

The American

Andreas Herrmann, from Golf Club an der Schlei, Schleswig Holstein, gives an insight into his two year Golf and Turf Management Programme at Rutgers University, in New Jersey.

The annual turnover of the golf industry in the United States amounts to 60 billion dollars. Currently there are 15,000 golf courses and around 120 are being built annually. As a European it is hard to imagine these figures. One must see the endless expanse of this country in order to get an idea of it.

Arnold Palmer's popularity made the game of golf very popular in the 50s in the United States. Today one finds courses of every style. From public courses with five greenkeepers (up to 80,000 rounds per year) to private exclusive courses such as Augusta, Pine Valley or others,

with a working force of 30 and more in the summer. With a budget of one million dollars, bent-grass fairways which are cut every day and greens maintained at the highest standards are no rarity. No wonder that German golf tourists coming back from the States dream of these fairways.

By the way, Pine Valley has been maintained for decades by Eb Steiniger, a graduate of the University of Stuttgart Hohenheim. He left Germany at the beginning of the century and moved to America. Today Eb Steiniger is in his 90s and lives in South Jersey. He is said to be one of the grandfathers of the GCSAA.

GCSAA (Golf Course Superintendent Association of America) is an international organisation with more than 16,000 members. Like BIGGA, the GCSAA organises and promotes seminars, journals,

career development, scholarships, money saving discounts and, of course, the annual Golf Show.

A Superintendent is highly respected by society. Superintendents have various backgrounds. The majority is between 30 and 39 years old and has a two or a four year college degree in turf science. The Superintendent has to train himself constantly. I cannot confirm the impression that many Europeans have about the American Superintendent, who stands on the green with his mobile giving orders to his Assistants, without being involved in any work on his own. All my classmates (and future Superintendents) had several years of practical experience in the field and they were very well familiar with the boredom that may occur while aerating fairways, with dirty hands after fixing drainage problems or with a tired body after a 12 hour working day.

The Superintendent primarily is a manager. He has a budget of millions of dollars, he hires and trains people and he is a public relations person.

One shouldn't compare the American Superintendent directly with the German Greenkeeper, since the circumstances are different.

The Golf and Turf Management Program at Rutgers is one of the most challenging in the United States (besides other very fine turf programmes).

It is unique in one way because the classroom work is required only during winter. Two intense 10 week sessions over two years and two seasons of supervised field experience lead to a two year certificate. A weed collection as well as a 12 page report about the field experience has to be presented in the second year. The training is designed for people who already have practical experience in the field, for people who make a career change or for people who can't afford or schedule a full-time programme.

We are mainly trained on three levels: science (botany, soils, grasses), leadership (communication, leadership principles), and business (business calculation).

The Superintendent has to be a scientist, a manager and a businessman all in one.

The biggest part of the course is botany and related classes. Classes are held from 9am to 3pm, Monday to Friday. The weekend is free and day trips to New York (only 50 minutes by train) are an attractive option.

My class consisted of 42 people. The average age being 29. The students came from all over the United States: California, Nevada, Colorado, Florida, Tennessee, Virginia, New York... I was the only European.

The first day started with a warm welcome and a general introduction to the programme. Everybody introduced himself briefly and talked about his goals. Quite a new experience for me, being a German. There were people there who were not shy to talk about their personal goals with an enthusiasm I'd seldom seen before. The attitude of the people was generally speaking very positive and they wanted to be the best at whatever they were doing at the time.

After I'd introduced myself, coming from a Bernhard Langer Course in Germany, everybody asked me about my "friend Bernhard". I wasn't really able to answer the questions, since I don't know "Bernhard" well enough to be able to talk about his well-being. Bernhard Langer is quite popular in the United States, as he had won the Masters a couple of times.

Classes started the second day. There were 16 classes in total: Golf Course Construction, Turf Diseases, Surveying, Weeds, Botany, Irrigation, Turf Establishment, Turf Maintenance, Turf-grass I.D. and Morphology, Soils, Landscape Plants, Landscape maintenance, Business Communication, Public Speech and Managing your Golf Course Employees.

Besides the brainstorming at school – and I mention this intentionally because the work of these ten weeks is a lot more than what is taught during a normal ten week session in a four year programme – there is always time to get in touch with colleague students. Many already had a two or a four year college degree in another field, often in business. For example T.J from North Carolina worked for the United States Government in the former



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Soviet Union. A.J from Virginia had a bachelor in classical music (he knew all the German composers and musicians). Andrew from North Carolina was an actor at theatres before he went into the golf field (he played Shakespeare and we often talked about old Greek philosophy). I had worked as a therapist in my own consulting room before I changed career. Strikingly few came from the agricultural or farming field.

In common we all had the love for nature and for the game of golf.

Generally nature and pollution control is a big topic right now in the golf industry in the United States. The spirit of the age didn't leave America behind. Although some places still apply chemicals without thinking of pollution (a nearby course of Jeff's in Maryland applied \$200,000 worth of chemicals last year, this is about the total budget of some courses in Germany), the environmental awareness of Superintendents is definitely improving. The USGA has installed a special department which deals with pollution control and has spent \$12 million on research in this field in recent years. It supports the "Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program", which advises and supports golf courses which practise an ecological approach to their landscape maintenance: for example the reestablishment of wetlands or other areas that were sacrificed to some fairways, the ecological maintenance of roughs, the building of nest boxes for birds, the protection of "environmentally sensitive" areas and a lot more.

The often used argument of many environmentalists that Golf Courses are like greenhouses with highly cultivated monocultures loses its power when seen in this background.

Another new trend is IPM (Integrated Pest Management). Two main reasons seem to be responsible for that. First, it reduces the impact on the environment and second it is money saving in the long run. One example would be the Pseudomonas Treatment for Biological Management of Turfgrass Diseases. A specially developed strain of the bacteria "Pseudomonas aureofaceans Tx 1 licensed by Michigan State University plays an important role in reducing the occurrence of several fungal diseases. There are three main routes by which bacteria are able to control turf grass pathogens: Production of antibiotics - Competition for nutrients - Parasitism.

In the ninth and tenth week the tension in the class reached an almost unbearable level. We missed our homes and friends, we had enough of grasses, trees, fertilizers and mowing frequencies. Dan from the Pebble Beach Company wanted to be back in California to be able to play golf in Hawaii. Rodney missed the mountains and the sun from Col-

orado, Tracy missed the Whiskey from Tennessee and I missed a Wiener Schnitzel. However, the highest obstacle, all the final exams, was still ahead of us. We watched each other looking more and more tired. The beards grew longer (no time for shaving) and the shirts weren't ironed anymore. Everybody had reached his personal limits. The days were long and the nights became short.

In the end we had a big party and we embraced and congratulated each other for still being part of the game.

Whatever we, as Europeans, may think about Americans, their positive attitude is definitely infectious. An experience of special value, recommended to everyone who likes a challenge and an excellent level of turfgrass teaching.



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