

CLASS C ADVISOR  
Nick Marfise, *Cog Hill Golf Club*



# Some People Hate Change

*I write to you today as the new Class B, I mean Class C, committee representative. Although this is not a position that most of you aspire to, after four years of being on the committee it was time to suck it up and take on some new responsibility. 2011 like 2010 was a tough year, as we all know. The economy and golf are still down, and the weather conditions during the summer months have been strange (my guess is that it will snow in June). As if things weren't crazy enough I decided to shake things up a little bit in my personal life.*

I started the 2011 season working for Joel Purpur at Park Ridge Country Club. Maybe you've heard of him. Park Ridge has a demanding membership with a demanding green committee, which requires the superintendent to be demanding on his staff. Ultimately Park Ridge was a great job. I lived at the maintenance shop. I ate most of my meals at the clubhouse. And Joel pretty much forced me to play Ice hockey (what more could you ask for). With all that going on, I was dating a girl who tolerated me well enough to stay with me for five years. She also has an understanding of our profession and doesn't mind the long hours that are required of me in the summer months (probably because she doesn't see me). I decided to roll the dice and propose. I figured if anyone is willing to stay with me that long, I might as well lock her down. I know what most of you are thinking, and I appreciate your thoughts and prayers... I proposed on April 28th, the same day as the royal wedding (whatever that means), and she said, "Yes."

Up to this point: I'm living the American dream in an apartment above the Park Ridge maintenance facility, and I'm engaged?

Somewhere between the end of July and the beginning of August the Assistant Superintendent position at Cog Hill Golf

and Country Club was posted on the MAGCS website. With Cog Hill being the 2011 sight for the BMW championship, I thought that the job would be a good experience and a chance to further my career. I did my home work on Cog Hill and its Superintendent (some guy from Ohio). I got my paper work together, applied, interviewed, waited for what seemed like forever; then I was offered the position, and I accepted.

All along Joel knew what I was up to, and supported my decision to go after a different job. After accepting the job I needed to tell Joel, figure out when I would leave PRCC, and start at Cog Hill. I couldn't really tell if Joel was happy for me, or happy to get rid of me. He just told me I had ten days to pack my stuff and get out. This was August 12th

Between jobs, excited about the future, the wedding planning has begun.

Knowing that I needed to move, I started looking for apartments, which isn't one of my favorite things to do. It's tough to find a "nice apartment" for cheap. We wound up finding a decent one-bedroom apartment for rent, but the management was looking to gut and remodel the inside (the previous owner had like 27 cats). The work on the

*(continued on next page)*





apartment would take one month, so I wasn't going to be able to move in until late September. I had decided to sign the lease anyway; it would be nice to move into a brand new place when the work was completed. Now that I had nowhere to live, and I was starting a new job in approximately 10 days, I needed to figure something out fast.

I decided to suck up my pride and ask my parents if I could move in with them for a month. My parents live in Orland Park about 10 minutes from Cog Hill. The weekend before my first day on the new job I moved. With 90 percent of my stuff stacked to the ceiling in my parents' garage, I was living out of a suitcase back in my old room. I remember having a moment to myself that night. I was standing there in the middle of the room with my suit case in one hand and a pillow under the other arm, using a few choice words. I asked myself, "What the Fudge am I doing?" I tried to remind myself it was all going to work out.

Temporarily squatting at my parents', excited about the new job, hoping I'm making the right decision. When Kelly and I talk on the phone, we talk about wedding plans...

Although it wasn't ideal, the living situation would wind up working out pretty well. My days prior to the tournament were an average of 14 hours long. I wouldn't come home til dark. So my mom usually left dinner on the table. I would eat, then go to bed, then do it all over again the next day.

Upon starting at Cog Hill I didn't really know what to expect. I did to a certain point, but when you start a new job there is always that unknown. All four courses at Cog Hill are maintained out of one shop, including the championship course, "Dubsdread." About a week before I arrived, Scott Pavalko and the Cog Hill team decided that the collars on Dubsdread should be resodded. The original collars were A1/A4 bentgrass. At collar height and with the summer

stresses of 2011 it was feared that the collars wouldn't perform well for the tournament. The decision had been made to re-sod the collars to Penncross bentgrass. I assisted in the sodding of the last four or five collars, and we were off and running for the tournament.

