



Isn't this how you mow your fairways?

Photo credit, Fred Behnke

The Masters: Go There, Do That

Fred Behnke, CGCS

Spring is a time of renewal. After the long, dark days of winter, golf course superintendents across the northern tier of the United States put out the freshly painted tee accessories, mow the winter fuzz off the greens and dust off the cup cutter. Oh boy! Here we go again!

The golf season has begun; green committee meetings, geese, mysterious turf diseases, more green committee meetings, stimpeters, irrigation leaks, hydraulic oil leaks, more green committee meetings, sick days, two-inch storm events, ball marks,

divots, cart traffic and more green committee meetings. Oh no! Here we go again!

About one week into the season, I was muttering to myself, "Where did the winter go?" With more than 15 years of this under my belt, the long view into the season looked a lot like been there, done that. The scary thing was this feeling usually waited until August to rear its ugly head. I needed a tonic, and I needed it fast!

So I went to the Masters Tournament in Augusta, Georgia.

There are thousands of golf courses across the world, and hundreds of memorable tracks,

but there are only two shrines—The Old Course at St. Andrew's and Augusta National.

Our group included two PGA pros and four golf course superintendents: Don Ferreri from Seven Bridges, Rick Wilson from Glenview Park, Doug Davis from Broken Arrow and yours truly. On Wednesday, April 7, we flew into Atlanta, hopped in the rental car and hit the road to Augusta. A couple of hours later, we parked the car (\$20), grabbed our camera gear and camping chairs and headed to the course.

Wednesday is the last day of practice rounds and they hold

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the nine-hole tournament in the afternoon. Cameras are allowed, but are not for the rest of the tournament. I had my trusty 35 mm; Rick looked like he needed a shopping cart for all of his stuff. Don and the two pros had been there before so they were our guides and off we went. We got in line at Gate 3 (PGA, LPGA, GCSAA) and checked in. The first time in, you register and get THE SPEECH. Be nice, be good, don't sell your badges or YOU WILL NEVER GET IN AGAIN FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE. Suitably cowed, we showed our GCSAA credentials and a photo ID and received our daily badge—FREE! The most coveted ticket in sports and we get in FREE—FREE—FREE! It's very cool.

But not the weather, 88 degrees. Let's get a beer!

Now, one of the pros who came with us works with me at Mount Prospect. Brett Barcel is a nice guy who runs a good operation, but his usual facial expression makes me want to take a nap (in fairness to Brett, the golfers at Mount Prospect will do that to you). This guy, who has been here before mind you, is hopping from foot to foot like a kid who really has to GO. "Okay, first we go to #8, get a beer, then we go to #15 and set our chairs, run to #6..."

We jostle our way through the crowd at the main gate area, big crowd on Wednesday, and head toward the first tee. The crowd parts and we enter the course.

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**YOU WILL NEVER
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Go there, do that.

Highlights:

- Beer—\$1.75 for a 12-ounce cup.

- Pimento sandwiches—\$1.50. (This is Wonder Bread with a gooey orange-ish sandwich spread wrapped in green plastic wrap—it goes good with the beer. In fact, all of the food on the course is cheap, fresh and tasty. The problem is that you're there all day. I swear I lost a \$100 bill.)

- Masters stuff—It's the only place in the world you can buy stuff with that logo on it. Again, prices are reasonable but you have to buy a lot of stuff to hand out when you get home. That's okay, though, because recipients of your largess are very grateful and they give you THE LOOK. You know, the look that says, "How did YOU get into the Masters?" It's very cool.

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Consider yourself a candidate.

Applications for the 2000 Environmental Steward Awards are available from the May issue of *Golf Course Management*, the GCSAA web site (www.gcsaa.org), affiliated chapter presidents, program sponsors and the GCSAA service center (800/472-7878).

We'll look forward to receiving your application by October 1, 1999.

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2000 ESA Call For Entries

Environmental Steward Awards (ESAs) were made to 37 GCSAA members in 1999. In 2000, such recognition could go to you.

For the eighth year, the ESAs will be presented to GCSAA members around the world who have demonstrated a commitment to environmental stewardship efforts on the golf course. The awards are sponsored by Novartis Turf & Ornamental Products, Rain Bird, Textron Turf Care And Specialty Products with Cushman, Jacobsen, Ransomes and Ryan brands, and Pursell Technologies Inc.

The standardized application form focuses on environmental efforts in the areas of technology use, resource conservation, water quality management, integrated pest management, wildlife/habitat management and education/outreach. Photos, videos and related materials will not be accepted with the entries, but will be later requested from those selected as national and international winners. Superintendents previously recognized as a national winner of the ESAs are not eligible to apply for the 2000 awards *unless* they have moved to a new facility from where the award was made.

