

Gary Mulvihill -N- Heritage Bluffs G.C.

Dave Blomquist, Naperville C.C.

In the small village of Channahon, just outside of Joliet, area golfers have found “the best deal around”! That is what best describes the site of the July meeting of the MAGCS. Certified Superintendent Gary Mulvihill has been at H.B.G.C. from the beginning, and what appeals to him the most about the layout is the many different looks architect Dick Nugent provided from hole to hole. “We have several holes cut out of dense woodlands, some surrounding environment-friendly wetlands; and part of the course resembles a seaside links-type routing.”

When the course opened to the public in August of 1993, the park district envisioned maybe 20,000 rounds; the first three

months of operation alone brought in 27,000! They knew they had a gem, but upon receiving accolades from Golf Digest, and finishing on top of several golfer satisfaction polls, it became obvious that their new project was something special. Area golfers refer to it as the best deal around

because the green fees are reasonable and the conditions rival the high-priced competition.

Gary’s previous experience at Forest Hills C.C. in Rockford and Kenosha C.C. fit right in with the expectations of the park district when he was
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hired in 1992 to provide private club conditions on a public course budget (now there's something I'm sure no one else has heard). The tees are Penncross bent cut at three-eighths of an inch, the fairways are Pennway bent cut at one-half of an inch, and the greens were seeded to Pennlinks and are cut at one-eighth of an inch. The 18-person crew includes two retired gentlemen whose primary task is seeding and soiling divots.

Notable features of the course include three trademark Nugent "beach bunkers" located on holes 3, 7, and 15. Gary reports no extraordinary problems with these bunkers; however, the pond adjacent to the third hole is leaking and will be lined this season. The site is extremely rocky, so it seemed like a good idea to put

what the locals lovingly refer to as the "Channahon potatoes" to good use. The tee markers are one example. Additionally, cart paths consist of a subgrade of 5 to 6" stone mined on site.

The usual horror stories accompanied the construction and grow-in. For example, after seeding two-thirds of the site, one of those 100-year rains washed it all away. Then another 100-year storm washed away the second seeding; and finally, a 500-year storm wreaked havoc on the site, forcing a third seeding. Today, the straight sand tees pose problems since they weren't constructed with a clay bowl sub-surface, so the water runs right through them. Several tees (6 and 18) have already been rebuilt because they were too small, and more are on the drawing board. As is customary, the irrigation system was pared

back to save on construction costs, so Gary has found it necessary to add over fifty heads to the system, primarily on the west side, and plans on adding more to the east side next year. Probably the biggest headache has been the amount of play. Red lines force carts away from greens and tees, and, surprisingly, half of the golfers actually pay attention to those lines.

Gary lives in a house on the grounds and enjoys spending time with his five-year-old son Evan. They are both pursuing black belts in Tae Kwon Do; in fact, Evan is set to become one of the youngest to achieve such status. Gary also plays in the Fox Valley Golf League. Future projects at the club include completing Audubon certification, planting 1,000 trees, and enhancing the site with numerous landscaping projects. ■

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