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Off The Fringe

Continued from page 20

phalt — a path in from the main road, and two driveways for the only two houses on the course. After three hours we call it a day. We deserve the rest just like the course. Tomorrow we'll be busy once again.

The turf management part of me is starting to feel impatient, but at the same time a wiser part of me knows that 14-hour days are again only a few short weeks away.

Friday greets the mid-Adantic with an expected high temperature of 37 degrees. I'll have a two-thirds crew today to help with the grinding, oil changing, ball-washer painting and shop reorganizing. Luckily, there is enough of that right now to keep them all busy for an eight-hour day.

The busy work is plentiful right now, and once the weather breaks a little we can get outside and attend to the trees. In the transition zone, we could have almost any kind of weather pattern, and we are at the mercy of whatever Mother Nature throws our way. One thing I do know is that on this particular Saturday morning, I am able to enjoy the luxury of sleeping in.

The opportunity to recharge your batteries is a rare gift for a greenkeeper. Accept that gift when you can.

Black is superintendent of Twin Shields GC in Dunkirk, Md.

The Major Challenge Is Back

Good news for you golf fanatics: The Major Challenge is back. If you have a hunch about which Tour players will dominate the Majors this year, here's a chance to play out that hunch and win prizes.

John Deere and Golfdom have again joined forces to present the second annual Major Challenge, an online fantasy golf competition for superintendents and other turfheads who want to test their luck against colleagues around the world.

The object of the contest is simple, says Mike Scaletta, advertising manager for Deere's golf/turf division. "You pick the six players you think will score best in each of the four Major tournaments and their combined stroke score is your score in the Challenge," he says. "You can change players and tinker with your team any time up to the day before each event. It's fun, and it's free."

The Major Challenge contest events are, of course, the Masters, U.S. Open, British Open and PGA Championship. An all-expense paid trip to the John Deere Classic to play in the Pro/Am awaits each winner of those events. The John Deere Classic will be held at the Tournament Players Club at Deere Run in September in Silvis, Ill.

You can register online now by visiting www.majorchallenge.com/golf. Contest information, complete rules, eligibility, standings, stats and player information are also available on the site.

So log on, sign up, have fun and win.

Un-Bear-Able

CANADIAN SUPERINTENDENT BATTLES BRUINS

By James E. Guyette

A situation at the Sparwood GC in Sparwood, B.C., is creating a "grizzly" situation for superintendent Rod Uhll. During the spring and fall, urinous invaders make almost nightly forays onto the nine-hole course.

Weighing up to 1,000 pounds, the marauding grizzlies are particularly partial to the pins — frequently snapping them in two like toothpicks. "They pick up the scents of everyone who grabs the flagsticks, and the bears are rubbing up against them to leave their own scents," Uhll says.

The bears make the rounds of other course features, too, targeting distance markers and anything else they can get their huge paws on. "They dig the cups right out, and they also dig-up our irrigation heads," Uhll says. Recently, "the majority of the practice course mats were flipped over, and one of them was shredded." The mat mayhem is especially puzzling because they're made of synthetic materials.

It's hard to figure out why the bears like the course. Insects aren't prevalent because of the rural region's rugged climate, and "we have a very stringent garbage control program" to eliminate other bear-type treats, Uhll adds.

A barking dog is no solution, as a canine could quickly become a snack. And applying typical bear repellents to the pins won't work because any product that the bears find foul is going to end-up on the hands of members lining up their putts. "I can't have my golfers getting that on themselves," Uhll adds.

Uhll seeks advice from those who've had bear problems. He can be reached at sparwoodgolf@netscape.net.

Guyette is a free-lance writer from Cleveland.
Waiting Is the Hardest Part

MORAN NAMED SUPERINTENDENT
OF YALE GC — FINALLY

By Anthony Pieppi

Mike Moran will celebrate his 20th anniversary at Yale University GC in style. He was finally named superintendent of the course after serving in an interim role for nearly two years.

They say good things come to those who wait. Moran waited, waited and waited to be appointed superintendent. He was named the official superintendent of the course in December. It was also a nice 50th birthday present for the superintendent, who turned the half-century mark the same month.

Moran was chosen out of a group of five finalists that were culled from a national search by a committee made up of Yale alum, members of the school’s athletic department and people involved with the course, said Thomas Beckett, Yale’s director of athletics.

According to Beckett, part of the reason Moran was chosen for the job was “his knowledge of the Yale GC and his passion for what the golf course is all about.”

Moran takes over at a time of positive change at the acclaimed Seth Raynor design, which opened in 1926. It is finally receiving attention from the school after years of neglect. Architect Roger Rulewich is in the midst of a bunker renovation scheduled to be completed by fall, including the reinstatement of a number of bunkers filled in over the years. Plans are underway to improve drainage on at least three holes.