Applications are available from the May issue of *Golf Course Management*, affiliated chapter presidents, the GCSAA service center (800/472-7878), program sponsors or the GCSAA web site (www.gcsaa.org), where it may be printed out or completed and submitted electronically. Entries are due to GCSAA on or before Oct. 1, and winners will be notified in November.

Since 1993, participating sponsors of the ESAs have donated more than \$125,000 to The GCSAA Foundation, and more than 200 golf course superintendents have been recognized.

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- Amen Corner.
- Volkswagens buried in the greens. TV doesn't do the elevations justice. The course is so up and down. Old guys—get a hip replacement before you go.
- Wrigley Field scoreboards. There are no electronics and no sponsor signs; everything is done by hand—quaint and really adds to the ambiance.
- The FRONT ROW. Friday morning we are standing in line with the riff raff—you know, the people who flew in on their Lear jets—when Tom Govern, the other pro, says, “Screw this, we don't have to wait” and goes UNDER THE ROPES. I tag along. We walk up to the row of Pinkertons lined up in front of

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the main gate. It's still closed. Tom flashes his card, I fumble mine out and they let us pass! In we go with Brett, Don and Rick scurrying behind. We put our chairs at the rope on the 18th green and spend the afternoon watching play finish right in front of us. It was VERY cool

A note about chairs. They are an absolute requirement. The story is that you can leave a Rolex on your chair at the Masters and it will be there when you get back. I couldn't test the theory because I left my Rolex at home. Anyway, the deal is that you place your chair and walk around; when you get back, your chair is still there. If a chair pirate is sitting there, you tell him to move along and he does. That's how we followed Steve Pate during his record-breaking

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A big, hearty congratulations to Rick Becker, assistant superintendent at Wilmette G.C., for taking first prize in the 18-Hole Challenge at the GCSAA Convention in Orlando. Rick is now the proud owner of a Ranger Sport R61 boat (which would have been useful at Mill Creek).

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Congratulations to the Steve Schendel family on the birth of their second daughter, Emma, on February 27, just two weeks after Steve took over as new superintendent at Highland Park C.C. Steve was most recently assistant superintendent at Butterfield C.C.

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Nice to see several of our members in print recently. Dave Ward of Olympia Fields C.C. was quoted in a *Chicago Sun-Times* article on renovations being done in preparation for the 2003 U.S. Open, while Bob Maibusch of Hinsdale G.C. has a letter printed in the April issue of the second-most anticipated publication we receive (after *On Course*, of course): *Golfdom*. Last but not least, Al Fierst of Oak Park C.C. responded to the most dangerous golfer known to superintendents (NOT Gerald Ford with a gallery)—the uninformed golfer with a nationally syndicated radio show—in a recent publication. It seems this local person feels that men playing golf, especially in the early morning, may lose interest in sex due to the pesticides applied on golf courses. Perhaps a case study should be performed to test the merits of this claim...

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Reminder #2: Please turn off your cell phones/pagers at MAGCS meetings—our education presenters deserve our full attention without the distractions.

Our Annual March Gin Charity Tournament

Sad to say, what was once a well-attended, fun tournament to benefit people in need has dwindled down to about a dozen loyal individuals. Unless we manage to get more people involved, this will be the last year for a charity event that has provided underprivileged children with more than \$20,000 over the past nine or ten years.

I realize it's hard to think about gin when the temperature outside is above 70° and there is a ton of work to do on our golf courses. Truthfully, March probably is not a good month for most of us. I realize also that the committee has to spend more time calling our Midwest friends to remind

them to come out, or at least send a check. In our Midwest circle, we have the most generous human beings in the world when it comes to needy, sick, helpless little children. So let me hear from you, along with a check made out for \$40 to the Maryville Academy. Please! You will sleep better.

The March Charity Gin Tournament was once again won by brother Peter (his fourth championship in ten years). Peter beat me in the finals after I made a lucky challenge. Congratulations, brother Peter.

Submitted respectfully
by Paul N. Voykin

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seven-birdie string to climb on the leader board on Saturday. Brett and I pirated chairs at Amen Corner and skipped along all the way to his string-ending par on 14. I swear he missed that putt because he saw us at the ropes on 14 and thought we were stalking him.

Sadly, the trip home was a nightmare, but we did get back in time to see the final round on TV.

The following night I had—you guessed it—a green committee meeting. The first thing on the agenda was stimping the green with the hydraulic oil leak among all the ball marks where the mysterious turf disease was being spread by the geese. Oh no! Here we go again.



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