

Point of View From the Club PGA Professional

Gary Hearn
Salt Creek G.C.

I thought it would be nice to hear from the other side of the “fence”: the person who interacts with the public much more than a golf course superintendent, a person who knows the “rub” of the golf course with their outstanding drives, accurate iron shots, and that super hot putter—our club PGA professional. That PGA professional that we interact with on daily basis by either playing a few holes together, coordinating a special event, or setting up the golf course for that particular day is usually a good friend that makes our job much easier. I contacted a few PGA professionals in the local area and asked them seven different questions. Here are the PGA professionals that responded:

Tony Perry, Salt Creek G.C.
Trey Van Dyke, Oak Brook G.C.
Phil Benson, Itasca C.C.

QUESTION 1 The game: What has changed?

Tony feels that the equipment has gotten better; thus, many courses are playing shorter than before, plus the addition of soft-spikes help improve play. Phil thinks that the additional play from juniors and ladies has caused more constraints on the golf course, and Trey also agrees and adds that golf is becoming a social gathering (for recreational purposes) verses being a sport. Golf is reaching out to all ages and ethnics.

QUESTION 2 Softspikes: Do you think this will be a revolutionary gimmick that will fade?

All three say NO. Phil adds that the improvement of the putting surface far outweighs the occasional slip. Tony has noticed at other golf courses where soft-spikes are mandatory that there is a much improved putting surface. Trey has a different point of view and feels that pressure from the club pros (PGA), superintendents (GCSAA), and general managers is forcing the shoe manufacturers to adhere to club guidelines. A touring PGA pro who swings aggressively might want to use steel spikes. On the Senior Tour, a person’s joints are a little more fragile, thus allowing the soft-spikes to give on a swing and preventing serious injury.

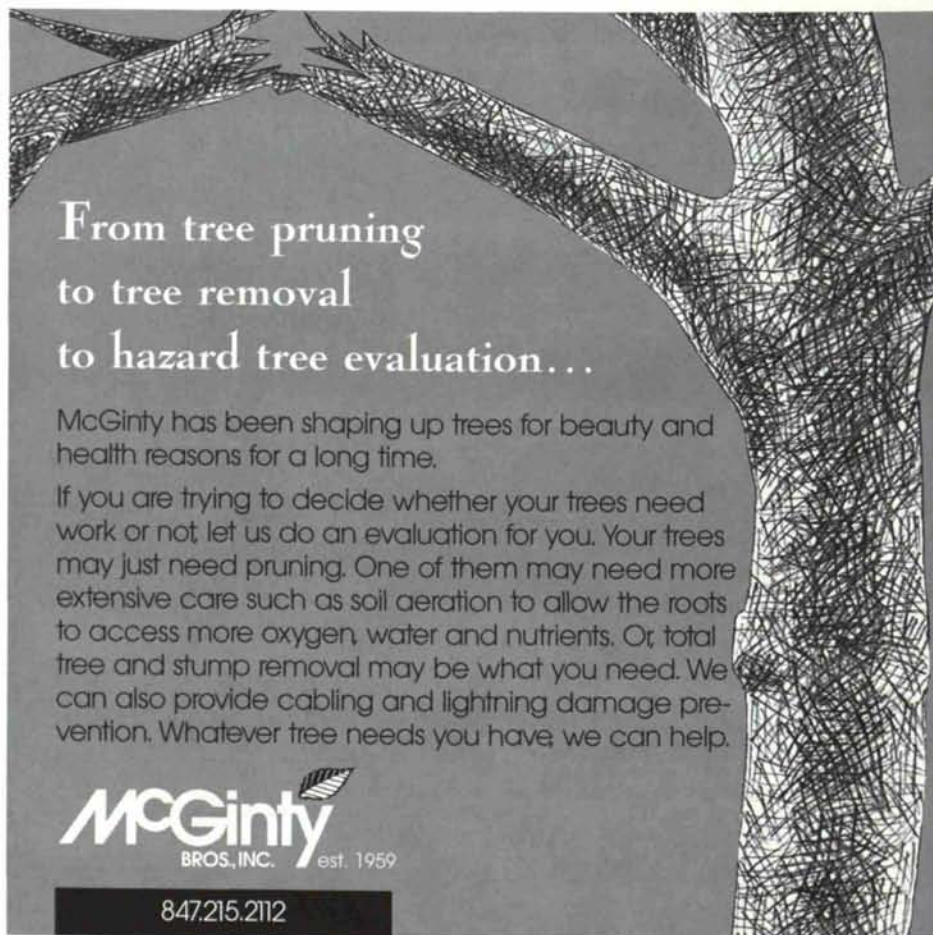
QUESTION 3 Greens: What constitutes a good green?

All three agree on holding a shot from the fairway, one that is large enough for many pin placements, is fast, holds up to reasonable traffic, and is consistent from green to green.

QUESTION 4 Approach to the green: Tough, open, blind, or rewarding?

Trey likes open approaches that give the golfer a choice from either firing at the flag or a bump-and-run shot and also the approaches that don’t have to be as wide as the green. Tony feels that the ultimate course should

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have all the different approaches that will allow a golfer to think before he swings. Phil breaks it down to the length of the hole: 440 yards, open; 365 yards, guarded; and 560 yards, a very large green.

QUESTION 5
Fairways: Has the switch from blue/ryegrasses to bentgrasses improved the game only for a few who can hit off bentgrass regularly?

Trey has a different perspective. He feels that by installing bentgrass, the club at a public course can raise their fees in accordance. If a golfer wants to pay top dollar, he wants a "private" course in the public sector. Economics has played a big part in changing the texture of the fairway. Phil believes that the poor player will benefit because the ball will roll farther, and the iron shot to the green from the fairway will hold due to back spin. Tony's answer was YES; end of statement.

QUESTION 6
Superintendents: What would you like to see us do to better the game?

Tony suggests questioning your golfers what they are looking for, keep the golf courses challenging but not unfair, and too many courses are tough for the the average golfer with a 20 handicap to break 100. Phil adds that the greens are the most important part of a golf course, keep a good relationship with your club pro (makes the job easier), and a superintendent who plays his own course will have a better overall conditioned golf course. Trey feels that superintendents need to interact more with the public by either using bulletin boards, newlines, or one-on-one with customers. Trey also thinks that the program "Par for the Course"

is an excellent public relation tool for the public.


QUESTION 7
What constitutes your signature hole from tee to green?


All three are in agreement: a hole that says AWESOME; a hole that has beauty, great landscaping with bushes, trees, and flowers; and has depth perception, elevation of tees, contours, and water hazards with fountains.

I would like to say thank you to these PGA professionals for taking their time to sit down and answer these questions. I hope some of these answers could help you in your day-to-day operation. Enjoy a round of golf with your local club PGA professional!


Dan Anderson -N- Fox Valley G.C.
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(a golf league primarily of superintendents and suppliers), a position that he slyly passed onto myself. Thanks, Dan.

Dan and his wife Catherine will celebrate their ten-year wedding anniversary in September. They have two children, Alexandra who is seven and Matthew who is four. Dan also travels with Bruiser, a seven-year-old Australian shepherd, a seemingly kind animal that you're never real sure about. Dan and Catherine are closing on their new home at the end of May, which they had constructed this past spring and look forward to inhabiting. Two weeks later, we will all be out on his course enjoying all of his efforts, as he is our gracious host for our June monthly meeting. 



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