

# THRU THE GREEN

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The Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California

— Committed to Responsible Turfgrass Management —



## Pacific Grove Debuts as December Host

For Pacific Grove Links Superintendent, Mike Leach, it was like coming home after an extended tour of duty. After carving out a niche first as an assistant golf professional at MPCC and then as a golf course superintendent at Corral De Tierra, Leach left the beauty of the Monterey Peninsula for the challenge of growing in the Johnny Miller designed Brighton Crest in 1989. Three years later he was back and he has no intention of leaving anytime soon. Having been in the golf profession all of his life, Leach hopes to make Pacific Grove his last stop. "I feel like I can hang my hat at Pacific Grove," Leach says with a smile.

Choosing a career in golf was a natural for Leach. "My family operated Indian Valley Golf Course in Novato," says Leach, "so it's safe to say I was exposed to the game and course maintenance at a very young age." The family owned operation left its mark on Leach's brothers as well. Terry is the V.P. and Golf Course Superintendent at Indian Valley, and Ray is the Spalding/Hogan representative for Northern California. With a lifetime spent in golf, "Was there anyone who may have influenced your career," I asked? "Certainly my brothers," Leach responded, "and Indian Valley Director of Golf, Jeff McAndrew. Jeff had a way of always making work fun." Leach is also quick to heap praises on peninsula stalwarts John and Bob Zoller. "John introduced me to greenskeeping at Pebble Beach," recalls Leach. The education continued three years later under Bob when he was given the opportunity to complete a two year NCGA internship at MPCC.

So what can NorCal members expect when they tee it up at what is known as, "Poor Man's Pebble Beach?" Two distinct nines, in

part a product of two architects, utilizing two uniquely different land masses, constructed 28 years apart.

The front nine which opened in 1932, is characterized by golf holes with small greens traversing through an inland forest. By contrast the back nine, designed by Jack Neville, is a true Links design over duneland that approaches the sea.

As you are hunting for errant golf shots amongst the forest and dunes, take note of the wildlife and natural landmarks that mark the property. Some of the wildlife you're likely to see include blacktail deer, sealions, sea otters and an assortment of birds. Although not likely to be present in December, the monarch butterfly is a regular visitor, calling Pacific Grove home during their annual migration.

Also of significance is the Point Piños Lighthouse, visible from the back nine. It's history dates all the way back to 1855, and it is currently the longest continuously operating lighthouse in California.

You can expect to see some significant course improvements as well. Since Leach's arrival 6 1/2 years ago, the city approved a capital improvement and equipment program. The result, a new irrigation system on the front nine, enlarged greens, concrete paths, some new bunkers and tees, fairway drainage and plenty of new equipment.

With so many positive improvements, it's easy to see why Leach intends to make Pacific Grove his home for a long while. "It really has been a great opportunity coming back," says Leach, "not only for me professionally but also for my family," which includes his wife of 20 years, Jill, and their three children. ♣

## Expect The Unexpected — It's Winter

By Bob Costa, CGCS

I can still remember those days, early in my turf management career when I used to anxiously look forward to winter for a chance to catch my breath after a busy and stressful summer. I had visions of myself relaxing in my office organizing files, putting away stacks of photographs and catching up on my trade magazine reading. That was a fantasy that was short lived. It wasn't long before I realized that winter, like summer brought about its own set of challenges and problems. For golf course superintendents and golfers alike, winter represents significant changes, not all of which are anticipated. Here's what a typical week might look like for a superintendent and his staff.

**Monday** — Plans have been made to apply a fungicide in advance of a predicted rain on Wednesday. Over the weekend

preparations are made and everything is set to go. The spray technician will be in Monday morning at 4:00 a.m. to get started in advance of play. At 4:15 you receive a call at home, it's the spray tech, the temperature has dipped to 28 degrees. You guessed it, frost! Frustrated, you instruct her to cancel the application. Arriving at your office at 5:30 a.m., you check the thermometer, the temperature is still sub freezing. Moments later the phone rings, it's the pro shop asking for a frost update, they're concerned about getting a tournament group off at 8:30. You share their concern. The challenge, to prepare the course for play in limited time while portions are still frozen. Shortly after 8:00 you swing by the clubhouse to meet with the pro. You are greeted by a group of golfers. Simulta-

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