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WRA 360
VISUALS REPORT

overview

Turfgrass is an industry that is little recognized by the common public. As a result, turfgrass publications target a very specific audience: those immediately associated with golf courses and other forms of turfgrass and sports turf. Many types of publications exist regarding turf including magazines, newsletters, pamphlets, brochures, journals, theses and dissertations. Many of these publications make use of visuals to illustrate their covers and content. The ways in which turf publications utilize visuals directly reflect their purpose, such as research or entertainment.

In this report, I present and analyze the visual content of three recent turfgrass magazine covers.

introduction

Not many students (or even faculty members) at Michigan State University are aware of what goes on in the main library behind the green paneling of 3-West. Inside these walls resides the Turfgrass Information Center (TIC), “the most comprehensive publicly available collection of turfgrass educational materials in the world” ([The Turfgrass Information Center](#)). This should come as no surprise, as Michigan State was and still is a major agricultural school. TIC’s extensive database, known as TGIF, currently has over 100,000 records (I would know, we had a party at work to celebrate the momentous occasion). TIC provides turfgrass literature, including many periodicals, not only to turfgrass management students but also to golf course superintendents, golf course architects, sod producers, horticulturists, and many others involved in the turf industry.

The turfgrass industry does *not* deal only with golf courses; though golf is a major part of the business, it also applies to football fields, tennis courts, cricket pitches, soccer fields, and more. Even artificial turf (maybe better known as AstroTurf) is considered turfgrass because it requires special upkeep and care.

Research behind the turfgrass industry is ongoing. Turf producers and managers are always looking for better equipment, ways to stop erosion, tips for deterring turfgrass pests, etc. This is where the huge number of turf publications comes into play; many turf publications report important research findings. While the occasional TGIF item does not contain any visuals at all, many of the turf publications found in the TGIF database do utilize pictures to illustrate their points. For my visual analysis I will be taking a look at the covers of three major turf magazines: *Golf Course Management*, *Golfdom*, and *Turf News*. All three of these are large-scale, monthly or bi-monthly publications, and appeal to similar audiences. Considering the turfgrass industry is not extremely well known to the average person, the use of visuals on the covers of these publications is both astounding and intriguing.





2005 golf industry show

www.gcsaa.org • January 2005

GOLFCOURSE

management

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

green light
orlando

Golf Course Management magazine (January 2005)



IT'S ALL BUSINESS

SAFETY PAYS

SOLD ON FERTIGATION

January 2005

Golfdom

www.golfdom.com

SOLUTIONS, IDEAS & OPINIONS

AN ADVANSTAR PUBLICATION

Put Into Words

What does show merger spell for superintendents and owners?

Golfdom magazine (January 2005)



JANUARY / FEBRUARY 1999

Turf News

TPI SUMMER CONVENTION
JULY 19-21 / EAST LANSING, MI

Field Day Format Undergoing Re-Design

See page 10

THE ONLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO TURFGRASS PRODUCTION
& PUBLICATION OF TURFGRASS PRODUCERS INTERNATIONAL

TPI Members Share 21 Ideas on Business Investments and Diversification— Sports Field Systems / Equipment Manufacturing / Speciality Grasses



MSU: Site of Summer Convention/Page 10



The MSU Pavilion has over 100,000 square feet of multi-purpose space

Sports Field Marketing



Graff Turf Farms share marketing method

TIPS: Pallets



Pallet Retrieval System

Turf vs. Man-Made Erosion Control
Pages 15-17

NEW RESEARCH PROJECT: "SOD MARKETING MANUAL"
SEE: ASK THE EXPERT / PAGE 59

Sale of Turf Sod for Hollywood Movie
Page 79

Woerner Manufacturing, Inc. (WMI) Purchases Texas Sod Harvesting – Page 65

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Visit our site <http://www.TurfGrassSod.Org>

Turf News (January 1999)



background

Golf Course Management

Golf Course Management (GCM) is one of the most important publications to undergo processing at the Turfgrass Information Center and its issues are added into the database very quickly. The issues are always placed in large white envelopes labeled “**RUSH RUSH RUSH**” in tall green letters. Founded in 1933, the magazine is owned and operated by GCSAA (Golf Course Superintendents Association of America).

