

# Learning to Live With Golf Cart Traffic

By **CHUCK GAST**

*Agronomist, Florida Region, USGA Green Section*

Golf carts have become an integral part of most golf course operations today. In more ways than one, they have made their mark at public, municipal, private, and resort courses throughout the country. While golf carts have done much to popularize the game of golf in this country, they also are the source of many headaches for the golf course superintendent. Since golf carts are here to stay, learning how to deal with the negative aspects associated with their use is essential in producing the best quality golf course conditions.

In 1990, the National Golf Foundation estimated that there were 800,000 to 850,000 electric and gasoline-powered golf carts in use on golf courses. Each cart was estimated to have made 150 rounds annually at an average rental fee of \$14.00 per round, for a total of more than \$1.7 billion in revenue. It further should be noted that this figure does not include income from trail fees from privately owned golf carts. Given these rather substantial income figures, the importance of this revenue producer to the golf industry is obvious. Furthermore, to add to this already impressive number of golf carts in existence, approximately 115,000 new carts are manufactured each year.

**Other factors that lend credence** to the use of golf carts on golf courses include enabling those with physical handicaps to play the game, as well as extending the number of years of play for many golfers. Use of golf carts also enables golfers to enjoy the game despite inclement or oppressively hot weather conditions and, in some cases, they actually assist in speeding up play.

Considering these benefits, it is safe to assume that carts are here to stay on the golf course. But consider some of the negative effects of cart traffic on the turf and soil. Even though a golf cart tire does not exert as much actual pressure on the turf as the human foot, golf cart opera-

tors tend to travel in similar patterns, resulting in accelerated turf wear and compacted soil conditions that limit turf recovery in these areas. During periods of turf dormancy, turf injury can be particularly severe, with little chance for improvement until normal turf growth resumes. This is a problem with warm-season grasses during the winter months and, to some extent, with cool-season grasses during dry, hot summers or very cold winters. Not only are effective management programs necessary to correct turf wear and soil compaction, therefore, but effective traffic-control methods also are necessary to minimize turf damage.

Problems of excessive turf wear and compaction are most noticeable in areas where traffic concentrates, usually near tees and greens or tight fairway areas. Loss of turf due to intense traffic conditions also can occur in other areas when adverse environmental conditions exist, such as drought stress or heavy rainfall conditions. While concentrated traffic on dry or frozen soil tends to cause turf loss due to physical wear, soil compaction is the greater concern when wet conditions persist. Programs ranging from intensive aeration to renovation with soil amendments to complete sodding sometimes assist in reestablishing acceptable turf conditions. Unfortunately, these improvements may only be temporary, and turf loss may occur again when similar environmental conditions return.

**The most efficient and logical** approach to most problems is to correct the source of that problem. Effective traffic control, therefore, is essential to minimize the negative effects resulting from concentrated golf cart traffic. A variety of approaches have been found to be effective in providing improved turf-grass quality under high-traffic conditions.

Traffic injury near tees and greens often occurs despite the presence of cart

paths. There seems to be a natural tendency for drivers to pull their golf carts off the edge of the path, as they would when pulling their cars off to the side of the road. This causes a gradual deterioration of the turf adjacent to the path, and the area soon becomes a mudhole awaiting the brand-new golf shoes of the unsuspecting, recently elected club president.

**This situation can effectively be avoided** by installing curbing along the paths in these potential wear areas. Installation of four- to six-inch curbing during initial path construction, using the same material, be it concrete or asphalt, works well and presents a neat, uniform appearance. When adding curbing to existing concrete cart paths, concrete curbing can now efficiently be installed (in areas of the country where it is practical) utilizing a one-step curbing machine. Typically, however, curb additions to existing paths are made with treated wood timbers or railroad ties.

With any curbing method used, the most important point to remember is to backfill the turf side to the top of the curb. Attention to this detail provides a cleaner look and allows for easier maintenance in these areas. Furthermore, the tendency to trap water on the turf side of the curb is eliminated.

**To minimize turf wear** and compaction throughout the fairways and roughs under intensive traffic conditions, installation of a continuous cart path system has proven to be the best solution in many parts of the country. At facilities that average more than 30,000 to 40,000 cart rounds annually, continuous golf cart paths are essential for maintaining healthy turf and good course conditioning. A continuous path system also allows the use of golf carts, restricted to paths only, during excessively wet conditions when carts might not otherwise be permitted on the course. Loss of revenue is thereby averted too.

