

# Samuel Lehrfeld

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# Odyssey Golf Club

*Odyssey Golf Club and Sam Lehrfeld will play host to the May 20th ITF/MAGCS combined meeting. Ray Schei is proud to announce that Sam will be taking over the reins (and the reign) as golf course superintendent of Odyssey Golf Club. Ray has reached the golden age of retirement and states that he has hosted more than his fair share of MAGCS monthly meetings during his tenure as a superintendent at various courses.*

*The course features a Curtis Strange design, including its no. 16 signature hole, a 526-yard par-5 dogleg with an island green . . . The topography of Odyssey includes a plethora of hidden bunkers and an abundance of water features.*

Sam was born in Harvey, Illinois, and raised in the neighboring towns of Park Forest and Country Club Hills. A graduate of Rich Central High School, he states that golf was not his first path taken—it was an interest in music. He picked up the sticks and became a drummer working locally and later traveling with a band. His travels took him to the West Coast, where he earned an associate's degree in turf plant science from California's Pierce College. Sam also maintained his musical interest by continuing to work as a studio musician.

As with many people, Sam realized that there is no place like home and returned to Illinois in 1984. His interest in maintaining the environment led him to the golf course profession. Sam initially worked for Ray Schmitz as a spray technician before being promoted to assistant superintendent. Sam later crossed the border into the Hoosier state and worked as a golf course superintendent at Calumet Golf Course in Gary, Indiana.

It was in 1997 that Sam made the trek to Odyssey Golf Club to become the assistant to Ray Schei. Together they managed the 30 acres of bent fairways, three acres of greens and five acres of tees that comprise the 18-hole facility located in Tinley Park, Illinois. The architect is Harry Bawers; the course was constructed by Cress Equipment Company in 1989. The course features a Curtis Strange design, including its no. 16 signature hole, a 526-yard par-5 dogleg with an island green, which Sam states is currently being renovated. The topography of Odyssey includes a plethora of hidden bunkers and an abundance of water features.

Sam says that his greatest challenge is maintaining both the golf course and the environment at the same time. Sam consults with the Audobon Society and works to encourage waterfowl populations while maintaining the water features. His planting of wildflower areas is designed to promote healthy wildlife and this is what he considers to be his greatest reward. He hopes that the next 25 years will bring even more environmental awareness to the profession.

His professional mentors are Ray Schmitz, Ray Schei and drummer Tony Williams, who taught him how to apply his skills and encouraged him to expand upon them. He enjoys the game of golf and has a working knowledge

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of the Rules as relates to defining and marketing the golf course. Working under Ray, playing is mandatory, and Sam enjoys the challenge of a game with Ray as well. During their partnership, Ray and Sam experienced many trials along with many comical moments. The most memorable was finding a snapping turtle the size of an alligator with an Odyssey golf ball in its mouth. The turtle was photographed and the picture was later

printed in the local paper. Sam's most humbling experience is another animal story. It was the retrieval of one of the club's escaped swans from the Cook County Forest Preserves and driving one "Big Bird" to the vet in the passenger seat of his car.

Sam is a member of the GCSAA and was welcomed to membership in the MAGCS in April. He resides in Park Forest with his fiancé and their

three cats. When he is not at work, he often cannot be found at his secret bass-fishing site on the Kankakee River (one of those guys, doesn't want to reveal the secret fishing hole)! With Ray's retirement in April, Sam and his new assistant Brian Trifilio are looking forward to a challenging new season and hope that our men and women in the Armed Forces have some great golf to come home to.



Hole no. 5 at Odyssey Golf Club.