

Thomas Prichard -N-



Ivanhoe superintendent Tom Prichard and his host of lovely ladies: (L to R) daughters Katie, Taryn, Christina, Jennifer and Kelsey, wife Dana.



After seven years of writing "Super -N- Site" profiles, I still ponder what comes first: the chicken or the egg? The golf course or the superintendent?



Photo by Golf Shots Unlimited, Inc.

A sneak preview of the Marsh Course at Ivanhoe; no. 3 in the foreground, no. 2 green in the background.

In regards to the site and host of the May MAGCS/ITF combined golf day—the Ivanhoe Club and Thomas Prichard—I am really perplexed. The Ivanhoe Club is a beautifully manicured, exclusive, private club located in the small town of Ivanhoe, centrally situated in Lake County. The Ivanhoe Club has the character and ambience of the North Shore clubs but within the wide open spaces of Lake County. To make things more interesting, the club, which originally opened in 1991, recently completed a three-year, \$4.5-million renovation of the 27-hole tract.

On the other hand, Tom is a pretty unique individual with a very strong industry background and a wealth of experience for a young 43-year-old. His experience spans new golf course development and old golf course reclamation. He has worked with golf course management companies, private country clubs, upscale public golf courses, nationally recognized golf courses and small local clubs. He has been involved with staging professional tour events as well as collaborating on projects with renowned architects and turf experts

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from around the country. So again, the question remains: the golf course or the superintendent!

If there is one thing that I have learned from my association with the MAGCS and the superintendent community, the business is **always** about the golf course, the club as a whole, and its members or golfers. The superintendent is the silent force that does whatever is necessary to keep things up, running and in the best possible shape under any and all conditions. The superintendent is always the **first** to take a step back and let everything and everyone else SHINE. He or she is the rock that does not budge in good or bad times. Therefore, I am sure Tom would direct me to talk about the Ivanhoe Club first.

The Ivanhoe Club's media guide identifies June 16, 2004 as the "Rebirth of a Champion." Before talking about the rebirth, however, I should talk about the birth. The Ivanhoe Club opened its gates to the members in 1991. Dick Nugent designed 27 holes of unique topography with distinct features for each of the three nine-hole courses. The clubhouse and golf course are located on 380 acres of woodlands, lakes (including 15-acre Lake Ivanhoe), wetlands and prairie. Each nine provides a unique golf challenge to club members.

The 27-hole layout skirts around two original log cabins dating back to the early 1800s, providing a glimpse of the way things used to be. The rolling cart path moves along the countless bridges and around the manmade waterfall. A myriad of trees frame the fairways and scores of flowerbeds offer a unique theme to each of the nines. The Ivanhoe Club is truly proud to be one of the select few clubs in America to earn Certified Signature Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary status.

The club offers three different 18-hole combinations. The black tees average between 6,700 and 6,800 yards, with par at 72 and a course rating of 73. The layout includes 71 sand bunkers, 25 water hazards and 4,000 trees, with an average green size being 5,100 square feet.

The three nine-hole layouts have distinct names: the Forest, the Marsh and the Prairie.

The rolling terrain of the Forest Nine marks the highest spot in Lake County and features tight, tree-lined, doglegged, rolling fairways. Water comes into play on four of the nine holes. Mature oak and hickory trees line the fairways. Deep grass bunkers surround the greens. The distinctive ninth hole meanders around Lake Ivanhoe, presenting a challenge from every perspective. The Forest Nine features approximately 11 sand bunkers. The black tees measure 3,389 yards and a par 36. Tom comments that this is his favorite nine.

The Marsh Nine embraces the lower terrain of the property: the wetlands and all its wildlife. These nine holes have fewer doglegs and more level terrain, but water is a more pronounced hazard. Streams, lakes or marshes affect every hole except the first to varying degrees. A greater number of sand bunkers appear strategically throughout these nine holes. The Marsh Nine closes with a spectacular par-4 hole that features an elevated tee overlooking Lake Ivanhoe, requiring a long, accurate shot to an island fairway followed by a second shot over water to a heavily guarded green. The clubhouse patio is located directly behind and above the green. An audience is always waiting and watching. The black tees measure 3,384 yards and par 36.

