

Kurt was one of several superintendents who found themselves managing very large staffs after the storm. Kurt had 15 extra people initially, and seven extra for an entire week. One day, he even had up to 10 members raking and stacking branches. The eats were pretty good too. Without power for roughly 75 hours, the club was forced to make quick work of its supply of steaks. For Exmoor, the devastation came on the heels of some major spring construction during which a new practice green and a great deal of clubhouse landscaping were taking shape.

Down the street at Northmoor Country Club, Stacy Wallace was on the property at the time of the storm and reports a very green sky and a train-like noise prior to the storm hitting. He saw large trees bent over 90 degrees before heading to the basement for cover. Now, due to extensive damage, club staff are in the process of removing 172 trees with another 50 expected. Roughly half of the tree loss was on the southernmost nine holes of the 27-hole property. Stacy says he called his tree care contractor of choice before he even looked at the damage; word of the conditions spread quickly as there was a Board of Directors meeting already scheduled for that evening.

Stacy reports that because the damage was so far-reaching and because many of his own members had damage to their own properties, his golfing clientele has been very understanding of the situation. Downed trees severely damaged two tees and slightly damaged three greens. The staff at Northmoor were in the process of installing 1,700' of 8" line for a new effluent supply when they inherited the extra work.

Casualties mount

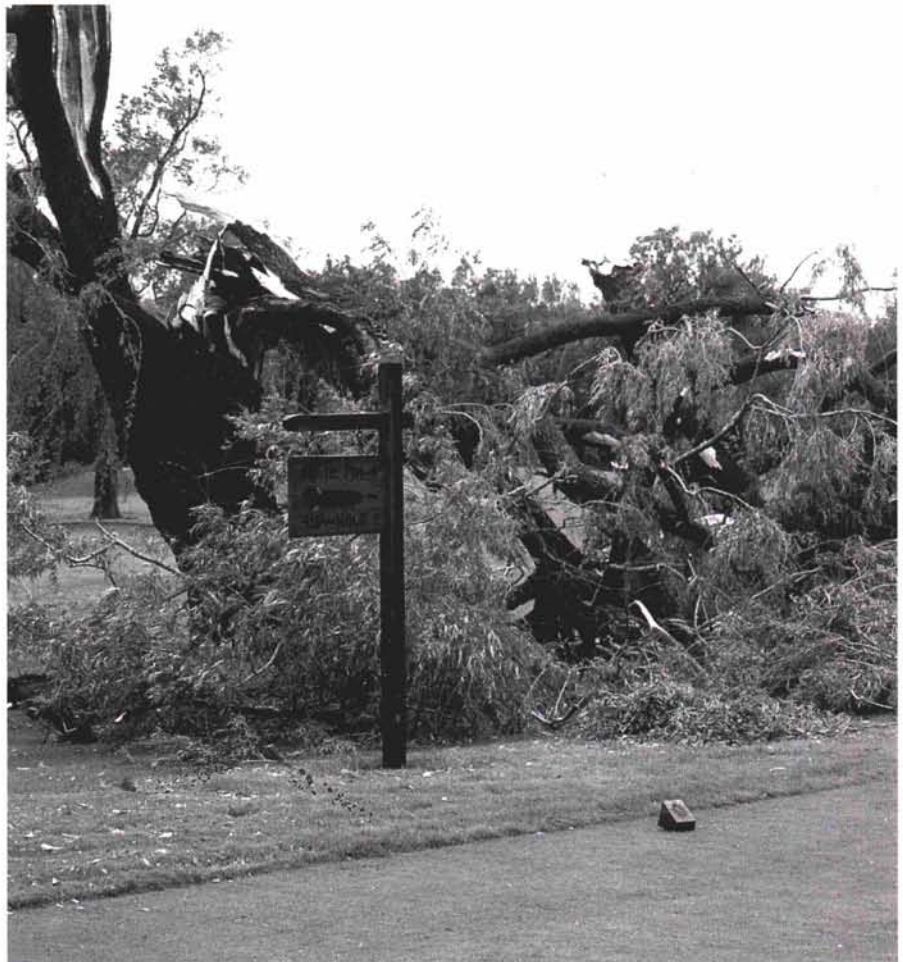
Unfortunately, the list of affected clubs goes on and on. It includes Ravinia Green, Lake Shore, Briarwood, Skokie, Green Acres and Highland Park Country Club. In fact, the magnitude of this story and a little confusion in assignments had both Brad Anderson at Midlane and myself researching the event. Two superintendents writing an article on the same topic! Not so long ago, the news would have had Fred Opperman doing cartwheels in his canoe.

