

## Midwest Breezes



### Ravinia Green Country Club, Tommy Robinson

I had the pleasure of playing golf with Tommy Robinson during the July meeting at Old Oak Country Club. It was incredible to watch Tommy shoot even par on a golf course that he had never played before. If you have ever seen Tommy hit the ball you might think that his score is mostly owing to his power and distance, but what I witnessed at Old Oak was a very analytical and studied game.

Tommy Robinson is gifted with great golf sensibility, and this is evident not only in his game, but in his work at Ravinia Green. He has completely remodeled nearly every hole at Ravinia Green.

Ravinia Green was designed by Packard who had a partiality for enormous, above grade, tilted, saucer shaped bunkers, which drain very poorly after the sand washes out from seasonal rainfalls. When Tommy began remodeling these bunkers, he spent days just hauling the sand away to get at the base of the bunker to begin his shaping. He solved this problem by digging a deep hole with a backhoe on the remodeling site, and pushing all of the old

sand into the hole. With the sand out of the way, Tommy now removes the topsoil with a bobcat and stock piles it nearby. The clay base of the old bunker is now used to build several smaller bunkers, or mounds. Tommy does all of the shaping with a bobcat, and he has discovered that a triplex mower can effectively mow whatever is built by a bobcat, with no push mower or trim work. As you can see from the photos, the shape and style of Tommy's bunkers are beautiful, and functional.

Tommy has also gotten away from the Packard/Harris concept of placing substantial amounts of sand on slopes that will wash out with every rain. The remodeled bunkers are flat, with just enough sand flashed upwards to alert the golfer of the bunker's presence. But be aware, there are several hidden bunkers at Ravinia Green that Tommy has hidden behind other bunkers and mounds. Tommy feels that a golf course doesn't have to show all of its secrets during your first round.

When the bunker shape is complete, Tommy installs

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tile and pea gravel drainage. For coring out the sand cavity, Tommy lays a roll of sod, upside down around the perimeter of the cavity. He then runs a sod cutter for two or three passes, set deep, along the inside of the sod roll, removing the soil that the sod cutter peels away. After the topsoil is re-spread around the embankments, against the upside down sod roll perimeter, and the final layer of sod is placed over the upside down layer of sod, the cavity ends up being approximately 4 inches deep where the sand meets the bluegrass edge.

Tommy also grows all of his annual flowers in-house from seed. Over the years he has collected seed from some rare and interesting flower varieties. When I played golf at Ravinia with two of my boys we stopped and admired these huge salvia flowers. They were just beginning to flower, and they are only half way to maturity. Tommy tells me that these Salvia flowers grow up to seven feet tall. He collected the seed from this variety many years ago on an estate, and he has successfully perpetuated from seed all of these years.



**Old Elm Club, Ed Fischer, CGCS**



Ed has found a good alternative to putting water coolers on the golf course. On several tees at Old Elm, Ed has placed these very attractive wooden insulated chests which are filled with ice, and water bottles.

*Brad Anderson, CGCS*

