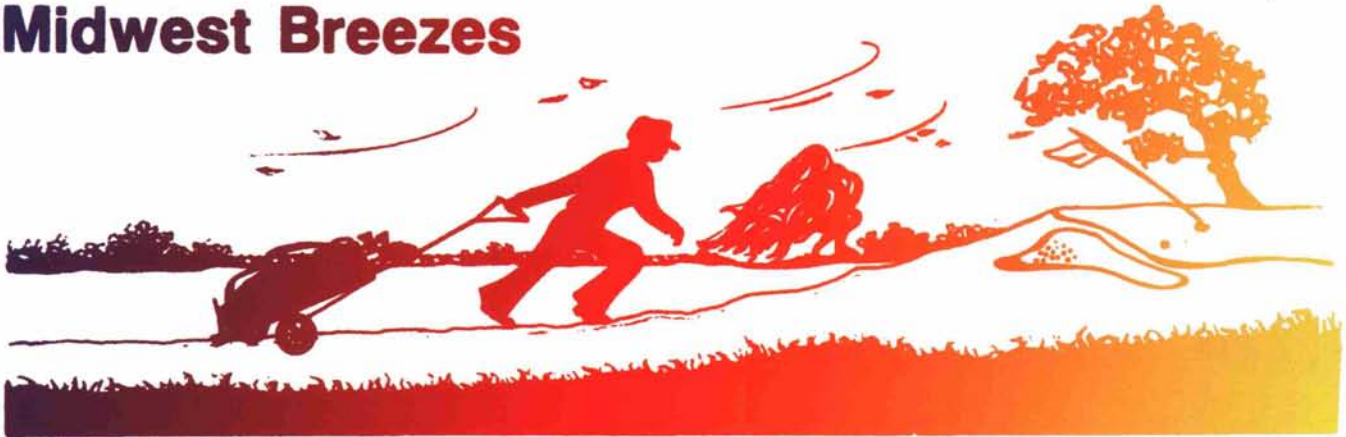


## Midwest Breezes



### **Making Greens Aerification Less Disruptive, More Effective at Rockford Country Club**

Like many superintendents, Al Pondel of Rockford Country Club has been looking for a way to make aerification of greens a less disruptive experience for his members. Al now believes he has a plan in place to accomplish this. His plan involves a change in how he aerates and the equipment that he utilizes.

The first part of Al's plan was to change his thinking on how he aerates. Since coming to Rockford Country Club in 2000, he had been aerifying the greens once per year in the fall with half-inch hollow tines. This practice compromised playing conditions for several weeks during a time where we traditionally see some of our best golfing weather. Furthermore, aerifying once per year was not significantly reducing the high organic-matter content of the greens, which Al is working to correct. Aerifying twice per year had been recommended but was tough to institute. Al thought that if he went to three to four aerifications per year, but with quarter-inch hollow side-eject quadritines, he could get the same agronomic benefits in a much less invasive way. Al quadritined the greens in May and early July of this year and will quadritine again in September and October. Results thus far have been positive. All quadritine aerification is completed on Mondays and by that first weekend, the holes are only slightly visible and cause minimal disruption to play. By the second weekend, the holes are completely healed.

The second part of the plan was to update the aerification equipment. Al's most important criterion in

selecting the new aerifier was the quality of the holes being produced, followed by productivity and reliability. After testing several different aerifiers, Al found that all of the units produced quality holes. As for productivity, the Toro ProCore 648 claimed to cover up to 26,000 square feet per hour. Though the ProCore 648 was easy to maneuver and appeared to be well-built, it was new to the market and its track record was yet to be determined. Anxious to learn more, Al spoke with Toro engineers at the 2004 GCSAA show in San Diego specifically about the quadritine option, which was not available at the time he had demo'ed the unit. After Toro engineers assured him of its quality and productivity, Al decided to purchase a ProCore 648. This was a difficult decision for Al because he does not like to purchase newly developed equipment in its first year on the market. Happily, the ProCore 648 has met Al's expectations so far. In fact, he reports that he starts aerifying at 5:30 a.m. and can have all 127,000 square feet of greens completed by 3:00 p.m. User-friendliness is another strong suit of the ProCore 648. Al notes that changing from quadritines to regular tines can be done in about an hour. Also, the tine spacing and depth can be varied. Backing into tight areas is made easier with a convenient reverse handle at the operator's fingertips. Finally, the wheel base of this unit is inside the aerification pattern, which prevents the plugs from being compacted.

—*Brian Mores*  
*Inverness Golf Club*

### **Controlling Dollar Spot at Stonebridge Country Club**

Dollar spot in fairways has become one of the hardest pests to control in golf turf. Many Chicago-area superintendents have been experimenting with the Houston Couch concept of applying a tank mixture of two fungicides. The synergism that can be achieved with tank mixing allows for the reduction of rates for each fungicide respectively.