# Evolution of Hole Notes—

(Continued from Page 6)

tion and too much information would be available to “those outsiders.”

To those of us who were presenting this plan, it seemed like hours and hours of debate. Looking back now, it undoubtedly was generated by genuine concern and caring for something that these people had devoted countless hours of their time in past years. After much discussion, this change was approved by the membership and the directive was given to pursue implementation.

**At the January, 1972 Board meeting,** (a great deal of information has been gathered from minutes of this and other Board meetings from the files of Gerry Murphy) a report was given on contract negotiations with AI, with the Board giving its approval. Soon after, an agreement was reached and the first issue of the new *Hole Notes* was published in February, 1972.

A copy of this issue was obtained from the files of Gerry Commers. The cover illustration still showed an irate golfer slamming his club down on a green with a distraught Superintendent looking on. This issue was a single sheet of paper folded to make a four-page publication. The first use of pictures is included in this initial issue. One photo showed damage to a green due to a gasoline spill. The other two photos showed turf damage from snowmobiles. The locations were not identified.

The next issue, dated April, 1972, had several “firsts.” This was the first issue to have a person’s photo included, that of Robert V. Mitchell, the newly elected president of the GCSAA. The masthead was brand new and featured a much more tranquil illustration of a green with billowy clouds in the background. It also included our Editor’s name with the address and phone number of the new office. Most importantly, however, revenues had begun to be generated. Included in this issue were the first ads ever run in *Hole Notes*. Equal space had been purchased by Minnesota Toro, Inc., now MTI Distributing Co., and R.L. Gould & Co., now North Star Turf, Inc.

**An invitation was extended to our membership** to visit the new MGA, MGCSA, MWGA and MPGA office. The results of a great deal of time and effort were beginning to be realized. MGCSA had a new office. It had a publication, a vehicle for communicating that was not only greatly improved, but was self-supporting. It had a person who would coordinate many of the business activities of the Association. And it had a place to call “home”!

Throughout 1972, *Hole Notes* was published out of the new office. At the end of 1972, AI officially retired from the MGA and publication of the newsletter was moved to his home. The official office, however, stayed at 7100 France Avenue South with the new MGA Executive Director Warren Rebholz and his staff. This arrangement continued until AI’s health deteriorated, and in 1975 the duties of Editor were consolidated with the other Association activities at the office on France Avenue.

The February, 1973 issue saw the first use of color with the masthead printed in green. Advertising continued to increase and the size of the publication grew. The one item that had been the biggest “headache” for the Officers of the Association was now being handled very professionally and was improving with each and every issue.

In March of 1976 the headquarters location changed to the York Avenue South location that most of you are familiar with. The location and staffing remained intact until the most recent

move to Turtinen Communications in Wayzata. There *Hole Notes* is published by a team of individuals whose primary expertise is the business of communication. We can readily see the vast improvements that continue to take place in the content and overall quality of our publication. There is no reason to suspect that this will not continue as time goes on.

There are so many noteworthy items that have occurred over the years that it would be a monumental task to chronicle them. They all, however, can be summed up by saying that *Hole Notes* has improved tremendously over the years due to the efforts of countless individuals who are not only dedicated to maintaining their golf courses in the best possible way, but have a true love of their profession and the Association that binds them together.

**Very few individual names have been mentioned** in this article because, to do so, would result in many not being mentioned that very much deserve recognition. They know who they are and most of you do also. From the Secretaries in the early days who had the unenviable task of working with next to nothing as far as resources are concerned, to the individuals responsible for the modern version which is a credit to our membership and our Association, many have contributed a great deal of time and talent.

What will the future hold for *Hole Notes*? Obviously, only time will tell. However, one might speculate that increasing size and improved quality are realistic expectations. “E” mail may eventually be involved as that technology continues to improve and expand. The technology certainly exists already to effectively communicate in this way. If the past few years have taught us anything, it is that change will occur and it may well occur rapidly.

As a closing note, it is impossible for anyone who has been involved with MGCSA for a number of years to do the kind of research that was done for this article and not be more than a little nostalgic. With past issues of *Hole Notes* scattered about in an attempt to be as accurate as possible with dates and so forth, headlines, pictures and articles serve as vivid reminders of the past. Friendships, outings, catastrophes and special events all bring back memories of people, places and the ups and downs of being involved in the profession that we all love so much. Some are no longer with us. Some are just beginning to play their role in making a mark on the future.

