

SUPER -N- SITE

Travis Dykstra, *St. Charles Country Club*

John Nelson, Arne Nordenson & Joe Baert -N- Merit Club



As many of you know, John Nelson and the Merit Club, located in Libertyville, Illinois, are hosting the 2011 MAGCS College Championship in October. What you may not know is that this Par 72, 7100 yard course was built by architect Bob Lohmann. The property comprises 320 acres, 21 holes (3 practice holes), and opened in the summer of 1992. The course hosted the U.S. Women's Open in 2000. John has been at the Merit Club since 1990. He's been captain of the Merit Club ship since 2006. Superintendents know they can't do it alone, though. That's why John relies on his two assistants, Arne Nordenson and Joe Baert.

Arne Nordenson grew up in McHenry, Illinois. He began his college career in the SIU music program. After SIU, Arne enrolled at McHenry County College where he took a combination of music, horticulture, and turf management classes, and is currently working on his turf management degree. He began his career in the turf industry by working as a caddy and a range attendant at Turnberry Country Club in Lake of the Hills, Illinois. Next, he worked on the night irrigation crew for Brian Comiskey at Pinecrest Golf Club in Huntley, Illinois. In between Turnberry and Pinecrest, Arne worked in the home construction industry for six years. In the spring of 1999, he returned to the golf industry as the irrigation/spray tech at Bull Valley Country Club in Woodstock, Illinois, for



Out for a morning spin, left Joe Baert and Arne Nordenson, Nelson's two assistants that help to keep Merit Club in top shape.

Kenny Goodman. That same year he landed the assistant's job at Four Winds Golf Club in Mundelein, Illinois. He worked in that position until 2003, when he was promoted to superintendent. In 2007, Four Winds closed, and Arne moved to the superintendent position at the Legends of Bensenville in Bensenville, Illinois. That same year the club was sold and Arne moved to the super-intendent's role at Bittersweet Golf Club in Gurnee, Illinois. He filled that

role until October 2010, when he decided to work for John Nelson at the Merit Club.

Arne told me that the biggest challenges at the course, just like everywhere else, is fulfilling member expectations and dealing with unpredictable weather. Nonetheless, he enjoys



seeing the results of the all the hard work that he and his crew accomplish during the season, but he also enjoys waking up in the morning to a beautiful piece of property. He recently retrofitted (with help from mechanic Don Briggs) a Gator with a 25-gallon boom sprayer, an electric fertilizer spreader, and a speedometer. This allows him to be very versatile in the field while completing detail work. Outside of work he enjoys spending time with his fiancé and his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter. Arne also plays the drums in his band and, when time allows, he likes to fish and play golf. Overall, Arne feels very privileged to have worked with the people he has. He attributes his success to John Nelson, Kenny Goodman, Scott Spieden, and Brian Comiskey.



John Nelson's other assistant is Joe Baert. Joe grew up in Geneva, and started working at the Geneva Golf Club for Ed Braunsky in 1999 as a part of his grounds crew. After graduating from Kishwaukee College, he went to work for Jason Funderberg and Jeff VerCautren at Rich Harvest Farms in Sugar Grove, Illinois, in 2006. From there, in 2007, he went to the "Brute" course at Grand Geneva Resort in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, under the guidance of Mark Barthel. In 2008 an opportunity arose, one that he could not refuse, at the Merit Club working for John Nelson. As in every

assistant superintendent position, Joe is kept on his toes determining the most effective use of the grounds crew. He's always thinking of new and creative ways to complete tasks. He explained that plans are being made for building and restoring tees, as well as for restoring pond banks with fiber logs and boulders. Joe said that one of his favorite tools at the course is the New Jacobsen Eclipse mowers, which they use to cut greens and fairways. For Joe the most enjoyable aspect of working on the golf course is being outside, working with his hands, and taking in the views that the Merit Club has to offer. Outside of work, his hobbies include playing softball, golfing, grilling out, and spending time with his girlfriend, Jen.

Joe and Arne both agree that #9 is the most picturesque hole, especially when standing on the #13 tee, which is the highest vantage point on the golf course.

In addition, they agree that what makes the Merit Club unique is that it's all golf. There are no tennis courts and/or swimming pool, which makes their job a little easier.

On behalf of all the assistants and superintendents in the Chicagoland area, I want to thank John, Arne, Joe and the Merit Club for hosting the 2011 MAGCS College Championship.

-OC

