

Midwest Breezes



Welcome to a revival of the old, but not forgotten, “Midwest Breezes” column.

I am pleased to head up a team of writers whose goal is to report news from the field while bringing to light the resourceful methods and procedures that many members of the MAGCS are developing and using.

One of the most vital strengths of our Association has always derived from our generosity in openly sharing our individual discoveries with our peers. It is my hope that the “Midwest Breezes” column will get more of this kind of information in circulation among all of our members.

The “Midwest Breezes” team currently consists of Brian Baker, Brian Mores, Tony Rzadzki, Brian Bossert and myself. I would like to add at least 10 more writers to the ranks. You may be called by one of these writers and

asked to relate something happening at your course. Please do not hesitate to share! You will have the opportunity to review material prior to publication for accuracy, any sensitivities and so on.

Please call me if you would like to join our writing team. I especially encourage assistant golf course superintendents to join us, as this enterprise could be a great opportunity for you to network and develop communication skills.

Thank you for your feedback as we launch the new “Midwest Breezes.”

—Brad Anderson, CGCS
Midlane Country Club

Chris Painter, the Man at the Helm of the Original Chicago Golf Club

It all started more than 20 years ago. No, wait. Actually it was over 100 years ago, way back in 1892, when it really all began. Yes, that’s right, way back in 1892 one of golf’s founding fathers—Charles Blair McDonald—founded the Chicago Golf Club in Downers Grove, IL. This was the first golf course constructed west of the Allegheny Mountains. And 1893 saw the addition of another nine holes, making the Chicago Golf Club the first 18-hole golf course in the United States. Shortly after that, in 1895, the Chicago Golf Club moved to Wheaton. Everyone knows the rest of that story.

But there’s more. From 1895 until 1968, renamed Belmont Country Club, the original Chicago Golf Club thrived in the western suburbs under various owners until the Downers Grove Park District took over the property. It still exists today as the Downers Grove Golf Course.

Now, more than 20 years ago, a bright young man decided to enter the golf course business. At that time, his passion was pulling wrenches, driving his Corvette and chasing two-legged does. I met Chris in 1982. He was the mechanic at the Bryn Mawr Country Club while I was wrenching at the Evanston Golf Club. He and I hit it off great. I came to find out that when we were younger, he used to live one block from my house on the North Side, but we never did meet back then. There are many wonderful things about Chris, but one of his most likeable

qualities is his loyalty. We have been true blue friends for many years now.

Chris moved on from Bryn Mawr and actually worked for me at Cantigny Golf. Wow, those were some years! I have to admire Chris; after I left for “God’s country,” Chris stayed on and oversaw construction of Cantigny’s Youth Course. After a marvelous opening of the Youth Course, Chris began to develop some confidence and started applying himself towards the next rung on the career ladder. And on January 8, 2001, Chris Painter became the head golf course superintendent of the Downers Grove G.C.

What really impresses me about Chris is his take-charge attitude. DGGC was going through many changes when Chris arrived. Since he started, he has:

- Completed construction of a new maintenance facility;
- Installed a new irrigation system;
- Added nine new tee complexes; and
- Created a massive berm and tee complex from fill created by the construction of the park district’s new recreation center.

Chris is also proud to report that through his efforts, DGGC’s slope and ratings have increased dramatically: white tee slope of 113 went to 123, blue tees from 122 to 128. The course rating went from 68.3 to 69.8 and 70.5 to 71.6, respectively.

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The past three years have been busy ones for Chris Painter. Since he took the helm at Downers Grove Golf Course (a.k.a. the original Chicago Golf Club), he has undertaken installation of a new irrigation system (top left), which is now in use (top right). Chris has also overseen the addition of nine new tee complexes (below left) and construction of a new maintenance facility (below right).



I spent some time with Chris at his course last fall and I must admit, it truly is one of the best nine-hole golf courses in the Chicago area. It is remarkable the amount of play that runs through there, and his greens are flawless. Chris told me that much of what has been accomplished at Downers Grove would not have been possible without his fine assistant, Vince Pawlicki. He also noted that without the support of the park district's Karen Shannon, director of facilities, and Dan Cermak, administrator, none of these improvements would have happened.

Chris isn't done yet. This year, he has already begun relocating the tee complex on the sixth hole. Drainage and errant shots necessitated a reconfiguration of the hole. Chris determined that if the angle changed on this par-3 hole, he could greatly enhance the character of the hole.

It has been a real pleasure to report on DGGC and Chris Painter, who has been one of my true friends as long as I have been in this profession. I admire Chris' courage and determination to have accomplished what he has in all of these years.

You know, Chris almost didn't make it to the dance. In the fall of 2000, Chris was diagnosed with a brain tumor. The operation would be a bit tricky because the doctors had determined that the tumor was close to a nerve that, if damaged, could cause partial or full paralysis of one side of his body, or possibly leave him blind in one eye or deaf in one ear. I recall praying *hard* for Chris. And I remember how scared my friend was. Once in a while, and I personally believe more often than we think, the Lord throws you a bone. The operation was a complete success! The tumor wasn't even close to that nerve. And now I have the privilege of introducing you to one of the newest older members of the MAGCS. I am proud of you, Chris! Keep up the great work!

—Tony Rzadzki, CGCS
Whistling Straits/Irish Course

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