GCM is considered a professional magazine geared toward practitioners. Each issue of *Golf Course Management* includes industry news, product news, and various reflections. *GCM* also presents research articles, usually summaries of important experiments, but makes them easy for the average golf course superintendent to read and absorb.

GCSAA states that its mission is “[to serve] its members, [advance] their profession and [enhance] the enjoyment, growth and vitality of the game of golf”. The organization’s goals are defined as follows:

- Provide opportunities and support that enable our members to achieve career success.
- Advocate for the interests of our members, the industry, and the game of golf.
- Contribute to golf facility success by providing relevant continuing education and information.
- Thrive as a strategic, inclusive and responsive organization.

Golfdom

Golfdom magazine, originally founded in 1927, was the first industry publication to advocate the education and training of greenkeepers and also served as the golf and turf industry’s first business journal. “The digest-sized publication, founded and published by the legendary Herb Graffis, was the “bible” for greenkeepers, club managers and golf professionals in search of technical and professional information” (*Golfdom*). *Golfdom* has been on the cutting edge of technology for years, often times featuring new products within its pages.

Golfdom left the scene from 1981, when “Herb’s declining health and changes in the magazine marketplace led to its demise...For 18 years, there was an empty space in the golf industry where *Golfdom* was supposed to be”. In 1999, “Questex Media’s Landscape Group revived the title to launch a new upscale publication designed to fill the niche between the highly technical association journal and the newsy tabloids” (*Golfdom*).

Golfdom, unlike *GCM*, is a trade magazine. *Golfdom*’s mission statement as declared on Golfdom.com is as follows:



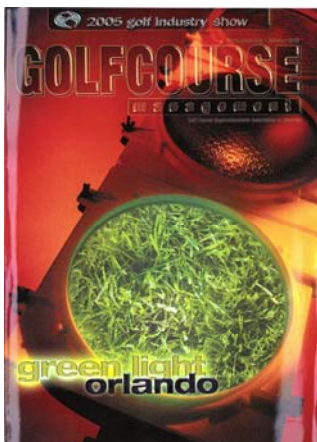
- Golfdom will always be relevant.
- Golfdom will assume our readers are smart people.
- Golfdom will focus on solutions.
- Golfdom will be designed for busy people.
- Golfdom will look great and be fun to read.
- Golfdom will have an attitude.
- Golfdom will take stands on behalf of its readers.

Turf News

Turf News is a magazine devoted entirely to turfgrass sod production. Since the publication's debut in 1977, it has been published bi-monthly by Turfgrass Producers International (TPI), formerly known as American Sod Producers Association (ASPA). The magazine's content features TPI news and events, descriptions of newly developed turfgrass varieties, equipment advancements and nutrients, recent technological breakthroughs, business management, research findings, and other sod-related topics.

Like *Golf Course Management*, *Turf News* is aimed at professional practitioners. The *Turf News* website states that "the *Turf News* audience is mostly turfgrass sod farm owners, representing TPI members, a high volume, steadily growing market" and claims that "because *Turf News* is the only magazine that addresses the specific needs and interests of the turfgrass sod producer, it is the publication they read cover-to-cover and keep for handy reference". TPI membership typically includes turfgrass sod producers, but also extends to turf equipment and parts manufacturers and suppliers, research scientists, and others involved in turf education.

analysis/results

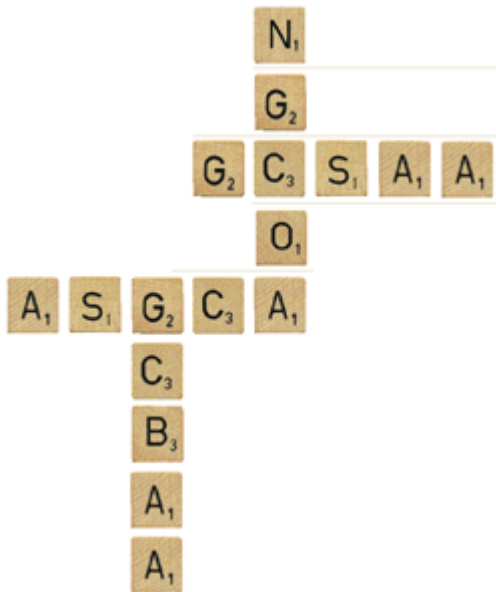
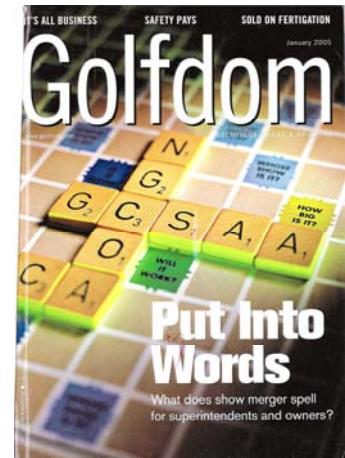


