

Director's Column



by Joel Purpur

What should I write about? Everyone is always talking about the weather because it has such an influence on our job, but what a year! A cold spring with several late frosts, (we had five "last frosts" in our log book), back to back months of record drought followed by wind storms when it did rain. Keep the rain it was not worth it. Even with all the messed up weather, the courses I've seen in the Chicago area look pretty good considering. I think sometimes golfers take these conditions for granted.

The other day after hearing enough complaints about slow greens we took out the stimpmeter. No wonder! Hell, they only averaged 9 and a half feet! The USGA keeps talking about raising cutting heights, slowing down green speeds, and educating our members that this is the right thing to do. Do you think they'll buy it? They like faster greens and they get what they want. We've seen it many times that if a reasonable effort is not made to give them the desired results, they'll simply get someone that will.

Hey will someone please invent a mechanical rake that will pick up and mulch branches too big to blow or mulch!? They'd make millions, or at least thousands because I'd buy one. Maybe I'd buy two because these wind storms only seem to occur at 3:00 p.m. the day before an 8:00 a.m. shotgun.

So far this year we've also had several fellow MAGCS members pass away. Closest to me was Steve Crow, the 32 year old superintendent of Briar Ridge Country Club. When I think of Steve I think of a guy full of life who liked to laugh and have a good time (Steve was the inventor of the Gauley River Nose Slinky). I know Renny Jacobson, his best friend will especially feel his loss. I always enjoyed Steve's company and still can't believe he is gone.

What is new with the MAGCS? The commercial members continue to be represented at our board meetings to give views, opinions and ideas from the other side of the fence. This has been productive and will benefit our members as well. The commercial members give a lot of financial support to the MAGCS which benefits all of us so please keep that in mind when making your purchases by supporting sponsors of meetings and advertisers in the "Bull Sheet".

Looking ahead we've pretty well firmed up next years meeting sites and are looking for sites for 1994. If you would like to host a meeting or would like to volunteer **someone else**, let us know and you can work on your club officials later.

With the home stretch of summer right in front of us, you know it'll only be a short time until we can tell some goofy stories about the Gauley River rafting trip in September. With 24 people going one can bet that something noteworthy is bound to happen. Kind of gets the imagination going. Next is snow skiing. If anyone's game let me know because planning is underway. It won't be long and we can put our jobs on cruise control and let the good times roll!

U.S. Open Notebook



by Bob Maibusch, CGCS

Awesome! Incredible! Spectacular! Fantastic! There aren't enough adjectives to describe the golf course at Pebble Beach.

As a Father's Day present to myself I decided to spend the weekend at the U.S. Open. Having seen numerous pictures of Pebble Beach, and watching the annual pro-am on television in February I was excited in anticipation of finally seeing the golf course. I arrived in Monterey on Friday afternoon and didn't have enough time to visit the Open that day, so I headed over to Spanish Bay for the GCSAA reception, which was very nice. I had the chance to walk the golf course at Spanish Bay prior to the reception and I really enjoyed it. It is a links course built on the sand dunes bordering the Pacific Ocean. I was interested in seeing it after having read about its design and construction, including the fact that it was seeded to all fescue grasses, including the greens. The fescue greens appeared a little bit shaggier than we would be accustomed to, and they had a fair amount of poa annua in there, which I am sure is a constant problem controlling, considering the amount of traffic that goes through there and the slow recovery time of the fescues, especially when cut short. Overall, it was a beautiful golf course in very good condition.

On Saturday I arrived at Pebble Beach early, and had no problem getting a daily pass with my GCSAA card. I decided to walk the golf course backwards so that I could enjoy the sights without the crowds. It was awe inspiring to say the least. The golf course was in fantastic condition (excluding the USGA "enhanced" greens), with beautiful, close-cut ryegrass tees and fairways, and thick roughs. For anyone who loves golf and interesting golf courses, walking the holes that play along the ocean borders on being almost a religious experience. Television doesn't do justice to the terrain and the effects of the ocean breezes on this beautiful piece of property. I also realized how lucky we are that this golf course was built in the early 1900's. With environmental regulation and the necessity for buffer zones, etc., I don't think that in this day and age a golf course like this could ever be constructed on this site.

The remainder of Saturday and Sunday were spent enjoying the golf course, and watching some great and not-so-great golf. The wind on Sunday wreaked havoc with a lot of player's games and made for an interesting finish.

Of the four U.S. Opens that I have attended this was without a doubt the most well run in every respect. The only exception was that the USGA once again felt it was their obligation to kill the greens. It was a shame to see all the obvious hard work and dedication of the golf course superintendent and his staff

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(U.S. Open cont'd.)

be tarnished because the USGA was determined to have the greens run 10.5 on the Stimpmeter, and be as hard as concrete. How they can insist, with a straight face, that this is for "the good of the game" is beyond me. I walked around the golf course after play concluded on Sunday, and the wind, sun, low cutting height, and lack of water on the predominantly poa annua greens had taken its toll. It will be months before these greens are back to normal. It baffles me that the USGA, a group that does so many positive things (turf research funding, rules regulation, etc.) for golf and could have a significant, positive effect on attitudes about course conditions, continues to exercise this kind of detrimental behavior at their U.S. Open sites. While I am sure that they viewed the tournament as a huge success because only two players finished under par, it is a pity that they continue to act in a way that puts the golf course at risk while reinforcing golfers attitudes that greens aren't any good unless they roll at least 10.

Oh, and while I'm on my soapbox, thank God we have Jack Nicklaus around to take credit for the great condition of the golf course. I'm sure he probably spent the last year doing nothing but watering localized dry spots and straightening traffic control ropes. Isn't it comforting to know that we can rely on turf management experts like Jack Nicklaus, Jim McKay, and Brent Musburger to let 100 million viewers around the world know why the golf course is in its present condition.

As I was leaving the area Sunday I took the time to walk around Spyglass Hill. This golf course is another gem with the first five holes overlooking the coastline, and the remainder, that I saw, playing through the woods. It was also in great shape, with an abundance of wildlife.

As dusk approached I jumped back in my rent-a-car, raced back to San Jose, caught the red-eye back to Chicago arriving at 5:00 a.m., and was back in my office by 6:00 a.m. All in all, a great weekend. I even got back here in time to help setup for the CDGA Pro-Junior tournament which our club hosted that Monday, not exactly the U.S. Open, but enjoyable none the less.

Now, my next goal is to get down to Augusta National in April next year for the Masters. Anyone else interested?

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