**Possibly, the one quote that sums it up best** is taken from the March, 1976 issue, which was published immediately after the GCSAA Conference and Show was held here. The quote came from a GCSAA staff member who said, after expressing gratitude for all of the “friendliness, kindness and willingness to help,” “I will remember Anaheim and New Orleans for their climates, but I will remember Minneapolis for its warm people.”

Besides the satisfaction of seeing a beautiful piece of land and being responsible for maintaining that beauty, or working with the one who is, that may well be what it’s all about — “the warm people.” After all, that is what really makes MGCSA what it is today and that is what makes *Hole Notes* something very special for all of those who have worked so hard to produce and improve it over the years. From an as-needed postcard to the first-class publication that you have in front of you right now, as the ad slogan says, “You’ve come a long way, Baby”! But his baby didn’t get there by itself. It took a great deal of work and caring by some very special people over the last 60+ years.

# From “The Clock” to a Salary— Things to Consider

By CHAD EBERHARDT

Golf course superintendents are responsible for maintaining and improving their golf courses, but this is only possible, to a large degree, by approval of a carefully prepared budget and subsequent funding by the approving authority.

As this nation faces the reality of economic hardships, golf course superintendents have to realize, more than ever, that they are dealing with discretionary money. Country clubs are not just made up of members with so much money that they don't know what to do with it all. Rather, many members are small business persons or people in the business world who, when times are tough, know what expenses are deemed unnecessary. One of the fastest ways to save money is to look at personal luxury expenses. You can bet that necessities, such as a furnace that's on its last leg or a leaky roof, will have a higher priority in the family budget than the family membership at the country club.

As you all know, the budgeting process is complex and requires you to thoroughly understand your operation. The largest category in golf courses budgets is labor. In many cases it consumes 70 percent or more of the total budget. And accordingly, labor needs thoughtful consideration.

**Have you ever consider changing** the way you pay your assistant? It is an extremely interesting and involved topic. I took it up with Red Jagers of the State of Wisconsin Department of Employee Relations.

I gave Mr. Jagers a typical job description/responsibilities of an assistant golf course superintendent. To get the ball rolling I asked him if there are any laws regarding a person's form of remuneration. Mr. Jagers said that anybody can be paid a salary or an hourly wage. But, the U.S. Department of Labor has guidelines that are “strongly recommended.”

The form of payment that an employer uses is more of an economic than a

legal consideration. Along these lines, I requested Mr. Jager's assistance in recommending a sound economic way of paying a golf course assistant.

Firstly, there are two main categories: hourly wage and salary. Hourly wage is reserved for physical or manual laborers. Non-manual employees should receive salary.

I reminded Mr. Jagers that the business of golf course maintenance is far from a stereotypical business. In other words, an assistant could be considered a manual laborer on one day and just the opposite the next.

**Keeping the job description in mind**, Mr. Jagers agreed that we have a unique situation here. But, he also pointed out that key words such as direct, supervise, instruct and examine/check leave little doubt that an assistant golf course superintendent falls directly into the salary category.

The salary category is broken down further into nonexempt salary or exempt salary. Nonexempt employees are paid a salary and are entitled to an overtime payment. The most common form of O.T. for nonexempt is “half-rate.” (For example: Salary = \$500. Hours worked = 48 hrs. and 43 hrs. = 91 total hrs. Divide salary of \$500 by total hrs. of 91 = regular rate of pay of \$5.50. Divide \$5.50 by 2 = “half rate”. Apply half rate of \$2.75 to 11 O.T. hours = \$30.25 in addition to salary of \$500). As the hours of overtime increase the half rate decreases.

**Exempt salary means** the salaried employee is exempt from overtime provisions of the wage hour laws. But this does not mean an exempt employee never receives overtime pay. It is a common practice for businesses to enter into an agreement with the employee and classify as exempt up to “x” number of hours during peak periods of business.

The determination of whether a particular kind of work is exempt or nonexempt is not difficult. The amount of time spent in the performance of the

managerial duties is a useful guide in determining whether management is the primary duty of an employee. In the ordinary case it may be taken as a good rule of thumb that primary duty means the major part, or over 50% of the employee's time.

If the majority of one's time is determined to be managerial or supervisory, that person is to be classified as exempt. Less than 50% means nonexempt.