Green Acres was closed for a week after losing 75 trees. For a day, Dave Radaj had 50 caddies assisting in the clean-up and used the chipper and dump truck from Park Ridge Country Club for 10 days. Mike Mumper has really

developed a certain kindness since his election to the MAGCS Board! Again, Dave had a great deal of help from an outside tree contractor.

Paul Voykin at Briarwood reports trees falling in all directions—a sure sign a tornado had touched down. I talked to Paul several times and he definitely seemed pretty composed throughout the trials. In fact, all of these superintendents demonstrated great professionalism and their respective clubs are touting them as heroes for the organized, “safety-first”-type efforts that came forth. In addition to turning me on to the term “widow-makers,” Paul also reports several friends in the business stopping over and sending some of their

(continued on page 12)



Briarwood C.C., #12 tee.

staff to assist in the clean-up. As for replanting, Paul states that this would be an excellent opportunity to get an architect involved and only replant where needed. This is not a time to panic, as over the years, tree planters have often lead with the heart.

Remember all the knocks those management companies take? American Golf really came through for Steve Schendel at Highland Park Country Club. Including his staff, he had 45 people reporting for work the morning following the storm. The number included 12 employees from Mill Creek Golf Club (another American Golf property) and five general managers from additional properties. (Unfortunately, we had no photos to confirm the general manager sightings.) He also received on loan several blowers, rakes and chainsaws. He estimates 120 tree removals with another 110 trees needing corrective surgery. The club was without power in its shop for five days, and Steve still isn't sure of the rainfall total; the storm relocated the rain gauge and the fence it called home.

Also helping Steve's cause: the city of Highland Park rented a tub grinder that was stationed at the city's public works department. Steve was able to take advantage of that, as the public works department is located near his #14 hole. The city arborist also assisted in accessing the damage. Steve thought that the club's insurance adjuster would better receive a report of that nature. Additionally, as of May 31, the waiting list in Highland Park was at three-four weeks to have parkway debris chipped.

Karl Johnson at Johnson Tree Experts reports more work than his team could possibly get to, requiring staff to make some very tough decisions when it came to prioritizing clean-up. Then more wet weather hampered the efforts. However, the company allocated 25 crews for golf course work; several courses could never have put a dent in the clean-up without their help. Karl reports that this will be an ongoing process of reevaluating the condition of the trees; he suspects the tree-loss numbers to go up as the season progresses. He also

remarks upon the tremendous camaraderie he witnessed, the camaraderie that we all know makes this business so unique. Several superintendents whose courses were less severely affected waited more than a week for service until other clubs had their situations under control. Also, several clubs deferred their routine maintenance pruning until later in the summer.

Hurricane-force winds were not the only factor contributing to the damage, however. Onwentsia Country Club was among those pelted by severe hail. Skip Willms reports golf-ball-sized hail for 30 minutes and 4" of the stuff on the ground when it was all over. The greens suffered eight-ten marks per square foot. After calculating some 70,000-80,000 marks per green, Skip decided against fixing the greens by hand. He estimates three weeks of rolling and topdressing before the greens are back to normal. However, 5" of rain had already delayed the topdressing process. Additionally, the hail ripped small limbs and all the foliage from many of the trees. Skip reports huge piles of green leaves and being closed for three days. Lastly, hail totaled some of the parked cars, while others sustained up to \$9,000 worth of damage.

You would hate to label it the storm of storms, because Nature has the ability to create a new set of conditions at any moment. It *was* an opportunity for superintendents to rise to the occasion and demonstrate again why they are such valuable assets to their own golfing communities. As mentioned, I heard of several instances of people pitching in to help the guy down the street and putting their own needs secondary to the needs of those who were less fortunate. Nearly everyone I talked to had made extensive efforts to communicate the situation to his golfers and



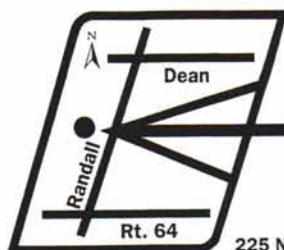
Sportsman's C.C., #8 green.

had taken precautions not to open up too early due to the hazardous conditions that still existed. Several colleagues note that the typical climatic stresses of summer will surely claim more trees weakened in the spring storms. A few ponder that perhaps Dutch Elm disease and oak wilt could be a more extensive problem than usual.