After getting the collars sodded and in place it was now time to keep them alive. This was how my basic responsibility fell into place. Scott had asked if I would be comfortable looking after the greens and collars for the few weeks prior to the tournament. He felt it was important to be the eyes and ears on the golf course, so that he could be more flexible dealing with the logistics of the tournament. In a place as big as Cog Hill (1000 acres) this seemed to be a very basic task, although it was pretty overwhelming in itself. I had never managed and looked after 19 USGA sand-based greens. They tend to be a completely different animal than soil-based greens.

So, up to this point, I'm squatting at my parents; I've started working at a world renowned golf course; I'm working an average of 14 hours a day; and when I talk to my fiancé, all we talk about is wedding stuff.

Just after my responsibilities were laid out for me, Scott gave me a 15-page packet that had been sent to him by the PGA Tour. The packet spelled out the parameters for the condition of the golf course that were "encouraged" by the PGA Tour. These parameters are site-specific, based on the golf course and how the PGA Tour wants the golf course prepared for a tournament. It outlines specified heights of grass, green speeds, etc., all of which were discussed and written by the PGA Tour's Tournament agronomist Paul Vermeulen. Scott had mentioned that Paul would be coming to the course during advance week (week before the tournament) and would stay until the tournament was over. Paul would be helping us tweak any





**DUBSDREAD**

HOLE	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	IN	TOT	HCP	NET
BLACK	383	607 <sup>592</sup>	216	480	215	523	456 <sup>446</sup>	423	494 <sup>477</sup>	3797	7554		
GOLD	369	565	202	446	194	509	419	407	459	3570	7144		
BLUE	353	547	194	383	184	482	381	399	431	3354	6750		
WHITE	336	525	178	371	174	462	362	381	401	3190	6382		
GREEN	333	483	154	368	171	425	359	378	374	3045	6033		
FORWARD	306	436	151	312	108	410	342	299	371	2735	5441		
Thursday AM	10.4	11.6	11.1	11.0	10.5	10.5	10.4	10.7	9.8				
PM	10.4												
PAR	4	5	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	36	71/72		
Friday AM	10.7	11.3	11.6	11.4	10.3	10.10	10.6	10.10	10.0				

necessary changes and would be another great set of eyes to have on the golf course.

Paul wound up being a great mentor through the tournament process, but in the beginning he was the agronomist from hell. Paul followed me, watched me, and harassed me until I was programmed to monitor the golf course the way he wanted it monitored. We calibrated the way I watered or didn't water. I never went anywhere without a TDR meter (I actually took it home with me by accident, twice). I mastered the tru-firm meter. There was never a time in the day that I didn't know the conditions of those greens and collars. I was focused on getting the bluegrass stand at "attention." We continued to moisten those high bunker faces so the sand wouldn't fall off. I ever so slightly cracked my hose up to lightly drip water onto localized dry spots. We added water where it was needed, and more importantly, didn't add water unnecessarily.

I need to do laundry (my suit case is empty). I've been falling asleep in my work cloths on the couch. Paul Vermeulen knows my every move. I watch the sun rise and set at work. Some nights I fall asleep while on the phone with my fiancé. Sorry, Kelly.

As tournament week started the crew and I began to fall into a bit of a rhythm. There is a lot to be said for a crew with a lot of experience. I'm not just counting years of service, but number of years that they have prepared for large scale tournaments such as the BMW Championship. Our crew put in a lot of hours and overtime hours preparing for the tournament, including time before my arrival. The course was in great shape, despite what a few critics thought of the architecture and design. It's amazing, the kind of drama that a few professional athletes can drum up, isn't it?