The Prairie Nine, featuring grassy hillocks and beautiful waves of native prairie grass, offers golfers a links-style challenge. The deep grasses provide protection to the rabbit, pheasant and deer and camouflage for the raccoon, fox, coyote and lost GOLF BALLS. Deep greenside bunkers add to the challenge of the Prairie Nine. Wildflowers add to the beauty and challenge of the layout. Approximately 29 sand bunkers provide added challenge. Water comes into play to some degree on seven holes. The black tees measure 3,328 yards and par 36.

If this bounty weren't enough, the Ivanhoe Club hired nationally recognized golf course architect Arthur Hill to update and renovate all three nines in 2000. The project wrapped up in early 2004. Strategic planning ensured that 18 holes were always available for membership play.

The renovation included, but was not limited to, sand bunker redesign and contouring; tee box relocation and additions; tee box contouring and reseeding; contouring of fairways and greens; reseeding fairways and greens; and adding strategically placed trees. As the new logo states, "Rebirth of a Champion."

Now The Fun Begins!

I think back to my first year in the MAGCS and the first meeting I attended was Hughes Creek. I was placed in a foursome with a superintendent whom I had never met. His golf game, at best, was erratic, from tee to green. The beverage cart always seemed to be following us, never far from sight. Here was a person who was jovial, engaging and always willing to have another beverage and talk about his industry . . . a person who knew everyone and everyone knew him. I said to myself, "What did I get myself involved with?" To this day, I always look forward to the beginning of the MAGCS golf meetings. And from that day, eight years ago, Tom Prichard has remained unchanged. But after all those years, I have finally gotten a chance to know what everyone else already knew about Tom. He is the true professional, friend, husband, father and mentor, someone always willing to grow his profession and help his fellow associates.

How appropriate, but Tom's long career and first exposure began with some night-watering at Cary Country Club in 1977. Tom was in high school. As with most young adults of the Seventies, transportation and companionship were top priorities. But priorities notwithstanding, fathers then ran their households a little differently. The mandate came down from the top that it was time to work to pay for the vehicle. No, it was not the love of nature or desire to work outdoors or the love of golf that directed Tom towards his future career. It was parental authority. He answered an ad and began working as a laborer at Woodstock Country Club under the tutelage of Jim Knulty, golf course superintendent. I guess it was blind luck or divine intervention.

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Tom continued to work summers, breaks and free time at Woodstock while attending Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in the aviation technology curriculum. I guess Tom wanted to be a pilot, mechanic or something like that. But after two years at SIU, Tom began to rethink the direction of his career. He enrolled at McHenry Community College in the two-year turf program. Tom continued to work at Woodstock under the guidance and direction of Jim Knulty. Tom notes that Jim was **always** willing to teach, help, guide, train and keep him busy (both during the season and off-season). After Jim left Woodstock for Big Foot Country Club in Fontana, WI, Tim Davis continued the development and teaching process. When Tim left for Shoreacres in Lake Bluff, Tom was promoted to superintendent of Woodstock Country Club. His tenure at Woodstock lasted seven years.

In 1991, Tom jumped at the opportunity to reclaim a golf course that had sat idle for three years and work on this 18-hole course. A limited partnership purchased the old Lakewood Golf Club (an extension of Turnberry) and wanted the course up and running in four months. In April, Tom took the position and began working with Roger Packard, the golf course architect. The goal was for the course to be open for play in August, and they achieved this goal. Tom worked at Lakewood (now Red Tail) for two years. During his time, the limited partnership briefly turned over the management of the golf operations to Kemper Sports Management, so Tom became an employee of Kemper.

In April 1993, Kemper Golf assumed management of the Chicago Park District's six golf courses and two driving ranges. Tom received a promotion to golf course superintendent of capital improvement. During a four-month period, Tom oversaw more than \$1 million spent on various projects throughout the Chicago Park District golf courses. Later that summer, Kemper moved Tom to Royal Melbourne Country Club. Tom took over the golf course operations and worked with golf course architect Greg Norman. The club opened in 1992 and Tom was respon-

sible for golf course maintenance and increasing membership.

