

# Todd Hoppahan -N- Elgin Country Club



Todd Hoppahan

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*Todd Hoppahan has been in and around golf most of his 36-year life. You might say it's the family business. Most influential in Todd's 22-year career in golf maintenance: Todd's father, Carl, since retired from Evanston Country Club and now an active member with the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation, and Uncle Hans, who we all know well for hosting the Fox Valley Golf League at Blackberry Oaks Golf Club. Todd has been employed by the Elgin C.C. for the past two years. He got his start at Aurora C.C., where he worked eight summers. He attended the University of Illinois, where he earned his bachelor's degree in horticulture with an emphasis in turf. Todd spent the next nine-and-a-half years working at Evanston C.C. as the assistant superintendent. Todd left Evanston C.C. and worked at Eaglebrook for two years before landing the job at Elgin.*

Elgin C.C., built in 1901, is one of those great old courses that has a very interesting history. Originally designed by Tom Bendelow, it was "nine stakes in a day." Elgin C.C. paid Mr. Bendelow \$500 for his services and covered the expenses for his train ticket. The course has had many changes over the years and little of the original course remains. In the 1950s, William Schatz routed the existing 18-hole format. Some of Elgin C.C.'s unique features include 130 feet in elevation change throughout the course; the club boasts the highest survey point in Kane County. The golf course itself is a modest 6,300 yards, but the fairways are lined with mature native oak and shagbark hickory and with the undulating terrain, it tends to "play longer." A great story Todd tells relates back to the 1930s; during Prohibition, members had a secret cave that included benches, cabinets and tables where they stored their "spirits" and hung out. All good things must come to an end, and the cave was blasted out; nothing remains but the stories.

Todd has kept very busy the last two years, involved with major drainage work for some of the fairways and bunker renovations for the greens. Other projects have included upgrades to the shop, equipment replacement and new landscaping. One of the most important projects Todd has embarked upon is to "meet the needs of a new generation of golfers." Todd's proactive approach is to educate his membership about why superintendents do what we do in regards to maintaining high-performance turf. His goal is to make Elgin C.C. as fine a golf course as possible. Todd feels it is critical to make an effort to reach out and make knowledge and information available to the membership.


This outreach education philosophy is not exclusive to Todd's work at Elgin C.C. During his stint at Evanston C.C., he was instrumental in the initiative to become

one of the original 10 courses certified as Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary clubs. He continues the same work at Elgin. Todd has also served on the MAGCS Education Committee and currently serves on the MAGCS Environmental Committee. Todd's "torch to carry" is to continue to promote the Audubon program; he was disappointed when Illinois dropped out of the lead for the number of Audubon-certified golf courses.

Todd feels very strongly about his love of the outdoors, which is the reason he entered the business in the first place. His appreciation for being a golf course superintendent continues to grow when he thinks about what other people do for a living. Despite the stresses of maintaining a golf course, Todd remains upbeat, focusing on the challenge. "I like the challenges of working with nature; there is never a dull day, each one is different." Todd continues to attempt to

improve the golf course, saying, "Rewards come from hard work."

In his endeavors, Todd receives support from his wife, Debbie, and their three children: Chad, age 9, Jenna, age 4, and Claire, age 1. The family lives in Aurora. This reporter's sources indicate Chad has been observed filling in divots—look out for the next generation! In his spare time (is there any?), Todd explores genealogy. No, he does not scour thrift stores and resale shops for retro '70s Jordaches (my first thought). Rather, he traces his family tree. He has traced his mother's side to the 1100s in England and his father's side to the 1600s in Germany—pretty cool.

I can't wait to play Elgin C.C. at our first golf meeting of the 2000 season (dare I say of the millennium). Bring your Y2K-compliant golf clubs, and see you there. 

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