

**In Memoriam: Al Radko**

**A**LLEXANDER M. (AL) RADKO, a mainstay of the USGA Green Section from 1947 until his retirement in 1981, passed away on October 31, 1995. During his career, Radko received many honors, including the 1983 USGA Green Section Award.

Radko joined the USGA in 1947 while completing his studies toward a bachelor of science degree at the University of Maryland. Originally hired by Dr. Fred Grau, then head of the USGA Green Section, as a research assistant, Radko later became an agronomist and eventually the Director of the Eastern Region. In this capacity, he made several thousand Turf Advisory Service visits, drove more than a million miles on USGA business, and was responsible for hiring many well-known agronomists on the USGA staff, including Stan Zontek, Director of the Green Section's Mid-Atlantic Region.

Radko became National Director of the Green Section in 1974, a position he held until his retirement in 1981.



Al Radko

Throughout these years, Radko maintained involvement in various research projects and contributed articles to a variety of professional publications, including the *Green Section Record*, which he edited for five years. In the early 1980s, he was instrumental in convincing the USGA Executive Committee to expand significantly its funding for turfgrass research. The USGA has subsequently spent more than \$12 million on turfgrass and environmental research.

His duties extended overseas as well. Following World War II, he served golf

in Japan by spearheading the rebuilding and rehabilitation of several golf courses in that nation for use by U.S. occupational forces. One of his pupils, Pete Nakamura, later became one of Japan's greatest golfers.

Jim Snow, current National Director of the Green Section, lauded Radko's contributions to the game and the USGA. "For those of us fortunate enough to have worked with Al, we knew him as a kind, thoughtful person who led by example and always had the very best interest of the USGA, the Green Section, and the golf course superintendent at heart. He loved the game of golf, and he lived by the highest principles the game has to offer. Al will be greatly missed by his many friends and colleagues in the turfgrass industry and the game of golf."

Radko is survived by his wife, Anne, and three sons. His family requested that memorial donations be made to the USGA Foundation in support of its Youth and Education Program. Donations may be sent to the USGA Foundation, P.O. Box 5000, Far Hills, NJ 07931.

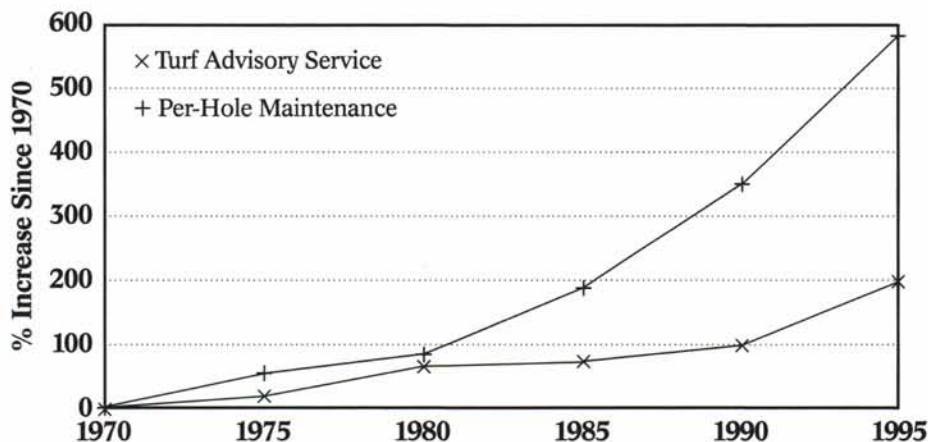
**TAS Still Best Buy**

**C**AN YOU REMEMBER back 25 years ago? If it all seems a little hazy, perhaps a few financial comparisons will jar your memory. The dollar you held in your hand in 1970 would today require \$3.66 to equal it in terms of real purchasing power.

If you think this example demonstrates that inflation has had a large impact upon the value of the dollar, it pales in comparison to the cost of maintaining a golf course. It took an average total cost (total cost, by the way, includes all salaries and wages, plus all other expenses like equipment and fertilizers) of \$4,924 per hole to maintain a golf course in 1970. This figure may seem, in retrospect, like a huge amount, especially when you realize it was 86 percent higher than a total cost per hole of \$2,641 in 1956. But take a look at the last quarter century. Recent estimates put the per-hole maintenance tab at better than \$33,500, which represents almost a 600 percent increase since 1970.