On my part, I know talking to this group of superintendents has made it much more difficult for me to complain about my rough being a little too tall and the rain keeping us from accomplishing everything we would like to. Be grateful for the good times; remember that it can always be a bit worse and that golf is, after all, a game. The storm on May 18 did claim the life of a man in Wilmette, done in by a falling tree while driving his car. Fortunately, we endured no news like that in the golfing community.



Northmoor C.C., white #4 fairway.



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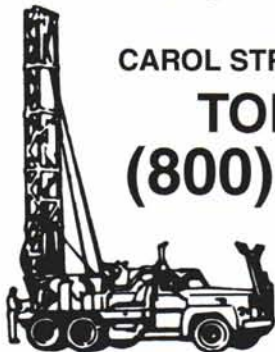
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A "Rookie" Reflects

Let me take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am the other rookie board member (John Gurke being my comrade in this category). For the year 2000, I have been charged with chairing the Membership Committee and the Environmental Committee. Currently, I am enjoying my eleventh year as a golf course superintendent. Kemper Sports Management employs me. My responsibilities are to oversee the six Chicago Park District golf courses, including Marquette Park and Columbus Park. This relationship has been excellent for myself as well as for my courses, which have flourished.

In my short tenure on the Board of Directors, I have been surprised by the amount of dedication, work and commitment displayed by my fellow Board members. The rewards for working so hard are few, yet extremely gratifying.

During my 11-year career to date, I have noted one common factor with the revolving calendar: change. The courses have evolved; we started with asphalt tees, mowing wall-to-wall with a gang mower, no irrigation systems and no bunkers. Today, we offer golfers grass tees, use lightweight fairway mowers and have some irrigation systems in place. We've instituted (but these routines are not perfect yet) regularly scheduled maintenance practices such as fertilization; weed, disease and insect control; and staff training and discipline. My personal reward is that I can look at my facilities with a great amount of pride. I have a unique perspective on where conditions have been. I also take opportunities to speak with my customers. They will agree that we provide a quality product for a good price.

In my short tenure on the Board of Directors, I have been surprised by the amount of dedication, work and commitment displayed by my fellow Board members. The rewards for working so hard are few, yet extremely gratifying. They are the same rewards I have reaped during my 11 years at Marquette Park Golf Course; you get to see a job accomplished properly and be proud of yourself.

I challenge you, the members of the MAGCS, to be as active in this organization as possible, as there is strength in our numbers. The rewards may seem to be few, but don't be fooled—over time, you will see results and relish the sense of accomplishment. 

Pat McDonagh



The McDonagh family (L to R): Nannette, Madison (4), Pat and Breanne (6).



Let me paint you a picture! A beautiful, sunny day! Village of Lakewood, IL! RedTail Golf Club (host of the Midwest's July meeting)!

Being an avid golfer (at a young age), Pat spent a lot of free time on golf courses. The opportunity to have a career where he could manage the ongoing maintenance and care of a golf course seemed extremely inviting.

This is the best perk for taking on the responsibility and time of writing a Super-N-Site article for *On Course*: spending an afternoon with the superintendent while playing a round of golf. This affords a great opportunity to discuss the superintendent's career, golf course and future aspirations—and to see the golf course up close and personal. My day with RedTail Golf Club's superintendent, Pat McDonagh, was most enjoyable.

As is the case with most superintendents, Pat had extensive exposure to golf courses before making the decision to make this his career. Being an avid golfer (at a young age), Pat spent a lot of free time on golf courses. The opportunity to have a career where he could manage the ongoing maintenance and care of a golf course seemed extremely inviting.

As is the case with many careers, however, the path to fulfillment took a bit of a detour. Pat graduated from Northern Illinois University with a B.S. in elementary education. Upon graduation, it was off to the classroom. All the while, the question still lingered. Do I want to be a teacher? Yes, no, yes, no, no, no . . . and years later, Pat has never looked back.

