



# THE NEWSLETTER

Golf Course Superintendents Association OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

Sponsors and administrators of the Troll-Dickinson Scholarship Fund — Awarded yearly to deserving Turf Management Students.

December 1988

## NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, December 14, 1988  
Monoosnock C.C.

9:00 am Director's meeting  
10:45 am Regular meeting  
12:00 noon Lunch  
1:00 pm Educational session

Host Superintendent—  
David Copeland

Directions: Rte. 2 to Rte. 13 exit, bear right off exit. Go thru two sets of stop lights, club entrance is 1/2 mile on right.



G C S A A • 89

## International Golf Course Conference & Show

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## Bob Johnston's "Totally Insane Year"



It was that time of summer when pythium stalked New England and its broad sweep of golf courses.

Bob Johnston, aware of the turf disease's danger signs, took the logical steps to combat it—steps that eventually led to what he labels "a totally insane year".

Johnston, the man who had nurtured five new greens into "beautiful" condition as part of his meticulous maintenance program at the Wampanoag country Club, reached for the Tereneb SP and applied the fungicide to those greens and 14 fairways.

It was early August, the humidity was extremely high (as it always is in that section of Connecticut) and Johnston thought the move had brought things under control.

Instead, his world caved in, along with four of those five greens and two fairways.

"They were wiped out," Bob recalled his dilemma. "And I couldn't understand it. I'd used 'SP' before and always got favorable results. It was baffling."

Then, the word came down.

"I got a call from the Lesco Company (distributor for the fungicide's manufacturer, Kincaid Enterprises)," Johnston told. "They advised that I stop using SP, that there was a suspicion the batch I purchased was contaminated."

"At first I thought we (Wampanoag) were an isolated case. My members had

seen what happened and, naturally, I felt the heat. However, as the explanation from Lesco expanded, I learned that around 100 courses all over the country had been affected. Some, like Fairfield and Norwich, were in our state."

Johnston remembers his turf was spotless until he started spraying with SP. Therefore, it didn't take much deducing to determine the source of his big problem.

"Some of my members were furious when it appeared that the fungicide had turned their course into a disaster area," Bob disclosed. "I'm not sure about the overall process. However, that's when there was talk of taking legal action and anticipation of compensation for the extensive course damage."

Eventually, that part of the nightmare was settled out of court for a sum of money Johnston prefers to remain in the club's confidential files.

Before that, though, Bob still had a golf course to deal with and an enormous recovery assignment.

"An insurance adjusting company called me in late August, maybe it was early September," Johnston scratched for dates. "I was invited to Baltimore for a seminar on corrective measures. People from the manufacturer were there, plus another 70 golf course superintendents. Our expenses were picked up, so that pointed the finger of responsibility to people other than the superintendents."

The manufacturer provided an agronomist, Stewart Turner, for the

*Continued on page 2*

**BOB JOHNSTON**  
*Cont. from p. 1*

seminar and a number of remedies was proposed. Most of them had to do with application of de-contaminates. But the Wampanoag recovery program was more thorough, more expensive—a re-sodding venture under the direction of Alex Rohoza.

"We started re-sodding Sept. 12," Johnston said. "And I have to say that the recovery was incredible. It was so successful, we were able to reopen the damaged greens a little more than a month later—on October 15.

"So, my members were playing temporary greens for the shortest period possible. They were frustrated, though. After all, we had been very patient putting those new greens into playing condition last year—myself and the members. That triggered the frustration."

Johnston disclosed that he received a lot of help from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection in the attempt to track down the source of the problem and take measures to effect a solution.

He also looked through the stormy period and found a rainbow.

"You always learn something, even when you're up to your eyeballs in adversity," Bob remarked. "The sodding job turned out so good we've decided that from now on there'll be no seeding when we need a new green. We're sold on sodding."

Obviously, the contamination experience was a first for Johnston.

"I still can't believe it," Bob added. "That happening on top of a summer when the weather conditions ganged up on virtually every superintendent in the Northeast. Like I said, it was totally insane."

Crazy, huh?

**GERRY FINN**

## The Super Speaks Out

Welcome to The Super Speaks Out—a monthly feature which offers the golf course superintendent a forum to express his or her views on topics and issues relating to their profession.

*This month TSSO turns to the potential profession-threatening practice of a golf course or private club circumventing hiring of an accredited superintendent and using the "consultant" service of a manufacturer or distributor instead. The following comments have been gathered after learning of such a plan involving the Shaker Farms Country Club and Scotts Pro-Turf Division.*



**Paul Miller,**  
Nashawtuc Country Club: "I think what we're talking about here is a leasee-consultant arrangement where someone leases a golf course and tries to operate it as cheaply as possible.

"This is something that has been bugging me for quite a while, a problem that our association must address. After all, the situation could occur where a superintendent leases a golf course and decides he can do without a golf pro or other department head.

"I can't quite put my finger on the solution other than to explore the possibility of making ourselves available as a management team to new owners or leasees who are looking for the best rather than the most expensive way to operate a golf course. This option may very well be a form of job protection for the superintendent.

"My feeling in this particular case is a fear that its long-range effects will be damaging to our profession and the game

of golf in general. Mind you, I'm not making any accusations but it's possible that a leasee could take everything out of a course, put nothing back in and then, in three or four years, walk away with a big profit.

"Above all, this is a delicate situation and maybe a dangerous one. I can't say that the practice of eliminating an established position for the sake of economics is dishonest. However, I can't say that it's proper, either.

"Regardless, the leasing method of operating golf courses is on the increase. First, we have to admit that it's there and follow up with reaction that's positive to the cause of our profession."