**The main difference** between exempt and nonexempt is that an employer is not required to pay an exempt employee any overtime. But, along with exempt status comes a higher salary. Mr. Jagers said that the whole idea behind the exempt status is to guarantee a set salary whether it's based on 45 hours of work or 35 hours of work.

Based on all of Red Jagers' recommendations, and with the assistance of my father, David Eberhardt, Operations Manager of Tecumseh Products, it is quite apparent that a superintendent can get greater control of the labor portion of his budget by offering his assistant a salary. A salary clearly allows you to do a better job of budgeting because it is fixed. Hourly wage, which involves overtime wage laws, is a variable figure that requires much greater attention.

**The most important thing** to keep in mind in all of this is that one should never take advantage of an employee. Changing the form of remuneration should not be looked at as a way to come up with money to be used elsewhere. But, rather, it is a way to gain better control of this important area of one's budget.

These approaches to employee remuneration are used in any businesses and generally well understood by board members, especially those with a financial orientation. Therefore, as golf course superintendents, you should strongly consider finding out more information on this topic.—*The Grass Roots*,

January-February 1992

# The Game of Golf Is Played on Grass

By **STANLEY J. ZONTEK**  
Director, Mid-Atlantic Region  
USGA Green Section

When the golf course is in good shape, everything at the club seems to go well. How obvious. . . or is it!

Why is it, then, that today's golf course superintendent must compete—perhaps struggle is a better word—for the machinery, manpower, materials, and “the budget” to do his or her job? Sometimes clubs and courses appreciate the obvious. If the golf course is in good shape, the rest of the facility hums. People bring guests who pay guest or green fees. This factor impacts favorably on the food and beverage portion of the club, and it helps the facility's cash flow. Members and guests buy logo shirts and sweaters, benefiting the golf professional. Everyone is happy and the club or facility is healthy.

Consider what happens, though, when several greens or fairways are lost, tees are divoted and devoid of turf, the roughs and stream banks are not well cut, and trash, tree limbs, and litter are scattered about the course. Who is happy then? Would you bring guests or sponsor business outings at your club or course? Probably not, or only with a multitude of apologies and excuses.

**With less play**, food and beverage sales suffer and golf carts go unrented. Golf shirts remain on the shelves and everyone begins to grumble. Attention is then focused on, you guessed it, the golf course superintendent.

Do you think a golf course superintendent wants to present a shabby golf course? Is that individual, as a professional, pleased with what he or she sees out there? No, not in the least. So why does it happen?

I submit it often is a question of budget priorities. *The golf course is not getting its fair share of the golf course income.*

Specifically, what percentage of course income is being used to maintain the golf course? Do you think it is 20%, 33% or 50%?

**Figure it out.** If the club has an income of, say, \$2 million per year and the golf course maintenance budget is \$400,000 per year, then the maintenance budget is 20% of the entire club or golf course income. Twenty percent does not sound like very much, and often it isn't enough. Where is the other 80% going?

Shouldn't it be a goal to allow the golf course to be maintained at a level where all the departments are humming and everyone is happy?

Only you can know. It bothers me that golf course maintenance budgets often do not receive their fair share of the club income, and when the course is not perfect, the superintendent is criticized. I submit the real culprit is the budget policy—not providing what is needed to do the job well.

Perhaps a better sales pitch is needed. I hope these comments will help people realize the obvious. . . the game of golf is played on grass, and providing properly for its maintenance should be a course's number-one priority.

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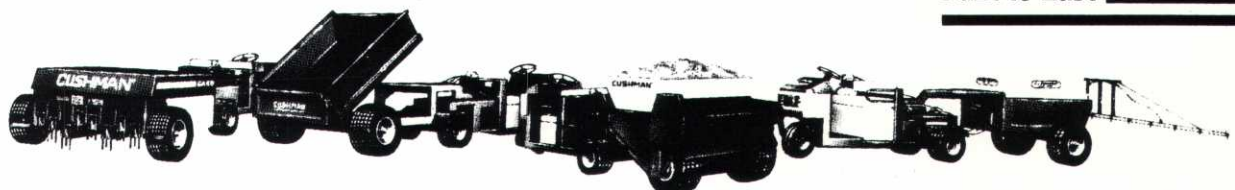
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# EDITOR'S CORNER

