

MIDWEST EDUCATION RECAP

Brad Anderson, CGCS, Midlane Country Club

The 55th Annual Midwest Turf Clinic was held at Medinah Country Club, on November 7, 2007. Education Chairman, Scott Witte, and his committee of Nick Baker, Sam MacKenzie, and Dave Drendel, Todd Schmitz, Rusty Stachlewitz, Mark Kosbob, Pat Maksymiu and Jeremy Turton are to be congratulated for lining up a very informative group of speakers for the day. The theme for this year's clinic was **Balance**.



Nick Baker moderated the morning session. It began with **Darryl Harris** of Carroll-Keller Group Consulting. Mr. Harris spoke on Balance in **Leadership and Communication**.

When giving direction to your subordinates:

- Try to communicate in their terminology and in their jargon.
- To verify that they understand your directions, have them describe to you how they are going to carry them out step by step.

Efficiently accomplishing corporate goals involves group awareness. The leader must share his vision and destination with his subordinates. On this point Mr. Harris gave us some very interesting examples from nature:

- When the leader of a herd of migrating wildebeests is "chomped" by crocodiles at the Serengeti River, the herd is in disarray and easy prey until a new leader emerges to escort what is left of the wildebeests across the river. Contrast this to



a flock of migrating geese flying in V-formation; observe how they take turns leading and drafting off each other; they reach their destination very efficiently because they all know where they are going.

In working through various conflicts it is helpful to understand that everyone uses one of three different modes in communication:

1. The **Parent** mode is patrimonial.
2. The **Adult** mode is logical and analytical.
3. The **Child** mode is most empathetic.

Here Mr. Harris illustrated the effective and ineffective use of the three communication modes in a typical conflict scenario:

- When you return a defective toaster to the department store you are in the Parent Mode. You put the toaster on the service counter and you say: "This toaster does not work!" The person behind the counter should diffuse your irritation by responding in the child mode with: "I am sorry for the inconvenience that this has caused you." If however the service representative responds in the adult mode with logical questions such as: "Did you plug it in?" you are most likely to feel insulted and become even more irritated.

The same principles apply to conflict scenarios on the golf course. When someone tells you that, "The pin placements today were awful – I three-putted on 12 holes." You do not want to begin responding to that person in the adult mode by answering that the pin placements were all set according to standard club policy, etc. And you certainly do not want to respond to their problem in a parent style by saying, "Well why don't you go and get some putting lessons from the golf pro!" Begin rather by responding in the child mode with empathy. Now you will diffuse the irritation and position yourself best to reconcile the matter logically in a more adult-to-adult mode.

As incongruent as it may sound, the most mature way to approach a conflict is in the child mode. For it is only after we have diffused the conflict with genuine empathy that we may communicate effectively for ultimate conflict resolution.

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Our next speaker in the morning session was **Lyne Tumlinson**, GCSAA Director of Career Services. Ms. Tumlinson brought things to a more personal level. Her subject was **Balancing a Healthy Lifestyle.**

When asked if their lives are truly balanced, only 2% of Americans are answering in the affirmative. Most people are now feeling that their energies are not adequately or equally distributed between the **health, career, and emotional** dimensions of their life. Americans are feeling that their career demands encroach upon their health and their emotional balance, or vice versa.

Ms. Tumlinson gave us several practical tips for maintaining equilibrium in all areas of life:

- Balance begins with maintaining the good habits of regular exercise, eating a healthy diet, and getting enough sleep.
- In various seasons of life there are different things that take focus. We should try to stay flexible in all of our activities so that we may be able to channel our energy to where it is needed in the moment.
- Everyone needs a mentor – someone you can trust to advise you on decisions and values in challenging circumstances.

The GCSAA provides golf course superintendents with the education and career advisory services that they need for their professional and personal development. These resources can be most helpful in maintaining a balanced life. The thing to keep in mind about education is: **you don't even know what you don't know.** With that in mind you will not discover what you are lacking for success or balance until you take advantage of the educational opportunities that are provided for you.

Being emotionally balanced involves looking outside of ourselves and realizing that life is not all about us. We should be in touch with our spiritual side and with the big picture of life.

We need to live a healthy life outside of our work. We need to have interests outside of our work.

If you feel burned out, you might benefit from getting professional help.

Ms. Tumlinson encouraged us to take three action steps for achieving balance in our work life, our physical health, and our emotional/spiritual balance.



The final speaker of the morning session was **Tammy Swanson**, financial advisor at Merrill Lynch. Her subject was **Balancing Finances.**

Ms. Swanson provided helpful financial planning guidelines for the various age brackets of life:

In our 20's we should:

- be concerned with establishing a good credit report
- set aside 3-6 months of liquidity for living expenses
- learn about investing
- save for the down payment on a home
- look for employment with a company that offers a 401-K
- consider our insurance needs

In our 30's we should:

- begin a college savings plan for our children
- have our will prepared
- begin our estate planning
- control our credit spending
- contribute to our savings
- review our insurance needs
- protect our assets

In our 40s we should:

- maximize our tax shelters
- invest in annuities
- begin planning for our retirement - 20% of our income should go towards retirement

In our 50s we should:

- pay off our debts
- ramp up our savings for retirement

In our 60s we are entering our retirement phase:

- our portfolio should be managed with less short term risk
- we might consider working part time for financial or even social purposes

The afternoon session began with USGA Green Section Agronomist **Ty McClellan's** introduction to our afternoon topic: **The Art of Balancing Green Speed, Fertility, Turf Health, and Player Expectations.**

The plus 10 green speeds that golf course superintendents are now expected to provide day-in-and-day-out actually



(L to R) Dave Biery, Bob Maibusch, Ty McClellan, Tim Davis and Tom Prichard fielded questions during the afternoon panel discussion.

favor a very small minority of golfers. Moreover, fast greens have exacerbated the problems of slow play, lost hole cup locations, and increased turfgrass stress, all requiring added labor and chemical expense.