He remained at Royal Melbourne for seven years as an employee of Kemper Sports. In 1998, he was promoted to be the company's regional agronomist. In addition to his responsibilities at Royal Melbourne, Tom also managed Vernon Hills' nine-hole golf course. Via the regional agronomist role, Tom increased his exposure to golf courses, conditions and superintendents around the country. In the year 2000, Kemper handed the reins of Royal Melbourne to David Groelle.

Simultaneously that summer, Kemper Sports Management was beginning a new project and appointed Tom to head it up. The project consisted of building a new golf course on land that was part of the former Glenview Naval Station. Construction on The Glen Club began in the summer of 2000. Tom worked with the renowned golf course architect, Tom Fazio. Yes, Tom had finally received the opportunity to work in the aviation industry! Instead of dodging departing and landing Navy jets on the runways turned fairways, he avoided wayward golf shots. The Glen Club became the permanent home of the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame and the Illinois PGA. The notoriety of The Glen Club also drew the attention of the PGA Tour and Illinois PGA. Over the last three years, The Glen Club has hosted the Nationwide Tour's premier stop, the LaSalle Bank Open, as well as the Illinois Open. Tom and his staff were responsible for the preparation and upkeep of The Glen Club for these tournament stops. Additionally, this included all the experience of working with the folks from the PGA, media and tour professionals.

Now a senior agronomist for Kemper Sports Management, Tom was performing his duties as golf course superintendent of The Glen Club AND responsible for writing budgets, reviewing golf course maintenance programs, and inspecting golf course grounds at the 70 or so Kemper-managed golf courses around the country. He indicates that this was done on an as-needed basis and mainly during the off-season. He mentions

that without the support and knowledge of an experienced staff, wearing two hats would have been impossible. Tom remained in the dual capacity through 2003. In 2004, The Glen Club golf course operations were turned over to then-assistant superintendent, Steve Dauer. Tom's goal as a superintendent has always been to promote his assistants. He is very proud of having Steve promoted even though the powers-that-be said Steve had a 99.9% chance of NOT getting the position. Tom took this as a challenge and opportunity.

In the spring of 2004, Tom was looking for opportunities outside of Kemper Golf. Maybe it was a desire to stay in one place or remove himself from being in the spotlight, only Tom knows for sure. He accepted the golf course superintendent position at the Ivanhoe Club. Tom comments that this was one of his easier moves: golf course renovation already completed, a quality and experienced staff and procedures in place, Audubon program implemented, etc. Welcome to the ambiance of the country club!

This all speaks to a pretty extensive background, wouldn't you say! I think Tom's success and accomplishments are a true indication what can be done if you want it bad enough. Who says you need a four-year degree and beyond to be successful?


Tom responds that it all begins from the home. Without the support and understanding of his family, many of these moves would have been difficult or impossible. Tom has been married for 15 years to wife Dana. He has five wonderful daughters who range in age from 21 down to 14: Jennifer (21), a senior at University of Iowa; Taryn (19), a freshman at University of Illinois; Katie (18), a freshman at Northern Illinois University; Christina (17), a future freshman at Southern Illinois University; and Kelsey (14), eighth grade. Yes! I did count off six females. Think of Tom during those days when you are down and out. Four years ago, Tom finally got his "boy," Winston, a blend of beagle/Austrian shepherd. Unfortunately, word came down from the top that Winston would be losing his manhood (neutered) two weeks later.