By Dale Wysocki  
Faribault Golf & Country Club



Recently I had the opportunity to tour the Willinger's Golf Club just west of Northfield on State Hwy. 19. The golf course is definitely going to be a challenge, and Superintendent Randy Nelson has done a fantastic job of bringing this golf course in. Randy and Assistant Superintendent Gene Griffith were presented with a monumental task of grassing this fine facility with all the rolling hills and swales, and with water on 14 of the 18 holes. My favorite hole is the 18th, a 530-yard, par 5 with an elevated tee looking down to a nice landing area guarded with bunkers. Then your second shot lands in an area that has water and a bunker on your left plus you still have 75 yards to get to the green. I hope my "cut" shot does not decide to go straight, or my ball will end up in the ranks of the experienced golf balls, 88 cents each!

\* \* \* \*

**Does anyone know what happened to the month of April?** It appears to me that March was followed by March. I can't get over the idea of cutting greens on the 24th of April with snow flurries in the air, then on May 1st (one week later) it's 89° outside. Only in Minnesota!

\* \* \* \*

**PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE pre-register for monthly meetings.** It is the policy of the MGCSA that registration over the telephone will no longer be accepted. On the other hand we will be sending the monthly meeting notice out in *Hole Notes*. This way, you will have it in your possession 30 days before the next meeting.

\* \* \* \*

**Any time when attending a green committee meeting** how do you relay your messages across to committee members? Is your message relayed in a clear and concise manner or is it just grumbled in a way that only you know what you're talking about. Being professional consists of many facets. Communication is a very important asset. Being able to communicate successfully is an ability that all Golf Course Superintendents have to master.

Just what does Professional Golf Course Superintendent mean? Outwardly appearances are important, everything from how we address golfing members to what happens when your irrigation pump decides enough is enough on the hottest day of the year. Today's Golf Course Superintendent is under more scrutiny than ever before. Golfers expect more in terms of more ideal playing conditions and as we give the golfers more we find that we are able to do more. We expand our horizons and arise to accept a new challenge. We also find that we have to be more aware of the environment around us. Nature is a living being that I think all Superintendents respect and cherish. Otherwise we would not be doing what we so love. After six

months of being cooped-up in a maintenance facility, it is a reward to rise with the sun.

A Professional Golf Course Superintendent is a person who is trying to delicately balance nature on one hand and yet be able to manage a crew of several people and a never-ending stream of new paperwork, keep the club's investments always running smooth and looking new, and always being proficient at keeping 300+ bosses happy after an enjoyable round of golf. Regardless of what club we are at, we all have the same goals, striving to excel, striving to be the best, striving to keep at peace with nature.

\* \* \* \*

**A very special thank-you to Cushman Motor Company** for providing the members of the MGCSA with complimentary beverages during golf at Braemar.

\* \* \* \*

**Congratulations to Scott Austin of Midland Hills C.C.** for recently completing all the rigorous steps needed to become a Certified Golf Course Superintendent.

\* \* \* \*

**Tim Killen called me the other day to apologize** for accidentally forgetting about the May meeting at Braemar Golf Club. Sustane is in the process of moving its plant, and amid all the hub-bub that goes with moving and getting organized, somewhere he had mislaid the book that said Sustane was a co-sponsor along with E.S. Dygert and Cushman Motor Co. He guaranteed me that Sustane will be making it up to the MGCSA. Look for Sustane to sponsor another meeting later in the year.

\* \* \* \*

**Polfus Implement is pleased to announce the 4th annual John Deere Team Championship Tournament.** This year's tournament is going to be held at the New Richmond Golf Club in New Richmond, Wisconsin on Monday, July 27.

Please contact Mark Reuter or Bob Frank at (715) 246-6565 for registration information.

— Dale Wysocki  
Editor

## 1992 MGCSA Meeting Locations, Events, Sponsors

| DATE         | LOCATION                     | EVENT            | SPONSORS                        |
|--------------|------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| June 8       | Faribault CC                 | Golf & Lunch     | North Star Turf Turf Supply Co. |
| July 13      | Tartan Park                  | Garske Scramble  | MTI Distributing Par Aide       |
| August 17    | Midland Hills                | MGCSA Champ.     | Long Lake Tractor RW Golf Cars  |
| September 14 | Wayzata CC<br>Rolling Greens | Stodola Scramble | None                            |
| October 12   | Island View Golf             | Golf & Lunch     | Polfus Implement                |



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