As part of union regulations of which he is a member, Moran will no longer be able to perform jobs of the rank and file — including operating machinery — unless in a teaching or testing capacity.

“I’m going to miss the labor stuff a little bit, but now I’ll have time to train and improve the professionalism of the golf course,” Moran said.

The golf course has nine budgeted positions, four of which are for 12 months and five for nine months. During the summer, help from the school’s dining halls augment the crew. The void left by Moran’s elevation will also be filled.

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Off The Fringe

A License to Drive ... and Pitch and Putt

IT'S HIGH TIME THAT GOLFERS LEARN THE RULES

By Anthony Pioppi

It was an epiphany of sorts. Not really hit by a bolt of lightning, but shocked just slightly, like the time in sixth grade when I accidentally touched the inside of an empty foot-light socket in my junior high school auditorium.

Tzzzzz . . . What the . . . ?!

This time the little jolt came while standing on the 17th tee of the local muni. About 30 feet below lies the 10th green and on this fine afternoon, four players were putting out on that very green, their golf carts parked no farther than a couple paces from the putting surface. While this in itself was out of line, the fact they had to negotiate the vehicles around a veritable obstacle course of yellow rope, stakes and trees to get where they were was no accident. Or was it?

Up until then, I had always assumed 90 percent of the people on golf courses who are doing what they shouldn't just don't give a rat's porch about the course. My conclusion was reached after a couple of decades playing the game, two years on a golf course grounds crew and more than a few occasions taking the role of ranger on the aforementioned layout.

For some reason, a modicum of patience had worked its way into my demeanor and rather than fire off my usual harsh words of disgust at the four offenders, I took a rather tactful approach.

“Gentlemen,” I said in a voice loud enough for them to hear without a hint of anger, “those carts don't belong there. Could you move them back behind those ropes, please?”

Well, tie me to an anthill and smear me with Ho Hos, the reaction from the four was nothing short of astonishing. Two immediately sprinted to their carts and moved them back to a reasonable parking distance, and they all practically

![Image of people putting with carts]

...move them back to a reasonable parking distance, and they all practically...
fell over each other spouting words of genuine, yes, genuine apology.

Over the years, more than one of my playing companions have disagreed with my low opinion of golf course miscreants. Those friends have argued eloquently, and not so eloquently, that the players who do not take care of the golf course are, in most cases, guilty of ignorance rather than of malice.

“How can you say that?” I would ask them under cross-examination giving an example. “What about the old-timers around here who were playing the game years before Noah needed to build himself a boat? They never fix a pitch mark.”

“They don’t know they are doing anything wrong,” my friends would tell me. “No one’s ever shown them the error in their ways.”

I have a proposal to correct this, which follows along many of the lines of other golfing countries such as Sweden. Under this plan, players are not allowed onto courses until they have passed golf’s version of a safe driving test. There will be no grandfather clause. If you don’t have a license to drive, pitch and putt, you will not play golf. It’s as simple as that.

Once golfers learn the etiquette of the game — including such talents as fixing ball marks; when and when not to replace divots; good cart driving techniques; and why it’s not an insult to let a faster group play through — they can tee it up anywhere.

I suggest the regional PGA section and the regional superintendent sections coordinate the classes that will be taught by golf pros and superintendents for a fee, of course. Along the way, prospective golfers will gain an appreciation for not just the game and its rules, but also for the people who take care of the courses on which they play. They’ll come to understand why it is important to fix a pitch mark or fill and level divots.

The dual teaching program will also foster increased communication and goodwill between pros and superintendents — both of whom will also learn to appreciate a little more what each other does.

Once certified golfers are let loose on the links, rangers will have it easier as well since all players will be well-versed in what and what not to do. Rangers will be able to skip the polite and gentle reminders to move golf carts or speed up play. Instead, BAM! To the moon Alice or Andy or whoever else breaks the law. Three strike law? Nah.

If the educational process works, I can even envision a world where rangers will not be needed one day. Now wouldn’t that be something?

Pioppi is a free-lance writer from Middletown, Conn.
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hey have grown together like a devoted couple. You listen to Gregg Guynan and you get the impression that he and O'Bannon Creek GC were made for each other. Guynan mentions the word “commitment” often when talking about the track.

On March 18, Guynan celebrates his 26th anniversary as superintendent of O'Bannon Creek in Loveland, Ohio, near Cincinnati. The course opened a year before the 49-year-old Guynan arrived in 1977. They were both babies to the business then.

If Guynan has his way, he'll stay at O'Bannon for the rest of his working life. He's like one of those throwback baseball players (“Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?”) who longed to play for the same team for his entire career and did.

Which brings us to the topic of longevity in the golf course maintenance business. These days, it's not that hot of a topic when you consider that the average superintendent stays at the same golf course for about seven years.

