

# GOLF 'SCAPING

## The business of dealing with greens committees

**So some people think they know your job better than you do. How do you set them straight? These supers have some interesting opinions.**

■ If you're in the market for real estate, the old saw tells you the three keys are "location, location and location."

Likewise, if you're a golf superintendent, the three keys to dealing with the greens committee are communication, communication and communication.

"That's what it boils down to," notes **Ron Wisniewski** of Flushing Valley Country Club, Flushing, Mich. "The more information you can give your greens committee, the better off you are."

He says that when asking for money for capital improvements, superintendents should:

- 1) be realistic about what you ask for;
- 2) don't sell yourself short; and
- 3) don't B.S. the committee.

"After a while, you get to know how much they want to spend," says Wisniewski, who has been at Flushing Valley for nine years.

**Listen first**—At Evergreen Country Club in Manassas, Va., **Dave Anderson** says "the entire membership is, more or less, the greens committee."

"I listen to them, across the board," he adds. "Besides writing monthly newsletter articles, I encourage two-way communication. I tell them to call me, stop me on the course, to jot it down." He gets about six requests per year from his ad hoc "greens committee."

If three or four comments are on any one aspect of the course, and he decides the suggestion is a good move for the oper-

ation, Anderson will go ahead with the project.

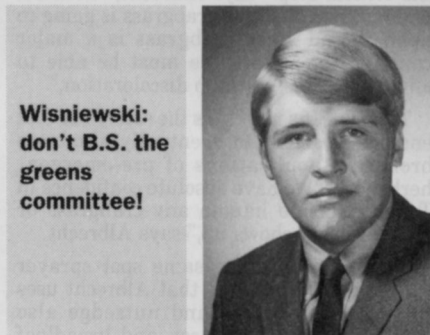
He also defined his own parameters before accepting the job two years ago.

"I made sure I was the one directing which way to go," he now notes. "I made sure the greens committee knew that I knew my business better than they did."

"In the past, board members were trying to micro-manage the course. I didn't want to get bogged down in the quagmire of club politics."

**A changing guard**—It's about the same for **Bill Gauwitz** of Mount Hawley Country Club in Peoria, Ill.

"You've got to keep the lines of com-



**Wisniewski: don't B.S. the greens committee!**

munication open," he comments. "The problem comes from the board level—not the greens committee—because it changes every year. The greens committee understands the realm of management within the dollars, but the board does not. So I have to justify what I'm doing almost yearly."

Anderson says new greens committee chairmen are always a challenge.

"I try to spend at least a half a day with new chairmen or presidents to let them know what-all is involved with my work," he admits. "I try to relate it to them in their terms, whether they're a banker or lawyer or whatever."

**Gene Daniel** of River Hills Country Club in Lake Wylie, S.C., has also had to handle a

variety of different greens committees with different personalities and different styles in his 15 years with the course.

"The main thing I try to do is inform them," he says. "It's more informal. I see them riding around the course and I talk to them. Or I'll stop by the greens committee chairman's house, or he'll come down to the shop."

When it comes to the membership, communication is easy because River Hills is affiliated with a retirement village. "Word of mouth is the fastest way to communicate around here," Daniel says. "You tell one person, and everyone knows it the next day."

**Routing requests**—Gauwitz handles small requests from the greens committee or even members immediately. "Large requests—and mostly they're verbal—either come to me or a member of the board to vote on."

While the others depend on informal communication, Wisniewski likes his to take a more formal format. He makes members put suggestions in writing to either him or the greens committee. The greens committee then discusses the member's proposal and votes on it. The decision is passed on from the committee to the member who made the suggestion.

While no one contacted by **LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT** had any extremely bad experiences (that they would admit publicly), there is no doubt that the problems between superintendents and their greens committees occurs. The lounge talk following countless local superintendents meetings indicates so.

