thoroughly enjoying myself, and making damn good crispies to boot!

I once had a golfer ask me why I was planting flowers in October. He literally laughed at me while informing me that they would be dead by winter's end. I intended to inform him that this flower was a pansy and could survive the winter, but the man was gone before I could explain.

Where's the respect?

How do you explain your profession? Well, I'm still learning, and this last year has taught me a lot.

Number one—is communication. Talk with your department heads, members, men's and women's golf associations, golf and green committees. Let all that knowledge inside your gray matter spill out. Take the opportunity, when asked a question, to show that you are not just an overpaid weed-puller.

(But don't buffalo them. That doesn't help anyone. If you don't know, tell them you will find out and follow through.)

I have had the opportunity to explain certain problems we are having on the golf course, and people have responded respectfully because I know what I'm talking about.

We have the opportunity each day to talk to anyone in the club from the dishwashers to the president of the men's golf association. What opportunities to show

ourselves off!

Number two—is the golf course. If you have all the knowledge of a turfgrass guru, but your members are putting over crabgrass, you'll have a respect problem. The golf course is a huge picture we get to paint every day. You can get a lot of respect if you use the proper colors.

We have a way to go yet before we're accorded the same respect as the medical profession. But my attitude has changed. Instead of being sarcastic and reactionary in a situation, I fall back on my knowledge as a golf course superintendent—or, if I don't know the answer, I call a colleague.

I bet I've made four or five phone calls to other superintendents in the last six months wanting information. I've always learned something I didn't know before. Never did I feel they didn't have the time to talk to me.

One thing that has evolved from all of this is that more people are coming to me for advice or information. More and more frequently, I am getting flagged down on the golf course to answer questions. It makes me feel that all these years of hard work are paying off.

Pay me \$100,000 a year and I'll feel good, but give me a little respect and I'll feel like a king.

—Arthur Jamison
is golf course
superintendent at
River North
Country Club in
Macon, Ga. This is
reprinted from
"Through the
Green," the maga-
zine of the Georgia
GCSA.



\$100 for your opinions, observations

■ Do you have an opinion or observation on the art/science/profession of being a golf course superintendent?

Every month, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT will publish a super's view of the industry as part of its "Strictly Golf" section.

We are soliciting the opinions/observations of golf course superintendents, much like those expressed by Arthur Jamison this month.

Topics can range from professionalism to employee relations to greensmower selection to treating turf diseases. Or anything in between that is of value to your fellow superintendents.

If you have such an idea you wish to express, type it, double-spaced, on plain white paper, 750 words or less. Send it, along with your Social Security number and a recent photo, to:

"Strictly Golf"

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

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Upon publication, the superintendent will be paid \$100 for his or her contribution. (We reserve the right to edit material for length and grammar. Non-returnable unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.)



Taping for TV coverage will take place at the heart of your course. Here a cameraman and announcer confer on camera angles for coverage of the John Deere Team Championship in La Quinta, Calif.

Preparing your course for local, national media

Photos in your local newspaper, commentary by hometown radio personalities, and TV sports coverage can attract area golfers to your course.

by Steve Trusty, Bob Tracinski

■ It's show time! Broadcast crews and print reporters will invade your golf course to cover the big event. Reporters and "analysts" will dissect the playability and aesthetics of your facilities; the competence and cooperation of your staff.

Accommodating the needs of these invaders will take extra time and lots of work, but—done well—the rewards are well worth the effort.

"The exposure is the pay-off," reports W. Scott Lewis, superintendent of the TPG Stadium Course and The Jack Nicklaus Resort Course at PGA West, La Quinta, Calif.

Lewis is accustomed to working with the media. The Grand Slam, November 10-11th, 1992, was followed one week later by the John Deere Team Championship Golf Tournament. "For the last Grand Slam held here, we had eight hours of cable TV coverage," Lewis remembers. "Viewers could see what we have to offer and think, 'I'd like to play that course; I'd like to try that shot.'"

Naturally, you try to keep the course in top condition for any play, but when TV cameras will be rolling, strive to be as close to perfect as possible.

"Watch the details," cautions Lewis. "Little things can look pretty big when flashed across the TV screen.

"Once you learn a media-covered event is scheduled, do as much advance planning as possible. For an event as important as the Skins Game or Grand Slam, we find it easiest to schedule in reverse.