After spending numerous college summers working at Country Lakes in Naperville and one year of tutelage at Oak Brook Golf Club under the guidance of superintendent Scott Nissley, Pat set out on his

(continued on page 36)



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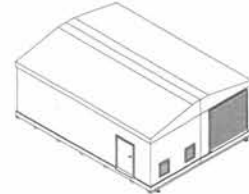
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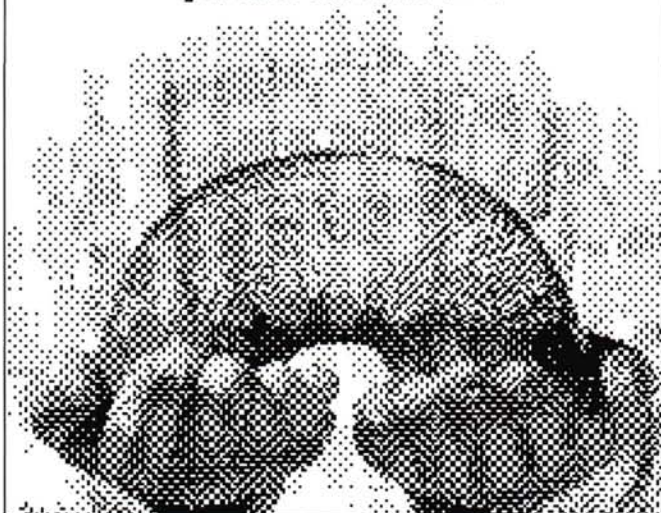
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It's Tourney Time!

The Merit Club prepares to host Chicagoland's first women's Major in nearly 20 years.

Less than one year ago, Medinah Country Club and superintendent Dan Quast hosted the "Last Major of the Millennium," the 1999 PGA Championship, which concluded with an exciting battle between Tiger Woods and young Spaniard Sergio Garcia. This month, Chicago-area golf fans will relish the thrills of another Major as The Merit Club and Oscar Miles, CGCS, welcome the 2000 U.S. Women's Open.



On May 18, The Merit Club tallied 3.5" of rain in two hours. Oscar reports run-off was excellent, but major problems reconditioning washed-out sand bunkers. Says Oscar, "We used this problem to train grounds care crew what could happen and what we would do!"

"On the men's circuit, the question has long been which Major is the Major? But there is no question that the U.S. Women's Open is the premier tournament in women's golf," says Ed Oldfield, president of The Merit Club.

The international field competing for the \$2.75 million purse—the largest in the ladies game—will include defending champion Juli Inkster (now seen frequently in Subaru commercials); luminaries like Nancy Lopez and Pat Bradley; and top players such as Se Ri Pak, Karrie Webb, Annika Sorenstam, Laura Davies, Betsy King, Patty Sheehan, Meg Mallon and Beth Daniel.

Nearly 20 years have passed since a women's championship event graced Chicagoland (think back to 1981's Open at LaGrange C.C.). During the intervening decades, women's sports have surged in popularity, and ladies golf is no exception. Tournament officials for the 2000 U.S. Women's Open Championship expect more than 125,000 enthusiastic golf fans to watch the world's best women compete at the breathtaking Merit Club the week of July 17-23; ESPN (Thursday/Friday) and NBC (Saturday/Sunday) will broadcast the event to millions of armchair fans worldwide.

(continued on page 20)

Setting the stage

Preparing for the Open has been a lengthy, painstaking and arduous process. The story begins in 1992, when The Merit Club's full 18 holes opened for play. That year and the following year, USGA officials visited, expressing interest in hosting a Major Cham-

"The course will bring out the best in the world's best," notes Mary Capouch, chair of the USGA Women's Committee.

Yet as Oscar tells it, today's Merit Club has evolved since its premiere in 1992, when the USGA first expressed interest.



In anticipation of the Open, staff installed a road for the catering company and expanded the west practice tee. Following a March 10 seeding, Oscar and crew covered the tee with plastic to create a greenhouse effect. They mowed the grass April 10 and opened the tee for member practice June 17.

pionship at the acclaimed new course. Subsequently, owner and founder Bert Getz extended a formal invitation, and in 1994, the USGA and The Merit Club entered into an agreement that the venue would host the 2000 U.S. Women's Open.

Seldom does the USGA award a tournament of such magnitude to such a young golf course, but The Merit Club itself and its desirable location—accessible to both the Chicago and Milwaukee markets—were an irresistible combination. In fact, when the USGA visited in fall of 1998 to initialize course set-up, officials recommended zero changes to the course prior to the tournament, another rarity, says Oscar. In other words, the USGA felt the course was challenging and fair as is—Oscar and staff faced no mandates to add or subtract bunkers, length or add trees, as is often the case.

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(continued on page 23)

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