"The horror stories are out there," says Anderson. "But everyone's starting to realize that you have to be communicative and flexible and realize that your greens committee and your members are your customers. Everybody nowadays is in the customer service business—and it is a business."

—Jerry Roche

## USE YOUR CAMCORDER!

■ Mike Mongan of Arcola Country Club in Paramus, N.J. has been very successful at communicating with members and the greens committee through video presentations.

"Membership and governing bodies have situations where they ask you, 'what have you done for me lately?'" Mongan said at the annual GCSAA Convention. "They have short memories.

"I've gained a lot of respect from the membership for the grounds crew because I've been able to demonstrate that we're not just grass-cutters and we don't just sit around drinking coffee in the winter. You get to show them things they wouldn't normally see. We can show things that are being done on a timely basis, in-house with our own staff."

Mongan says you can use a videotape to document things like construction, the effects of nature on the course, and vandalism.

"You can also show (your greens committee) that your crew is well trained, and that they are willing to tackle problems," Mongan says. "The reporting aspect is essential. Being able to bring things to life is an integral part of communication."

Mongan has 10 commandments of video



Use video cameras to record golf course renovation projects.

taping, gleaned through four years of experience taping his course's development:

1) Identify a subject or project.

2) Be sure your battery is charged.

3) Keep the segments brief, just enough to give a flavor or whet the appetite.

4) Keep the day/date mechanism on the camera turned on.

5) Refrain from quick movements.

6) Keep reference points the same during time lapse photography of the project.

7) Use the fade button for more professional results.

8) Narrate during your presentation to the governing body, not while taping.

9) Don't tape golfers up close, or their faces.

10) Solicit comments from the governing body during the presentation.

—J.R.

## Controlling summer patch

■ Summer patch is a disease that affects annual bluegrass on golf course greens, tees and fairways in the northern U.S., according to Dr. Bruce Clarke of Rutgers University. The scientific name of the pathogen is *Magnaporthe poae*.

Several methods of cultural and chemical control are now available, Clarke says.

"Cultural management (i.e., aeration, fertilization, lowering soil pH) will reduce disease severity and thus reduce the amount of fungicide needed to control summer patch," he further notes.

Aerifying will reduce the disease's harmful effects on turfgrass. "It doesn't matter whether it's shallow- or deep-tine aeration," Clarke says, "Springtime aeration, however, is most effective in reducing disease severity."

Fertilizers can help superintendents cope with summer patch. For instance, Clarke states, an acidifying fertilizer will reduce the severity of the disease by lowering soil pH. "This is a long-term approach in which results don't become apparent until the third year," he further notes.

Sulfur-coated urea, ammonium sulfate and ammonium chloride will reduce the disease. However, certain fertilizers should be avoided. Calcium nitrate and potassium nitrate will actually accentuate

summer patch.

Clarke further notes that superintendents can decrease the probability of damage from summer patch and other root diseases by making sure the soil pH is between 5.5 and 6.0, which is more acid than the normally-accepted 6.5.

If you must use a fungicide to control disease outbreaks, Clarke says that foliar applications of the fungicides in the

accompanying chart work best. Use full label rates until proper cultural practices (i.e. fertilization and aeration) reduce disease development.

He adds that high rates of water—four or five gallons per 1000 square feet—should accompany fungicide application. "But if you can't apply that much water, irrigation does enhance control slightly," he says. One-eighth to one-fourth of an inch of irrigation is ideal.

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Summer patch thrives in soils with higher pH factors.

Courtesy DowElanco



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The *Magnaporthe poae* fungus needs a soil temperature of at least 60 degrees at a two-inch depth to infect roots. This means that the soil temperature will have to be 60 degrees for four or five days in a row before it will begin the infection process. Therefore, the first fungicide application should not be made until this time. For optimum control, repeat two to three times at 21- to 28-day intervals.