But there's something to be said for longevity, as Guynan's career attests. He's successful and happy at O'Bannon. He knows he could probably make more money at another course, but that's not the most important issue to him. As the Beatles song says, “Money can't buy me love.”

But there are also two sides to this street. While Guynan wants to stay at O'Bannon because he loves it, he knows they (his bosses and the members) must want him to stay. In essence, longevity is about achieving personal goals as much as it's about maintaining solid interpersonal relationships.

So if you desire to stay at your course for more than the norm, you're wise to listen to Guynan's recipe for longevity. Its ingredients have to do with personal satisfaction and respect for others. And even if you're not looking to stay at the same course for 20 years, you can learn a lot from Guynan's philosophy. Here are his secrets for staying power:

**Look for a course that's you.**

“It's important you look for a course that fits your style and needs,” Guynan says. “I'm a project-oriented type of person. What I enjoy most is building something new on the course. That's exactly what this course needed when I came here — there were a lot of unfinished projects.

“That's also what will help keep me here,” he continues. “We've got projects planned for the next 10 years.”

**Work with what you're given.**

Guynan advises a superintendent not to stomp his foot and throw up his hands if the green committee rejects his pitch for more money to complete a project.

“I've always been willing to work with what I've been given without complaining,” he says. “As a whole, superintendents have to be efficient people or they don't last very long.”

**Learn to pinch pennies.**

“I always watch what I spend,” Guynan says of his maintenance budget. “We do a lot of projects in-house. We did our own fairway irrigation system for a fraction of the cost of what it would cost a contractor to do. It's a challenge for me to see how far I can stretch a dollar.”

**Take care of your crew members.**

You're the boss, but you don't have to rule with an iron fist, Guynan says. Let crew members have fun in their jobs and empower them so they feel like they're important. In turn, they'll respect you and most likely stick around for more than a summer.

“You have to make the job enjoyable for...Continued on page 30
continued from page 29
them,” Guynan says. “I think I’ve
done a pretty good job of that. A big
part of my longevity here is that I’ve
had good people working for me.”

Do the right thing.
“I don’t always do what [members
and committee people] ask me to do
because I know it’s not the right
ing to do,” Guynan says.

For instance, if a few members
bark at Guynan to cut the greens
shorter to make them faster — and
it’s mid-July and hotter than the in-
side of a steel mill — Guynan won’t
heed their calls.

“You just have to do what you
know is right,” he says. “That’s part
of the survival process — keeping
the golf course alive and in good
shape.”

Bite your tongue.
It’s 95 degrees, it hasn’t rained in
three weeks, and you’ve been tending
carefully to three of the course’s
greens that are stressed to the max.
Meanwhile, a green committee
member is complaining to you about
untrimmed grass around the ball
washer on No. 9. You want to tell
that committee person a few things,
but Guynan advises you to bite your
tongue.

“You have to learn not to speak
everything that you would like
to say,” he says. “You have to hold back.”

Take compliments to heart.
If someone pays you an atta-boy
about the condition of the greens or
the fairways, don’t think twice about
not feeling good about it, Guynan
says. Pats on the back are good
for self-esteem.

“A single comment can make a
huge difference,” Guynan says.
“Those are the things that help keep
you going.”

Try to get along with everyone.
Sometimes, a newly appointed green
chairman is bound not to like you,
Guynan says. But that doesn’t mean
you don’t have to like him. In fact,
respect that person and try to get
along with him or her. You may win
that person over.

“I’ve had a few green chairmen
come in, and they didn’t like me,”
Guynan says. “But after we worked
together for a while and they under-
stood my operation, they ended up
liking me.

“It bothers when somebody
doesn’t like me, but I also realize it’s
part of life. And it doesn’t stop me
from trying to change that person’s
mind.”

Pray.
Sometimes, when life on the golf
course gets to be distressing, Guynan
will pray for strength and the intelli-
gence to make the right decisions.
“It has helped keep me from over
reacting to certain things,” Guynan
says.

Family time is quality time.
Guynan knows you’re busy, but he
advises you to make time for your
family and friends. You won’t regret
it, he says.

“I spend a lot of time here, but I
never let this job be all encompass-
ing to my life,” Guynan says. “I
have a wonderful family. I don’t get
as much time with them as
I’d like, but it’s quality time when
I do.

“A lot of times I’ve come home,
and I’m stressed out from something
that’s happened here, and someone
in my family will say something that
takes all the stress away.”

Keep a fresh outlook.
Twenty-six years have been a blur,
Guynan admits. But he’s had time to
watch the course mature into a vet-
eran track — and himself into a sea-
soned superintendent. He wants to
keep watching and learning.

“I hope that I retire from here,”
Guynan says. “This course is my
baby.”

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