



Turf Times



The newsletter from the Northern Michigan Turf Managers Association

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President's Message

How about this weather? It's enough to slap your...never mind. If the chemical salespeople aren't happy this summer, well they're just not working hard enough. Between the wetting agents and fungicides alone, they should all be able to retire. Or at least make them feel better about the bath they've taken in the stock market. Remember, it's not the heat; it's the damn humidity.

What a lame British Open. I bet nobody wanted to see a four - way tie at the end, topped off with a sudden death two person play-off. That was really a snoozer of a short course that put a premium on the short game.☺ It's kind of a fun game when you see a person have to decide on the last tee, whether or not to unleash the big dog or to keep it in the kennel. Wow, what an incredible finish to a great tournament that a lot of golfers had a chance to win. Take a lesson from that, Hootie.

The ant seminar at Shanty Creek was well attended. I took attendance and the NMTMA members from Shanty/Schuss Resort, Veronica Valley, A-Ga-Ming and Highpoint will not be ripped on for not showing up at a meeting. I mean, even Turf Daddy made an appearance. Thank-you to Dr. Dave Smitley and his staff for their continuing research efforts. Also, Joe Grippi and Bayer for putting this seminar together.

Up and coming events for the NMTMA include the Tribute at the Otsego Club and Wild Bluff Resort and Casino. Check the website for time and registration. Be sure to be present at one of these fun filled days or I may be forced to name names. You know who you are...Emerald Vale, Fox Run, Michaywe', Lakewood Shores, Alpena Country Club, Egypt Valley (we haven't seen your bright and smiley face in a while), Twin Oaks, Sugar Springs, Mackinac Island, Ye Olde C.C. See, I didn't name any names, but next time watch out.

Congratulations on a personal note to our very own NMTMA Editor - in - chief. Scott and Lisa Pulaski just became new parents on July 22 to a baby boy. I still think Duef Pulaski has a nice ring to it. We wish you many happy years of sleepless nights and diaper changing to the both of you. Lisa, you have to give me one point for that . Again congratulations!

Well, I'm off to put a new tape measure on the first tee. The golfers want one that reads in millimeters. What's that all about?

Green Side Up,

Daniel J. Bissonette

At retirement home, no rest for the weary

Written by: Randy Wilson

Having recently slipped into semi-retirement, I decided to visit the Golf Course Superintendent Rest Home, a stark facility located in Central Georgia, adjacent to the Regional Mental Hospital.

The grounds were barren and void of trees or grass-not at all the lush landscape I expected to find in the care of so many exgreenkeepers with time on their hands.

Dr. A.P. Ziffel, the facility's director, met me on the front porch and immediately offered me a refreshment-a thick, green liquid in a small paper cup.

"No, thank you," I shook my head. "I'm just visiting. You know, checking out the situation."

"We don't receive many visitors," Ziffel said. "Most of the retirees didn't have time for family during their careers, and now the families don't have time for them."

I pointed at the dry, sandy landscape. "I expected more of a"

"None of the lawn services," he interrupted, "will return our calls anymore."

Dr. Ziffel placed his hand on the doorknob and hesitated. "I'll be very happy to give you the tour, but I must caution you, we had an altercation this morning, and things are a little unsettled."

"An altercation?" I inquired

"Yes. It stems from a long-running rivalry between the big-budget superintendent and the low budget fellows. The low-budget people are quite proud of their ability to improve solutions and make do with less, whereas the big-budget supers demand nothing but the best."

"What happened?" I prodded.

"Oh, we ran out of coffee filters, and a former nine-hole fellow substituted an adult diaper. Worked quite well, actually, but when one of those former top-10 supers began making a second pot..well, wet coffee grounds have an unpleasant appearance to begin with."

We stepped inside, where I was greeted with another shock: A large number of former superintendents, mostly in their late 30's, were sitting motionless, staring at a blank TV screen.

"They're catatonic," I said. "Do you sedate them or something?"

"No,no," Dr. Ziffel assured me. "They can be quite animated. Watch this."

He handed me a briefcase, put his arm around me and shouted, "Look, boys, it's a seed salesman!"

The room cleared within seconds, a frenzy of ex-superintendents leaping over chairs, couches and tables and knocking each other down as they escaped into hallways.

I met Dr. Ziffel's triumphant smile with another question: "Is the television broken?"

"TV causes nightmares," he said. "Two hours with The Golf Channel and the Weather Channel and nobody sleeps. Screams in the night about Poa and pumps and member-guests."

I went to the window to watch a softball game forming. "Dr. Ziffel, it seems you have all kinds of superintendents here. Is there any one type that manages to escape ending up here?"