Yet for all that weighs against the demand for increased green speed, the issue is an important part of the game today. Recently, on the Michigan State Turf Grass Information File database, a search for the phrase **green speed** produced 704 articles. Only 7 of these articles were published before the Stimpmeter was introduced in 1977. And since 1977, greens speeds have increased by an average of 3 to 4 feet. 2007 was

Mr. McClellan's first season as a Green Section Agronomist in the Mid-Continent Region, and at all but one of his 150 course visits, green speed was a topic of discussion and inquiry.

Mr. McClellan gave suggestions for increasing green speed without further compromising the health of putting greens that are conditioned for speed.

Speed is largely determined by mowing height, but double cutting adds 6-12 inches roll and it is less stressful than lowering height of cut.

Grooved rollers versus smooth rollers also provide a slight increase in speed.

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The use of walking greensmowers versus the riding triplex greensmower adds up to 6" roll.

Rolling increases speed 6-12 inches for up to 24 hours, however rolling also increases turfgrass wear. Mr. McClellan suggested target rolling the area around the hole cup to mitigate the wear associated with too much rolling.

Brushing and grooming makes the grass stand more upright and this practice also works to help increase speed.

With all of the stress that is put on greens from conditioning for speed, it is vital that we manage the growing medium to maximize water and gas diffusion for a healthy root system. Topdressing should be applied to match the growth of the turf to dilute thatch build-up. Aerification is an effective method for removing thatch build-up.

Plant Growth Regulators make the grass healthier, and they reduce daily fluctuations in speed by regulating vertical growth of turf leaves.

The newer cultivars of bentgrass that have been specifically bred for lower cutting heights and increased density should be considered for regrassing the greens.

Consideration should also be given for scheduling major events before or after the peak summer stress period.

It is too often assumed that every member of a club expects fast greens. Surveying the club membership may be helpful in determining a green speed standard that best suits the membership at large.

Every club should define realistic expectations of green speed within a predetermined budget. This involves communicating all of the issues associated with green speed to the membership of a club.

The Art of Balancing Green Speed, Fertility, Turf Health, and Player Expectations was continued by a panel of four distinguished Chicago area golf course superintendents that included Dave Biery, Bob Maibusch, Tim Davis, and Tom Prichard, moderated by Erwin McKone.

The panelists agreed that green speed is very important to the members of their clubs, but not at the expense of turf grass health. Each panelist indicated that his club trusts his judgment on all matters concerning the health of greens and what they are capable of withstanding.

None of the panelists are posting daily green speeds. Some clubs have a maintenance standard that includes a speed range, and these gentlemen are able to report that the speed is above or within the range. It was generally agreed that it is not helpful to report what the exact speed is.

No one is double cutting very often, but every one is rolling 2 to 3 times weekly.

Everyone is using turf-groomers or planning on grooming in the future, but Dave Beiry feels that he gets better results from verticutting once per month.

The panelists all perform twice per year soil tests with a laboratory to determine fertility needs. Dave Biery's greens are built with 100% sand, and subsequently he is having his soils tested every six weeks. Generally everyone on the panel is doubling the amount of annual nitrogen with potassium. And every one provides more than 50% of their nutrients with granular fertilization, the balance being supplemented with light rates of spoon-feeding on 10 to 14 day intervals. Tim Davis applies iron in the fall to darken the leaf tissue to absorb more sunlight.

With respect to aeration and venting, everyone is making full use of all the tools and various tine kits that are available for opening up the soil with the least amount of disruption to play. Tim Davis was the only panelist with older and original grasses on his greens, and he regularly spikes and seeds with the newer bentgrass cultivars.

Everyone is mowing with different mowers and heights of cut. Dave Beiry has two separate fleets of mowers for greens that he rotates to allow his mechanic to sharpen routinely.

Growth regulator rates and products used were also fairly varied.



Our keynote speaker for the day was **General David Grange, Ret.**, current CEO of the McCormick Tribune Foundation. He spoke to us from his broad experience of leadership, **On Balancing Demands with Character: Principles for Leaders.**

Balance

- Career and life balance is harder now than ever before, but balance involves how you handle yourself and all of the other responsibilities you have.
- You need to make a personal commitment to excellence and to expect much of yourself.

Time Management

- The will to prepare is where the character and the grit is.
- Your plan needs to be flexible. When the terrain on the ground is different from the map, you adapt.
- Time is the thing we have the least of.
- Lost time is never found again.
- In Delta Force they teach that smooth is fast. It's not about speed but momentum.
- Use scraps of time; do not waste any time.

Leadership

- Communicate with your people.
- Some of the best ideas come from your junior leaders.
- Delegate and empower your people.
- Be performance oriented. It is not the time it takes but what is accomplished.
- Quality is more important than quantity.
- To achieve quality results you need quality people.
- Important team decisions need to be face to face.

Priority

- Your first priority is your family.
- Your priorities should be informed by what is important 10-20 years from now. **-OC**



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