

One Superintendent's Perspective

By **KEVIN BLACK, CGCS**
Prairie View Golf Links



KEVIN BLACK CGCS
Prairie View Golf Links

Prairie View Golf Links, Worthington, MN, is a 6,500-yard Joel Goldstrand treeless links style course opened in 1983. The course encompasses 130 acres of which 20 acres are water and 12 acres are naturalized rough areas.

I started as the assistant superintendent at Brooks Golf Club in Okoboji, IA in 1979 where I stayed for three years. I was the sup't at Spencer Municipal Golf Course in Spencer, IA for 13 years. I have been sup't at Prairie View for the past 16 years. I obtained certification here in 1996. I was recently elected to the Board of Directors of the South Dakota Chapter of GCSAA.

Why an/or how did you enter the turf management industry?

I was a long-term student at Iowa State University, where I eventually decided on Horticulture as my major. Then Superintendent Doug Wicks had just taken the job at Brooks Golf Club and asked me if I would be his assistant. My reply was, "but I've never worked on a golf course," to which he said "you'll be alright." I started working, never went back to school, and am still at it 32 years later.

Who was your professional mentor?

Obviously Doug Wicks showed me the

ropes from the beginning. As I look at all the people in our profession, I am constantly impressed at the things I learn from different supers whether they are old or young, weathered by time or new to the business.

What has been the highest point in your career?

I think the construction projects I have been involved in have been the most gratifying, but seeing employees going on to become good Superintendents has definitely been a thrill.

What has been your lowest point?

Losing a job for purely political reasons.

Are your greatest challenges political, agronomic or managerial?

If you had told me long ago that political and financial challenges would be in the forefront today, I would have thought you were nuts. Now the agronomics are the easy part.

What is the most difficult disease to manage on your course and how do you?

We are situated on the outskirts of Worthington where the wind is always blowing (a four or five club wind is not

uncommon) so diseases never really get a foothold. Dollar spot is our biggest challenge, but it really wasn't much of an issue until last summer when the wind didn't blow for about three weeks and it just devastated us. I get by in the winter without applying any snow mold fungicides, because even in a snowy winter, the snow blows off the greens.

Is it hard to find good help in your area of the state?

I have been very lucky finding and retaining good help, especially with what we pay them.

Do you have a dog on your crew?

Ruger, my 110-pound, five-year-old chocolate lab keeps things interesting here.

Where will our industry be in 10 years?

I'm very intrigued to see where the advances in technology will change the way we do things.

Where would you like to be in 10 years?

Retired, on a lake in northern Minnesota where the wind doesn't blow.

What is your perspective of our state association and what would you change?

MGCSA is a solid organization full of talented people.

Name your dream foursome. Who would you like to spend time with golfing?

My dream foursome would include Al Linder, Bill Clinton and Mother Teresa. Al, because we could talk fishing for four hours and maybe I could wrangle some time on the water with him: Bill Clinton, because mulligans anytime are okay and I want to play with someone who actually has a legitimate shot at the beer cart girl; Mother Teresa, because I know golf is frustrating enough to make even a saint swear out loud, I just want to see it with my own eyes.



Prairie View Golf Links