

## EDUCATION RECAP

Charles Anfield, CGCS, *Heritage Bluffs Golf Course*



# 57th Midwest Turf Clinic and Annual Meeting "Changing Times"

*The MAGCS Members once again gathered at the venerable Medinah Country Club for the 57th Midwest Turf Clinic, hosted by Curtis Tyrell, CGCS. This year's theme was "Changing Times". The more things change the more they stay the same as Bob Dylan 1960's hit declared in "these times, they are changing". There is no question we are all doing things a little bit differently. We have to, so it goes...*

Outgoing President Tony Kalina, from Prairie Landing Golf Club started the day off with a power point presentation loaded with photos, recapping this past year's meetings and events. He made a special thank you to all of the sponsors who helped make it all happen.

### 2009 Board Initiatives

- Initiated "MAGCS Podcast" Applications
- Implemented "Partnership Task Force"
- Created "Directors Dashboard"
- Videotaping of all MAGCS educational offerings
- Received \$1,800 matching fund grant from GCSAA
- Outreach for media/public relations efforts

The first session of the day was the **Assistant Superintendent Perspective**. This was a great opportunity for these guys to get some speaking experience in front of a crowd, they did not disappoint.



*l-r: Joe Schneider, Steven Biehl and Josh Therrien*

**Joe Schneider**, Beverly Country Club, made a presentation on hosting the USGA Senior Amateur Championship. Interesting note: the bunkers were broomed, not raked.

**Steven Biehl**, Naperville Country Club, made a presentation on setting irrigation based on ET. Only one other course in the room was using this technology. ET based irrigation is mandated in California. Statistics reveal 14% less water is applied utilizing this technology.

**Josh Therrien**, St. Charles Country Club, made a presentation of getting his course certified with Audubon International.

Once the Assistants wrapped up, we heard from another of our members. **Jeff VerCuatren**, Rich Harvest Farms, gave his presentation on **Preparing for the Solheim Cup**. He said it was the most fun he ever had working a golf event. It's always nice when your team wins.



*Jeff VerCuatren*

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The morning concluded when **Stuart Lindsey**, Edgehill Consulting Group made his presentation on **Turf Care in Tough Times – Proactive Steps**. He certainly got every ones attention. He outlined some trends within the Industry.

- Since 2001 there are less golfers, playing less golf
- Golf was more affordable from 1967 – 1985, now it is less affordable
- 75% of golfers have incomes over \$75K
- Since 1990, the courses built are more challenging, penal and expensive to maintain
- There has been a 2.5% decline in revenue per round of golf
- Expenses are up, revenues stagnant, rounds stagnant
- Course values are decreasing
- Participation is not tracking with population growth



*Stuart Lindsey*

Stuart shared some more tidbits of information.

- Barriers to golf include: time, \$, access, finding a game and LOFT ( lack of \*&^\$#@# talent)
- There is less "hooky" golf being played
- Challenges include: water availability, sales tax, chemical limitations, credit card compliance

Stuart was just getting warmed up.

- Course conditions matter most to golfers selection of where to play
- Price of golf is #2 in choosing where to play
- In 1990, 36% of golf was played by people over 55. In 2010 it will be 50%
- Today's players are price sensitive
- Did we build courses that are too hard to play, too labor intensive/expensive to maintain?
- The "restless consumer" is finding discounted golf
- People feel ripped off now
- Discounted green fees are what they "should" have been paying all along
- They never want to pay full price again

Stuart did have some answers that will make a difference in staying competitive in the future:

- Focus on speeding up pace of play
- Create easier course set ups: tee markers, hole locations, eliminate bunkers
- Cut down native areas so people can find their golf ball
- Expense Control: time study- track man hours per task, manpower is 70% of budget
- Increase staff training, increase expectations and evaluations of staff
- Expand equipment purchase options other than the "big three"
- "Widen view" of dedicated task vehicles
- Smart chemical use
- Cost/benefit decision making

Stuarts closing "shots":

- What gets measured gets done.
- What gets rewarded gets done better.