**Dean Robertson,**  
Kernwood Country Club: "This thing has me stymied in a way because I can see where there's room for consultant service in our profession. But I'm talking about 'bona fide' consultants, not someone who's supposed to be selling products without providing what I suspect is an amount of advice based on how much business it triggers.

"That possibility is the one thing that really upsets me about this situation. And it's the one thing that points the practice in the direction of being unethical.

"Maybe what I'm about to say may not be what a lot of supers want to hear but, remember, a situation could arise where a

*Continued on page 3*

### -POSITION OPENINGS-

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**New England C.C. (18) Hole**  
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Richard Zepp, CGCS  
27 Fowler Rd.  
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Home Phone 234-8490  
Office Phone 234-2533  
Club Affiliation  
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**VICE PRESIDENT**  
Paul Miller, CGCS  
1 Leicester Rd.  
Marblehead, MA 01945  
Home Phone 631-7910.  
Office Phone 369-5704  
Club Affiliation  
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**SECRETARY**  
Stephen A. Chiavaroli, CGCS  
100 Airport Dr.  
Worcester, MA 01602  
Home Phone 752-0031  
Office Phone 791-5373  
Club Affiliation  
Tatnuck C.C.

**TREASURER**  
Thomas Schofield, CGCS  
290 North Rd.  
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Home Phone 443-3712  
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218 Camelback Rd.  
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Home Phone 420-3210  
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189 Matfield St.  
W. Bridgewater, MA 02379  
Home Phone 584-6568  
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**THE SUPER** *Cont. from p. 2*

super and a club manager get into leasing and lean to a consulting service to operate the pro shop.

"There are a lot of ramifications here. However, I'm not worried too much that this kind of operation will mushroom. For one thing, I don't think it will work which means it won't last.

"But the chemical company involvement part of it still doesn't set well with me. What are they (Scotts) thinking of?"

Leon St. Pierre, Longmeadow Country Club: "I have two 'd's' for you in thinking about this leasee-chemical company course maintenance connection. It's dangerous for our profession and it's dumb for the guys who are doing it.

"But this is an old hat thing. It happened years ago when another salesman went out on the road in the dual role of peddling and putting his maintenance ideas in his showroom. It would up with some clubs loaded up with products for getting a little 'free' advice.

"Just the thought of this practice taking hold makes me offer some advice to the Newsletter. Maybe you people should look back at old issues and start recycling the stories we did on ethics.

**DATES TO REMEMBER**

**Annual Meeting**  
Monday, January 16, 1989  
International G.C.

Host Superintendent—  
Ron Milenski

**February**  
No Meeting

**Thursday, March 16, 1989**  
Blue Hill C.C.  
Host Superintendent—  
Dave Barber

Certainly, the practice being attempted falls into the category.

"Let me emphasize that I see nothing wrong with consulting as an aid to a maintenance program. But when I bring up consultants, I'm talking about bona fide agronomists. Really, what can a salesman tell somebody about maintaining a golf course that will meet high standards?

"It gets more ridiculous when you have the complete picture. There has to be a man on the scene in charge of the course. Talk about absentee ownership! This would be worse—like, 'call me up if you have a problem'.

"Of course, this might also have a boomerang effect on the company involved. I can see a lot of superintendents burning when they find out about this.

"As I said earlier, there are only two words to describe the situation—dangerous and dumb. It's as simple as that."

GERRY FINN

**Divot Drift**

Our final outdoor meeting was held at Whitinsville Golf Club. Dick Zepp, our fearless leader had this Donald Ross layout in excellent condition.

*First gross went to the team of:*  
Mike Cornicelli, C&J Equipment  
Dick Duggan, Concord C.C.  
Art Miller, Nabnasset Lake C.C.  
Jack Hassett, Mt. Pleasant (Lowell)

*First net:*  
Dick Zepp, Whitinsville G.C.  
Kevin Lyons, Turf Specialty Inc.  
Jim Beane, Mt. Pleasant C.C. (Boylston)  
Steve Chiavaroli, Tatnuck C.C.

*Second net:*  
Len Blodgett, Kittansett Club  
Charlie Dickow, Heritage Hill G.C.

Joe Rybka, Thorny Lea G.C.  
Don Levangie, Norfolk G.C.

*Third net:*

Jeff Carlson, Ocean Edge G.C.  
Leroy Allen, Brookmeadow G.C.  
Dave Robinson, The Captains G.C.

There were only two winners in the skins game. Larry Bunn, Sawtelle Brothers and Paul Jamrog, The Orchards G.C. \$\$\$ "A TIDY SUM" \$\$\$

**-PROPOSED NEW MEMBER-**

Wayne La Croix, Associate  
Ipswich C.C.

**REINSTATED**  
Phil DiRico, Regular  
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**GOLF CHAIRMAN**  
James O'Kelly  
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Home Phone 603-429-2453  
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**EDUCATIONAL CHAIRMAN**  
Ronald E. Milenski CGCS  
65 Rocky Pond Rd.  
Princeton, MA 01541  
Home Phone 464-5312  
Office Phone 779-6911  
Club Affiliation  
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**NEWSLETTER CHAIRMAN**  
Ronald Kirkman  
25 Green St.  
Needham, MA 02192  
Home Phone 444-8412  
Office Phone 444-5548  
Club Affiliation  
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**PAST PRESIDENT**  
David Barber, CGCS  
145 Dedham St.  
Canton, MA 02021  
Home Phone 828-7266  
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Club Affiliation  
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**Philip Wogan**  
Golf Course Architect  
17 Walker Road  
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# THE NEWSLETTER

RONALD W. KIRKMAN  
Newsletter Editor

DOUG JOHNSON CGCS  
Associate Editor

THOMAS SCHOFIELD CGCS  
Business Manager

GERRY FINN  
Contributing Editor



Return to:  
RONALD W. KIRKMAN  
25 GREEN STREET  
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