

SUPER -N- SITE

Billy Sharp, *Chicago Highlands Club*

# Matthew Harstad -N-



*Driving east on the Tri-State toll way near Homewood, Illinois, one can just catch a glimpse of Calumet Country Club, despite the course only being 15 feet from the expressway. The best way to actually see the unique design and great playing conditions of Calumet Country Club is to play a round of golf, or in my case, get a first-hand tour from Golf Course Superintendent Matt Harstad.*

Calumet Country Club is a Donald Ross design that was established in 1901. Located on 120 acres in south Chicagoland, the club sits on a prime location to entice new players and members from the surrounding villages and suburbs. The club was originally located at 95<sup>th</sup> Street and Cottage Grove, but moved to its current spot shortly thereafter. One unique and interesting thing I learned about the course is that part of it, specifically hole 7, was originally part of Lake Chicago. Lake Chicago was a huge extension of Lake Michigan hundreds of years ago. The sandy soil is not found anywhere else on the course except hole 7 and is the prime indicator that it used to be some sort of beach. Another sign of Lake Chicago is a stand of Black Oak trees on the seventh hole as well. The rest of the course consists of the native soil, which is home to Washington bent/*Poa* greens, as well as bent/*Poa* tees and fairways. Another interesting tidbit about Calumet's early history was that Byron Nelson won his 11<sup>th</sup> straight tournament victory at this club in 1945, claiming the title in the Chicago Victory Open.

Superintendent Matt Harstad is an Illinois native and has been on the job at Calumet Country Club since February of 2006. Prior to that, he spent time as Assistant Superintendent at Butterfield Country Club and Ravisloe Country Club both after a short internship at Naperville Country Club. Matt is a Penn State alumni. He graduated in 2000 from the well-respected turf program. Since coming to Calumet, Matt has overseen various projects that not only help to improve



*Matt and Nittany, not a lion  
but we know where he got the name.*

playing conditions, but also help to beautify the course. One of the first major projects he accomplished was the installation of the XGD drainage system in the greens on holes 12, 14, and 16 during his second season. Matt explained that these were extremely problematic greens during the summer and since has noted great improvement in the years after the installation of the system. In addition to the drainage, the crew has been consistently removing trees around the green complexes in order to promote greater sunlight and air movement. Matt said that some greens were almost completely shaded during the critical hours of the day when the sunlight was most needed. From 2008-2009, Matt oversaw a complete restoration of all the greenside bunkers at Calumet Country Club. The old, contaminated sand was removed, new drainage installed, followed by the installation of the new sand. The difference between the new and old bunkers is like "night and day," according to Matt.

The feedback from the membership has been very positive, helping to justify this large and costly project.

Like many other Superintendents in the country, Matt is working with a tightened budget. The economy has affected every club in the United States, private or public. At Calumet Country Club, larger more expensive projects are broken down in to smaller jobs to help spread out the cost and labor. Matt has done a terrific job with what he has been given.

*(continued on page 17)*





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Matt's Assistant Superintendent Dave Sievers, six full-time, and six part-time employees, have done a remarkable job during this tough summer. I was amazed at how healthy and lush the course looked during my time at Calumet Country Club. Strategic blind shots, beautiful tee shots set up over small ponds, and the early Donald Ross designed greens are just a few of the highlights I saw during my tour of the property. Expect this and more at the MAGCS meeting this October. Maybe some of those Washington bents in his greens will be a little purple with the cooler temperatures.

When Matt gets a break from the grind at the course, you can find him cheering on our hometown Blackhawks. Having a partial season ticket package, you just may see him in his favorite Hawks jersey with his face painted in the first row at the United Center a time or two during the season. Also an avid skier, Matt tries to make out to the slopes a few times a year. Matt currently lives in Homewood with his wife of four years, Lauren, and their dog, Nittany. **-OC**



*Matt and Lauren*