What has happened to the cost of a USGA Green Section Turf Advisory Service visit in the last 25 years? If you had scheduled a half-day visit to an 18-

**Comparison of Turf Advisory Service Visits Versus Per-Hole Maintenance Costs Over Time\***



\*Half-day visit, prepaid before May 15.  
Cost-per-hole figures based on Pannell Kerr Forster surveys

or 27-hole facility in 1970, you would have paid \$300. In 1995, a half-day visit scheduled before May 15 would have required a \$900 expenditure, or \$1,200 for the same service if you booked it after that date. Thus, the TAS cost has increased three or four times (depending upon the promptness of your reservations), which represents a much smaller climb than the rate at which overall maintenance costs have soared.

Today's price represents less than 1/4 of 1 percent of the average course maintenance budget. Putting it another way, the TAS expenditure equals only 3.5 percent of the average cost of maintaining *one hole* of the average golf course.

How do all these costs relate to the USGA's expense in providing this service? First, the money paid by the golf course is a flat fee that covers the

agronomic aspects of the visit, the preparation of a detailed written report, as well as *all* related expenses such as transportation, food, and lodging. (Often, similar consulting services charge a basic fee plus all expenses incurred on a visit.) Second, the direct costs for the salaries, travel, and expenses of the agronomists, when combined with the other costs of TAS like

maintenance of the corresponding regional offices, represents a total yearly TAS cost to the USGA of approximately \$2.5 million. TAS revenues annually run in the \$1.6 million range. Thus, the USGA provides a regular TAS subsidy in the neighborhood of almost \$1 million. The point is not to bore you with USGA accounting procedures or belabor the USGA's finan-

cial commitment to the program, but to highlight TAS's relative economic value to subscribing courses.

This analysis, hopefully, provides some worthwhile historical perspective about the costs of golf course maintenance and the Turf Advisory Service. These numbers bear testimony that TAS represents a wise and cost-effective investment for your golf course to make.

## ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

# Staying on Course

*Think and work long-term to achieve sustainable success.*

by JOHN H. FOY

A COMMONLY USED buzzword today is "sustainable." It is used in conjunction with various practices or principles such as development, agriculture, and resource management. In this context, sustainable could be defined simply as a pattern of activity that can be supported indefinitely. Given the opportunity and adequate time, golf course superintendents can apply the principles of sustainable resource management and help ensure that future generations continue to enjoy the game and the diverse collection of flora and fauna that inhabit our courses.

It should be obvious that consistent leadership and adherence to sound programs are vital ingredients in achieving a sustainable system. Especially in the management of a golf course, several months or even years can be required for the full impact and desired results of changes in management to be realized. Quick fixes seldom result in permanent improvements.

During the summer and fall of 1995, we experienced quite a few weather extremes. A prolonged period of high daytime and nighttime temperatures, along with severe drought, caused widespread turf loss at facilities in the northern portion of the country. In Florida, tropical storm/hurricane activity exceeded all previous records. During July, August, and September, more than 50 inches of rainfall was recorded in most areas of South Florida. The average *annual* rainfall for West Palm Beach, Florida, is 62 inches.

As one would imagine, producing and maintaining healthy turf growth and good quality course conditioning was difficult. With the return of the winter-season golfers to courses that have had problems, rumors of superintendent changes, naturally, circulate.

The South Florida area has long been notorious for "musical chairs" in regard to superintendent jobs. Along with a volatile political scene and excessively high demands for perfect course conditioning, fast growth in the number of courses over the years has resulted in high numbers of job changes. During the ten years that I have worked in Florida, tenure of three years or less seems to be the norm for many superintendents. Today, while new course construction has slowed, budget-cutting at some facilities has resulted in superintendents losing their jobs to help *save* money. A flooded applicant market has not helped matters, either. Unfortunately, other Green Section agronomists across the country are reporting that this lack of tenure for superintendents is not unique to South Florida.

Although a much shorter job tenure seems to be a trend in businesses today, in my opinion, this is a very bad situation for the turfgrass/golf management industry. With regular changes in course superintendents, the likelihood of achieving long-term success is greatly diminished. Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which is an important aspect of sustainable resource management, can serve to illustrate my point.

Monitoring is one of the primary components of an IPM program. In addition to establishing pest threshold levels and scouting a site for pest activity, the tracking of environmental conditions is necessary to determine when and where control measures should be implemented. The effectiveness of control measures also should be evaluated as part of the monitoring process. The accumulation of only two or three years of data is not sufficient to evaluate pest and environmental patterns at a site. Further, most superintendents agree that it takes at least a couple of years to develop a good understanding of the various characteristics of a course.

Far too often today, the *quick fix* solution of changing superintendents is the response to a temporary problem, even in cases that are weather-related and out of the hands of the golf course superintendent. Particularly given the current environmental concerns about golf courses, we must be more far-sighted in management decisions. For successful sustainable resource management, *staying on course* is essential. This is as true of a superintendent's tenure as it is with that of the course leadership and overall club management.

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