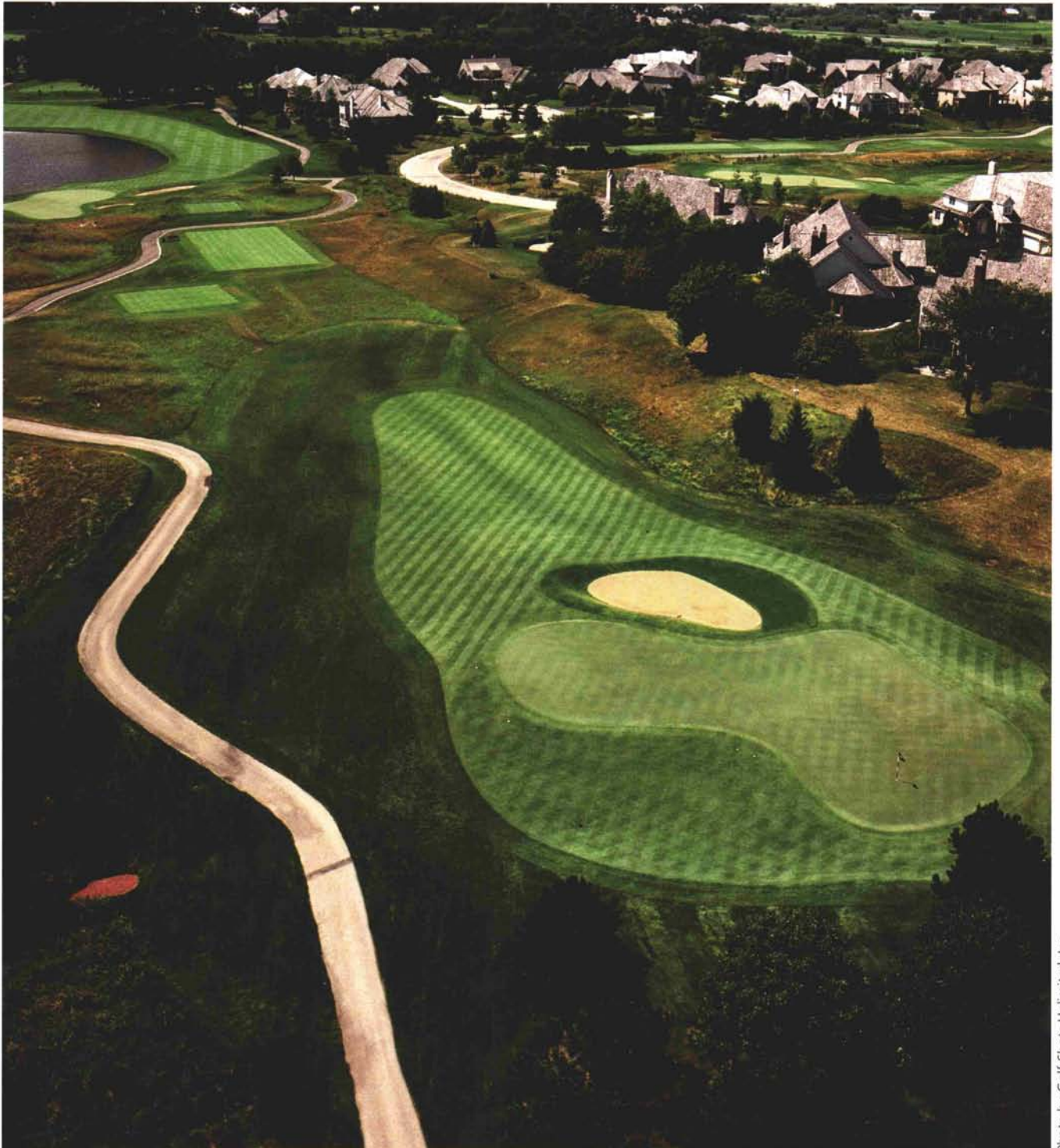
Now I know why Tom is ALWAYS happy and delightful! A bad day on the job is really never that BAD!

Tom's hobbies include coaching softball and basketball, golf (improving on his 16 index), his backyard water garden and the volunteer work maintaining the Woodstock High School football field.

The most challenging aspect of his career is dealing with member expectations through whatever Mother Nature does, and succeeding. The most rewarding aspects of his career are the pride he takes in mentoring his associates and peers in Chicagoland and around the country, and the gratitude of satisfied members.

Tom goes on to say he truly appreciated the support, teaching and guidance from Jim Knulty and Tim Davis. These individuals, and all his peers, have made his career what it is today!

Whew! Where did that beverage cart go? 



An aerial shot of the Prairie Course, no. 6; no. 1 is in the background, left.

Photo by Golf Shots Unlimited, Inc.