Golf Course Management's January 2005 cover is a beautiful piece of design work. The cover features a traffic light, set at an angle that obscures the view of the red and yellow lights. The only light that is illuminated is the green light, and inside the green light is (what else?) turfgrass! Even the title of the magazine is subtle so that the grass appears to really jump right off the cover. This cover tells us very little about the issue's content, but one might guess that the 2005 Golf Industry Show will be held in Orlando, Florida.

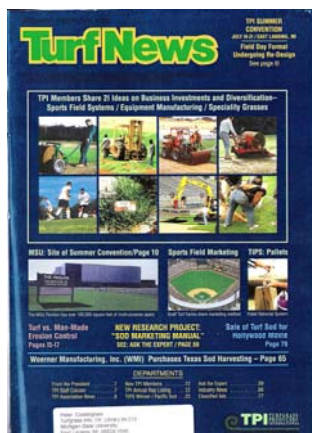
The January 2005 cover of *Golfdom* focuses on one very central event: the Golf Industry Show, which combines the annual trade shows of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA), the American



Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA), and the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA). *Golfdom's* use of a "Scrabble" board on the front cover cleverly and effectively illustrates the idea of the show merger. Even though the image is cut off, the abbreviations of the two largest organizations are featured on the final cover (the full image, taken from *Golfdom's* website, may be seen below). Also note that the remainder of the game board is left in shadow and that the important block text is illuminated. The use of white text on this cover is also very attractive.



Inside, the feature article expands upon the use of the "Scrabble" board, as CMAA (Club Managers Association of America) is scheduled to join the Golf Industry Show in 2007.



Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain the January/February 2005 issue of *Turf News*; the most recent *Turf News* issue I managed to procure is January/February 1999. This doesn't really matter, however, because every cover of *Turf News* has had the same layout for at least the past ten years. The only main difference between issues is that the background color of each cover varies. *Turf News* crams a lot of information onto their cover space, mainly pictures of new turfgrass varieties and turf equipment. They use a smattering of colors (too many, I think...where did that pink come from?!) and their entire table of contents is also listed on the bottom of the front



cover. I do not understand the reasoning behind listing the table of contents on the cover, I find it to be repetitive and redundant, but perhaps *Turf News* has been doing things the same way for so long that they feel there is nothing wrong with their design decisions.

There is no consistent alignment of the many pictures on this cover and the fluorescent green of the *Turf News* logo doesn't really fit in with the more natural colors of the pictures. There is also a lot of text compared to the *Golf Course Management* and *Golfdom* covers. This cover is overflowing and overwhelming – where is the viewer supposed to look first?

conclusions

While each of the magazines has a unique look to its cover, along with its strengths and weaknesses, the covers are designed in a particular manner in order to serve the magazine's purpose. *Turf News*, for example, does not have to rely on looking attractive to gain new readership; anyone who reads *Turf News* is going to continue to read *Turf News* regardless of the magazine's appearance. Readers of *Turf News* are probably sod producers who are interested strictly in the content of the publication and want to know what's new in the sod-producing world. The reliable research-based articles within this publication keep the readers returning.

Golfdom and *Golf Course Management* magazines, on the other hand, are going to be read mainly by people who deal directly with golf courses and the care of golf courses. There are many more publications out there dealing with golf course upkeep, so these readers can afford to be pickier. In this case, the appearance of the magazine may come into play, resulting in the attractive covers of both *Golfdom* and *Golf Course Management*.



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