During the 2004 season, Dan Sterr has had success with the control of dollar spot by applying a mix of Propiconazole and Vinclozolin to fairways on two-week intervals. Dan reports that he has had success

with rates as low as 0.25 oz. of Propiconazole and 0.5 oz. of Vinclozolin.

In the early part of the season, Dan had success with 0.25 oz. of Propiconazole and 1.0 oz. rate of Chlorothalonil, though he is not convinced that this particular mix would hold up during periods of high disease pressure.

—*Brad Anderson*  
*Midlane Country Club*

*(continued on page 23)*

## Ruth Lake Country Club Undertaking a \$4 Million Facelift



*Before.*

After nearly three years of planning, on August 2nd Ruth Lake Country Club closed its doors to golfers and began major renovation. Throughout those three years, superintendent Dan Marco, CGCS worked tirelessly to give the membership all the information they needed to cast the deciding go-ahead votes. Dan, along with architect Arthur Hills and the firm of Discovery Management, put together a very powerful multimedia presentation that included hole-by-hole flyovers and professional commentary noting the proposed changes to the existing 6,400-yard layout.

Ruth Lake hired Landscapes Unlimited, LLC of Lincoln, Nebraska as its contractor. Together, they will be building eight new green complexes while gassing and regrassing 10 more. The greens and collars will all be seeded with A-1 creeping bentgrass. The course will also go through serious routing changes as hole number two will be changed from a par 4 to a par 5 and hole number three from a par 4 to a very challenging 230-yard par 3. A number of other changes will result in the addition of 300 yards to the championship tees. Dan chose L-93 for his new fairways and approaches.



*After.*

The club will also be completely renovating their existing bunkers. Dan chose the “Tour Grade Signature Bunker Sand” coming from Best Sands in Ohio. Also in the works is a completely new practice facility with a T-1 bentgrass tee, low-mow bluegrass fairway and bentgrass target greens, complete with a mist irrigation system. The mist irrigation system will allow members to practice and Dan to irrigate.

The project doesn’t end there; Liebold Irrigation has been contracted to do the \$250,000 worth of irrigation work. The new irrigation will afford the opportunity to irrigate all grassed bunker faces. Finally, Ruth Lake Country Club will be moving and constructing a new maintenance facility. The new facility is going to be 10,800 square feet with a separate 2,000-square-foot chemical storage building.

Ruth Lake Country Club hopes to have the contractors off the property by year’s end and be ready to open sometime in June of 2005.

—Brian Baker  
*Chicagoland Turf*

## Midlane Country Club’s Recipe for Topdressing Greens

In 2004, we began topdressing our greens every seven days with rotary fertilizer spreaders, and our greens have never played better.

Two men are sent out in the afternoon to apply dried sand with Lesco rotary fertilizer spreaders.

The spreaders are set wide open.

The sand is applied to 130,000 square feet of putting surface in six man-hours.

A hopper full of sand is good for two passes across the green, on 12-foot centers. We are currently reloading our hoppers with shovels from a utility cart at the edge of

the green. If we had a silo for storing the sand and dispensing it into five-gallon buckets to be dumped into the spreaders, we would probably be able to reduce our man-hours considerably since much of our time is actually spent in shoveling the sand into the spreaders.

We have discovered that there is no brushing or dragging of sand required after application with the Lesco spreaders.

The application of sand with this method does not interfere with golf play. Actually, the greens seem to roll even better while the sand is being applied.

The greens are watered for nine minutes at night to move the sand below the turf canopy.

The amount of sand that is applied on this schedule is slightly less than the amount of sand that was formerly applied with our tow-behind topdressing unit, but our intervals are more consistent. I am expecting the weekly application of sand to better match our growth curve.

Using this method, there is no waste of sand from being thrown beyond the putting surface. And we have eliminated the compaction weight of the utility cart, which was used to brush the sand in.

Our former method of brushing the sand in after application required a follow-up mowing to clean up the tufts of grass, which were lifted by the drag broom. But the rotary-spreader method has eliminated the clean-up motions.

—Brad Anderson  
Midlane Country Club

## Selecting an Architect for Renovations at The Oak Park Country Club

The Oak Park Country Club has retained the services of Rick Jacobsen to develop segments of a renovation master plan, including greens, tees, fairways and bunkers. The master plan will also address trees that have grown to affect the playing surface and the game.

During the process of selecting an architect, Alan assured the committee members that he would be able to work with any architect that they chose. Alan also encouraged the committee to be absolutely sold on what the architect could bring to them and do for them, and to adopt completely the theme and concept of the architect's plan.

—Brad Anderson  
Midlane Country Club



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