

SUPER -N- SITE

Ryan Hinnars, *Sunset Ridge Country Club*

Matt Kregel -N-



On June 15, the MAGCS members will be taking a short trip just over the Northern Illinois border into the beautiful land of Wisconsin. They will visit The Club at Strawberry Creek, hosted by Superintendent Matt Kregel. There will be plenty of competitions: the Senior and Super Senior Championships, the Class C Championship, and the Dom Grotti Championship, where the Superintendent and his Assistant are paired together as a team, competing with other teams of the same make-up. This Championship honors Domenic Grotti, a long time Superintendent at Sunset Ridge Country Club, who always encouraged Assistant Superintendents to participate in both local and national associations.

Matt Kregel grew up south of Chicago in the small village of Beecher. You might miss the Village of Beecher if you blink. It may or may not have any stoplights, but it's big enough for a 27-hole golf course – Shady Lawn Golf Course (now named Cardinal Creek). This home town course is where Matt was introduced to the game of golf by his grandfather and uncle. They would bring him along to drive the golf cart and caddy for them. As an 8th grader Matt was parking carts, helping in the clubhouse, and mowing lawns. At the age of 16, he was brought over to the grounds crew by Jerry Crist and John Hogan. He had an arrangement worked out where he would change cups or mow greens in the morning before he went to class. He also worked weekends. Matt continued to work at Shady Lawn for his summer job. He was unknowingly preparing for his future in the golf course industry.

Matt's college education began at Illinois State University as a business major. While attending college, Matt worked part time and weekends at the ISU Golf Course under Steve Leason. After two years of business classes, he realized that he did not want to work indoors and stare at a computer all day. His love for working outdoors and working at a golf course led him to a major decision. Matt not only changed his college major but



The Kregels, clockwise from Matt are his wife Rosa and kids Hannah, Tyler, and Isabel.

he also had to change universities.

He transferred to the University of Illinois and enrolled in the Ornamental Horticulture program with a concentration in turfgrass management.

During his schooling at the U of I, Matt interned at two private clubs in the south suburbs of Chicago. First, at Prestwick Country Club for Dick Trevarthan and, later, he served a second internship with Dave Ward at Olympia Fields. This was in 1997, when they hosted the Senior Open. Matt graduated from the University of Illinois and accepted a job with the Ivanhoe Club. He was there for the next seven years, three as a Second Assistant and four as the Senior Assistant. In his tenure with the Ivanhoe Club, Matt had the opportunity to work with two respected individuals, Peter Leuzinger and Tom Prichard.

At Ivanhoe, the high level of golf course conditioning and the 27-hole master plan renovation provided invaluable experiences that helped groomed Matt for

his future. He encourages all aspiring Superintendents to gain renovation and construction experience as an Assistant. Clubs are always looking to update and remain competitive. Matt says it was at Ivanhoe Club that he gained his experience in golf course construction, which in turn gave him

the qualifications for the Superintendent position at The Club at Strawberry Creek.

The ground was broken in spring 2004 to start the golf course and housing development at Strawberry Creek. In the spring of 2005, Matt took over as superintendent while course construction continued. By the fall of '05 the grow-in was complete. Some invited rounds were being played that fall. The following spring the course opened with mature, healthy turf and ready to be enjoyed.

Designed by award-winning Rick Jacobsen, The Club at Strawberry Creek opened in April 2006, with prairie landscapes and native grasses that create a "links style" feel. The course has 50 acres of bentgrass with rolling hills, generous landing areas off the tees, hidden rollofts, wetlands, 126 bunkers, and fescue native areas. It is a family oriented club, which is geared to any style of play from novice to professional. The clubhouse was designed and built with the entire family in mind; from the resort-style swimming pools, to the fitness center, to the activity room for the kids, to the spa for the ladies (and men). For the first couple years, the club was a private one that allowed outside play in order to drum up interest. With the completion of the brand new state-of-the-art clubhouse in February 2009, the club became fully private.

***RIGHT:** The 6th hole, a short par 4 at 299 yards presents an interesting choice off the tee.*

***BELOW:** The 17th hole, another short par 4 has a very receptive green.*

After being involved with every aspect of the construction from the ground up, to the grow-in, to facilities, Matt and his Assistant, Jeremy Dahl, are both looking forward to entering the 2009 season with no major projects scheduled. Matt says Jeremy "is a huge part of the success at Strawberry Creek." They are both excited to be getting back to maintaining the greens and grounds. When Matt is not at the club he enjoys spending time with his wife, Rosa, and kids Isabel, Hannah, and Tyler. The three young kids keep him on his toes. Matt is a Fighting Illini fan who bleeds orange and blue for U of I football and basketball. Those colors also work for being a Bears fan. In the land of cheese there are bears; one of Matt's owners is former Chicago Bear, Jay Hilgenberg. Matt is a Chicago Cubs fan as well and very much enjoys attending games at Wrigley Field and Wrigley North (Miller Park).

MAGCS thanks Matt and Jeremy in advance for hosting this year's Championship Golf Meeting. We look forward to playing the Midwest's most exciting new venue. **-OC**