Stuart realizes much of his presentation relies on Golf Course Superintendents to "make it happen". There will be more pressure on us in the future.

After a delicious lunch, **Doug Sisterson**, Argon National Laboratories woke us up with his whip and his presentation on **Greenhouse Effect – Carbon Dioxide and Climate**.



*Doug Sisterson*



Science is measured by consensus. Not all scientists agree on everything. (Just ask the Skiing Weatherman) If more than 50% of scientists agree on something then it becomes valid. Science is only valid if we can prove it. This often takes a long time. The current consensus is that the climate is warming. Human produced CO<sup>2</sup> is measurable. That being said, Doug outlined some speculated weather trends in the Midwest.

- There is an increase in annual average temperatures despite year to year variations.
- The largest increase is during the winter season.  
The growing season has been extended by one week.
- Heavy rain events are now twice as likely.
- Summer and winter are wetter than average.
- There will be more record breaking floods.
- There will be a decrease in regional ice.
- There will be an increase in heat waves.

The good news keeps on rolling.

The last educational session featured **Superintendent/GM – Dual Role and Challenges**. The panel discussion was moderated by the ever effervescent **Ed Braunksy, CGCS** of Geneva Golf Club. The panel featured: **Don Ferreri**, Seven Bridges Golf Club, **Michael Matchen**, Wilmette Golf Club, **Al Pondel, CGCS**, Rockford Country Club and **Tim Anderson, CGCS, MG** Naperville Country Club. The session featured question and answer for each panelist. To summarize:

For various reasons all of the panelists were asked to step forward and assume the General Manager position.

**Don:** "I just wanted to be part of the solution" to help the Club through these difficult times." I don't feel like we need a GM, we just need someone accountable for the property. Superintendents are the most capable to be the GM. They are the most diligent task masters on any property, who better to lead an operation".

**Tim:** "I am the interim GM. I could not do this without a good staff in the Golf Maintenance Department. I find myself working later hours".

**Mike:** "I evolved into the job. I still want to keep my roots in Golf Maintenance. The Park District wants condensed information".

**Al:** "I spend 99% of my time in the Clubhouse. Superintendents have a lot of experience with budgeting. We are probably the most diligent and focused on the operation. We previously had a confinement of information. Now I share more information with all of our staff. There is more transparency now, we help each other out".

*What has changed for you in your new position?*

**Don:** "Managing the Food and Beverage department really opened my eyes. F&B people are very different than people who work in Golf Maintenance. It's a challenge. You need a lot more people skills and you need to be versed in liabilities. It's a changing industry. I get more why questions in the Clubhouse than I ever did in Golf Maintenance. I enjoy bringing the team together and get everyone's input. I encourage our MAGCS Members to pursue these positions. I think they can add a lot of value to their operation".

**Tim:** "Yes the F&B is the hardest challenge. It is a very detailed operation. It's not much different than my on course work. My skills in human resources and budgeting have been very helpful. The focus is a lot more bottom line. I get a lot more email messages now. It can be chaotic but I enjoy the challenge of bringing structure to an organized environment. I still keep close contact with the grounds crew".

**Mike:** "I spend about 60/40% of my time, Clubhouse/ Golf Maintenance. I find myself needing to be more patient and being a better listener. I like being responsible and connecting the entire staff for the common good. It's an opportunity for the entire staff to take on more responsibility. I find my experience in time management has helped me in my new position."

**Al:** "I find myself apologizing more without taking it personal. Before, I could just drive away from the confrontation. Now I listen more to help smooth out the situation. I enjoy speaking with the Members on a personal level. Watching the bottom line is huge".

Great job by the Education committee to put together another great day of education! They tackled some tough issues that we are facing every day in a changing business, changing economy and a changing world. **-OC**



*l-r: Tim Anderson, Don Ferreri, Al Pondel and Michael Matchen*