To summarize Clarke's approach to effective summer patch management:

- aerify and improve drainage;
- raise mowing height during heat stress;
- overseed with perennial ryegrass, tall fescue or bentgrass;

**FUNGICIDES FOR SUMMER PATCH CONTROL**

**DMI/sterol inhibitors**

Product	Rate
Banner 1.1E.	4 oz./1000
Bayleton 25DF	4 oz./1000
Rubigan 1AS	3 oz./1000
Sentinel 40WG	1/4 oz./1000

**Benzimidazoles**

Product	Rate
Cleary's 3336 50W	8 oz./1000
Fungo Flo 4.5F	8 oz./1000
Tersan 1991 50W	8 oz./1000

- fertilize with ammonium sources or SCU; avoid nitrate sources;
- keep pH between 5.5 and 6.0; and/or
- apply systemic fungicides in 4-5

gal. water/1000 sq. ft.

Clarke made his observations at the GCSAA Convention in Dallas two months ago.

—Jerry Roche

**I.D. weeds: start with weed type**

■ Weed identification begins with classifying the weed type.

**Broadleaves**, or dicotyledonous plants, have two seed cotyledons (young leaves) at emergence and have net-like veins in their true leaves. Broadleaves often have colorful flowers. Examples of winter broadleaf weeds include clover, lawn burweed, henbit, speedwell and chickweed.

**Grasses**, or monocotyledonous plants, have only one seed cotyledon present when they emerge from the soil. Grasses also have rounded hollow stems with nodes (joints), and parallel veins in their true leaves. Annual bluegrass is an example of a winter grass weed.

**Sedges and rushes** generally favor a moist habitat and have stems which either are triangular and solid (sedges) or round and solid (rushes). Although many sedges are perennial and live through the winter, frost usually causes sufficient shoot dieback. Sedges therefore are not usually noticed at this time.

Most winter weeds germinate in late summer through early fall, grow throughout the winter months, and flower or produce seedheads during late winter and early spring. For most observers, winter annual weeds are not usually noticed until spring when growth sprouts, along with seedheads and flowers, produce a ragged-appearing turf.

In the past, weed identification has frustrated turf managers because of the lack of an adequate turf weed identification guide. "Weeds of Southern Turfgrasses" is a highly recommended identification guide published recently for turfgrass managers. It is available from either the Florida, Georgia or Alabama state cooperative extension offices. County agents, lawn care operators and industry representatives are also helpful in identifying troublesome weeds.

—Dr. Bert McCarty,  
University of Florida

**Native plant is defined**

■ What is a native plant? According to Tom Smith, who is on the board of directors of the Wildflower Association of Michigan, the definition goes back a long way.

Smith says the correct definition, according to the fall, 1992 issue of "Wildflower" magazine is "a plant that grew in an area prior to European settlement." The definition appeared in an article by Mark V. Wilson, David E. Hibbs and Edward R. Alverson entitled "Native Plants, Native Ecosystems and Native Landscapes."

Smith writes: "Many of our introduced or 'exotic' plants now occur 'naturally in a region' and are 'ideally suited to grow there' as the definition in the article states. That does not make them native. If they can reproduce in nature in an area, then they are considered 'naturalized' but not native."

Smith is president of Grass Roots, East Lansing, Mich.

**Primo receives New York label**

■ The New York Department of Environmental Conservation registered Primo, a growth management tool, to be used on turf in the state beginning March 18th. Primo was labeled for use in the rest of the nation in February, 1993.

Primo, manufactured by Ciba Turf &

Ornamental, is registered for golf courses and highly-maintained commercial and residential turf. When used at standard rates, Primo reduces turf growth and clippings by approximately 50 percent for four weeks during prime growing periods, Ciba says.

The product may be used on all

major warm- and cool-season turf species, including bahiagrass, common and hybrid bermudagrass, centipede-grass, St. Augustinegrass, zoysiagrass, bentgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, red and tall fescue and annual and perennial ryegrass.

For more information, call the Primo information line, (800) 395-8873.