A frown darkened his face. "As a matter of fact, yes. Fitness nuts, those runners and swimmers and cyclists who hide from stress in a cloud of endorphins. Some of the most disturbed individuals still are running around loose out there, probably still working in the golf industry."

Depressed and having seen too much, I prepared to leave.

"Are these guys violent? I asked. "You know dangerous or homicidal?"

"Not generally, no, but we have had our share of incidents."

"What kind of incidents?" I asked. The softball game had become very competitive, and Dr. Ziffel joined me at the window.

"Well, once we made the mistake of allowing a greens chairman to visit his former superintendent. Never found the body."

"No one ever confessed?"

"No, not even with the whole camp...uh, facility population, on punishment," he responded.

"Wait," I said, "what kind of punishment?"

"It's not what you think," Dr. Ziffel answered in a calm tone. "We simply force them to watch time-lapse photography of a bentgrass green wilting from green to black in 90 seconds while a crew worker with a hose stands idly by. Normally, someone cracks after several hundred showings, but not that time."

I started for the door. "Thank you, Dr. Ziffel, it has been most informative."

Dr. Ziffel didn't respond. Lost in thought, he continued to stare out the window while stroking his goatee.

"You know," he said, "there was one other incident. A few years back, they took a visiting USGA Greens Section director hostage. Their demands were quite simple, really. They said if he could grow grass here, to the quality standards in his research articles, they would release him."

"What happened to him?"

"That's him on first base."

So Who's Water Is It Anyway???

Gregory T. Lyman
Turfgrass Environmental Education Specialist
Michigan State University

If you have a surfboard hanging around in the garage, get it washed and waxed because a thundering wave legislation has hit the floor of the Michigan legislative in recent months. Hang on, because we're going for a ride over the next six months. I have always considered "water" to be one of the most pressing environmental issues facing the golf and turf industry in Michigan. We can take most of the issues relating to water and boil them down to concerns about quality and quantity. Most of our energy as an industry in Michigan has been engaged in activities that preserve the quality of surface and groundwater resources. For instance, start rattling off the research projects related to the movement of pesticides or fertilizers that have been conducted over the years. In addition, consider the development of prudent management plans to minimize the potential for off-site movement of these products. Now top it off with the efforts on behalf of wellhead protection and the use of buffer strips along waterways and they add up into a considerable effort to protect water quality. Well...the latest package of legislation is going to focus the public debate about quantity, not quality. Here's how - the package of bills is designed to create a new permit system for drilling a well to pump groundwater for most any type of use. The bills are primarily focused on new wells and hence most existing wells will not require a new permit. For those who would like to get a close look at these bills, sear the internet for the Michigan Legislature and pull up House Bill 5725 and Senate Bills 1197-1200.

What's Next?

These bills will be debated during the House and Senate committee sessions throughout the summer and likely into autumn. The sticky parts of the bills include some rather detailed and technical information that would be required to fulfill an application for drilling a new well or enhanced use of an existing well. Some of the requirements will demand some rather expensive procedures in order to compile the information. Stay tuned because the industry will have the chance to weigh in on the effects of these bills should they become law.

What About Those Water Use Reports?

The water reports that golf courses have been submitting over the last ten years are going to be extremely valuable during the debate of these bills. They will provide an accurate account of water use and the information can be tied to specific regions or properties. Few other industries going into this debate will have information with the same level of detail. The amount of water used in previous years will be protected for future use. I have heard of folks who have routinely reported less than what was actually used on the property. Bad move. It's best to "grandfather in" an accurate description of water use so the proper amount can be protected for future use. Don't skimp on the reports.

Where Did this Come From?

A series of events in the past few years have launched us into intense debates about the use and ownership of water in the Great Lakes basin. The issue began to heat up in the late 1980's when serious requests were made by states in the southwest U.S. to pipe water from Lake Michigan and distribute it throughout that region. Since that time, a pact was signed by all the Great Lake states and Canadian province to prevent diversions of water to areas outside the Great Lakes Basin. This pact, called the Great Lakes Charter, was the reason that golf courses (and many others) were asked to record their use of water so we could better defend our water use needs if push came to shove. Since that time our Great Lakes water continues to evolve from being described as a "natural resource" to a "commodity". The event that seems to have pushed folks past the boiling point was the authorization of the Perrier water bottling plant in Mecosta County. The plant was opened amid some strong local opposition and others who considered the water plant a clear diversion of water outside the basin. The legislature has responded with the five bills described above in an effort to provide better control over future diversions. A few billboards were erected this winter throughout Michigan demanding that other states "back off" our water were voice of a strong opinion on this issue. Stay tuned to the evolution of these bills, the public debate and ride the wave.

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