Tournament week starts on Monday, with practice rounds on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Thursday is the start of the real deal. We did most of our maintenance in the mornings, course setup, hand raked all the bunkers (yes, all the bunkers), and mowed greens. We would also water in the mornings, so that everything had enough moisture to get through the day. It was important that nothing dried out too

early in the week (we didn't want to peak too early). Once the "ball is in the air" or the first player tees off, there is nothing we can really do to the golf course except monitor the conditions. Without going into too much detail, tees, approaches and fairways, and any kind of second cut were mowed in a combination of every other day either in the mornings or afternoons. We typically rolled greens in the afternoons (I learned that rolling greens tends to artificially enhance greenspeed immediately after the procedure).

After everything was cut and rolled, we went back to watering. Watering included all banks and bunkers around greens, the collar and the green. During tournament week we noticed that the collars were starting to turn an off color, showing signs of stress. As a precautionary measure, we mixed together some basic nutrients and gave the collars a spray.

*(continued on next page)*

**Delivers  
brains  
and  
brawn.**

**CAN A UTILITY VEHICLE  
REALLY DO THAT?**

Vehicles that go where you need them to go, doing the jobs you need them to do, day in, day out, without problems. Brains and brawn. Now available in utility vehicles.

**Nadler Golf Car Sales, Inc.**  
2700 N. Farnsworth Ave.  
Aurora, IL 60502  
Call: 630-898-1616 for Eric, Chad or Dave  
www.nadlergolf.com

**YES, IF IT'S A ClubCar®**

1 800.CLUBCAR • clubcar.com



Using a portable mixing tank and a backpack pump sprayer we treated each collar individually. It was something like 120 pumps per collar. My right arm was numb. We decided to spray the collars again on the Saturday night of the tournament; we were there til 10:30 p.m. The spray had an immediate affect, and we saw the benefits the very next morning. A jolt of color helps when your collars are being scrutinized in high definition.

The course looked great and the tournament was a success, despite what you might have heard on TV from a few critics. Even though the tournament was just about over and Justin Rose was only two holes away from being crowned the BMW Champion, our staff was preparing for its evening maintenance. After a week of pure stress, it was important to give our greens some relief by replenishing the nutrients. We whipped up a soil spray, which was then soaked in. I mean really soaked in, by hand. It felt good to flood those greens after babying them for so long.

With the tournament over, it was time to sleep. I hadn't really gotten more than five hours of sleep a night since I had started. After I woke up it was time to get my life back on track. The work on the apartment was completed approximately one week after the tournament, so I had to move. You know how much fun moving is. I continued to live out of a suitcase until we were completely unpacked; it still feels weird to hang clothes on a hanger.

In one month's time: I started a new job, four eighteen hole golf courses on 1000 acres with a 75 person crew (which hosted a PGA Tournament, the third leg of the FedEx Cup Playoffs); I moved back in with my parents; I missed two hockey games, two graduations, and one

50th surprise party (sorry, Uncle Dave). I don't remember most conversations I had outside of work, especially anything on the phone after 8:00 p.m. (sorry, Kelly); I don't know if it was the stress, or the fact that I never had time to sit down, but I lost 15 pounds through it all (thanks, Scott); I learned what it takes to maintain a golf course for a PGA Tournament (thanks, Paul). I continue to learn from Scott Pavalko, and the legendary Ken Lapp.

And even though it was the most stressful, chaotic, and exciting month of my life, I wouldn't have changed a thing, and I would definitely do it all over again. Tournament golf is addicting, and now that I've experienced it I want to do it again.

Now that it's all over, it's time for Scott and me to figure out what a "normal" day is like at Cog Hill. Cog Hill does over 100,000 rounds of golf a year. We are open all year long, even in the winter. With the good weather, we are looking at record numbers for these last few months. The winter months are consumed with maintaining our fleet of golf carts (over 500) in house, and getting ready for the upcoming golf season. It's funny to say that, seeing as the season never ends, even with six inches of snow on the ground (we still check for frost). I enjoyed being part of an event that is seen on a national stage, and I enjoy working at a facility that is world renowned. The very near future will be exciting and interesting as you can imagine. If you're going to stop by, which I hope you do, call ahead because navigating this large and intense property takes a little extra time. **-OC**