"Work backward from the date of the tournament to establish the proper timing on procedures. Planning is the real key. You need to know what can and must be done—and when to do it. You want to be ready before the first camera shows up."

For example, Lewis notes, if it's going to take 10 days to edge the cart paths, work backward from the scheduled event to make sure the work is completed. Time overseeding so the new grass is ready for daily mowing. Increase seeding rates drastically if necessary to attain full turf in a limited time span. Green speeds should be ideal. Time your topdressing procedures accordingly.

Weather is a major factor to consider. What time of year will the event take place? What delays could weather conditions cause? What procedures might need to be postponed or moved ahead to accommodate inclement weather? What materials and equipment need to be on hand to compensate for problems?

Communicate special procedures to your staff. For example, if you're going to

Media coverage idea file

■ Other ideas from California superintendents W. Scott Lewis and Michael J. Tellier:

- Obviously, you must comply with golf rules. Pay special attention to the height of cut, bunker raking and bunker sand content.

- Pull sand away from the bunkers, hand rake the area and make sure that no rocks have been pulled to the surface.

- The greener the grass the better. Deep green shows up well on the TV screen and in color photos. Decide on mowing patterns and keep them consistent throughout the course.

- If your course has notorious wet areas, make sure those spots are drained well in advance of the special event. Have extra pumping equipment and squeegee-type tools on hand in case irrigation problems occur. Order extra sand and organic wood chips for use if needed.

- Spend extra care on trimming and cleanliness in the perimeter areas as well as the course itself.

- Aesthetics are important. Enhance the background prior to the event. Reseed thin or lackluster turf. Plant flowers and add more color to existing flowerbeds. Use flowers to highlight the corporate logo or some distinctive feature of the facility.

- Expect to pull in extra help to prepare for a major tournament. Divert employees from other departments or use temporary personnel for supervised tasks.

- Try to have the course ready when the practice rounds start, which is usually two days ahead. The players don't want to cope with changes during the actual competition.

- Once the event starts, make sure all crews are out of the way. Alert your staff to the procedures to follow.

- Be prepared for more work at the end of the event. There will be lots of clean-up. Grass will be matted down. Some repairs may be necessary.

be altering mowing patterns, review the material with your staff in time for them

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Picture perfect means the course looks so inviting that those viewing it can see themselves playing on it—and may make plans to do so. (The Dunes Course at LaQuinta Golf and Tennis Resort, LaQuinta, Calif.)

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to make the proper adjustments.

Michael J. Tellier, Golf Course Superintendent of the Dunes and Mountain Courses of the LaQuinta Golf Club, LaQuinta, Calif., whose Dunes Course served as a venue for the John Deere Tournament, also is skilled in work-

ing with the media. He adds these suggestions on course preparation:

"Communication is vital," says Tellier. "The advance production staff for television coverage usually comes to the facility two months prior to the event. For annual events, we start preparing for the coming year the day after the current event ends."

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The superintendent is becoming more recognized as a factor in golf course success by the media, especially over the last five years, according to Tellier.

Go over the course with media advance personnel, looking for eyesores. "See what has to be done and develop a priority list, tackling the major problems first; then the minor ones," Lewis says.

Tellier says you should take this opportunity to determine what camera angles they wish to use; to mark areas for towers; to determine special angle shots, etc. Decide if trees must be trimmed for sight lines to make sure the shots will be "clean."

"View the course from the camera's perspective," Lewis recommends. "Know exactly what will be seen in shots from each position. How will normal care procedures affect the camera's picture?"

There's always give-and-take with media coverage. For example, there may be some discussion as to where to set up the announcing booth. The area needs to provide a good scenic angle, yet be out of play. It may be necessary to change a location choice to accommodate irrigation or computer lines.

"Keep an open mind," Lewis says.

The superintendent is becoming more recognized as a factor in golf course success by the media, especially over the last five years, according to Tellier: "Commentators like to relay information on course care during telecasts, so expect them to ask you questions to fill in their background material." They want details so that people who know the game of golf will understand why certain things look certain ways.

Both superintendents agree that something always comes up, but you can handle it if you plan ahead, schedule wisely, anticipate problems, work hard and follow up thoroughly. Then enjoy. Good media attention attracts new golfers to your course.

—Steve Trusty is President of Trusty & Associates, which provides consulting services to the horticultural trade. Bob Tracinski is manager of public relations for the John Deere Company in Raleigh, N.C.