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the Bull Sheet (continued from page 30)

cost of only \$40. After this date, it will go back to its annual standard dues of \$80. The offer is designed to expand participation of assistant superintendents within the Association. We currently have 300 Class A and B members, but only 95 Class C (assistant superintendent) members. Now is your chance to sign up your assistant as a member of this great Association for the cost of a dozen golf balls. There is so much to be gained for so little investment, so let's get with it! Call Tim or George Minnis for more details—their numbers are in the MEMBERSHIP directory (which your assistant will receive once you make the call).

.....  
 Congratulations to **Rodney Riech**, formerly of Panther Creek Country Club, who has taken the second assistant's position at Bryn Mawr Country Club under the tutelage of **Brian Bossert, CGCS**. Rodney replaces Damon Soderberg, who is now the assistant superintendent at Milwaukee Country Club. Welcome to Chicago, Rodney.

.....  
 Those of you who have been on the MAGCS Web site recently may have heard this tragic news—two employees of the Hawks View Golf Course in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin (Jim Moore superintendent) lost their lives in an accident while performing pond maintenance when their canoe capsized. Think about your own crew, and how easily something like this can happen on any given day, and please help out if you can. **Dan Quast** has offered to administer an account at the M & I Bank in Juneau under the heading

“Hawks View Fund,” and donations can be sent to Dan in care of the O. J. Noer Research Foundation at P.O. Box 94, Juneau, WI 53039.

.....  
 Congratulations to former MAGCS member **Terry Dillner, CGCS** of Arbor Hills C.C. in Jackson, MI on successfully completing the GCSAA's Environmental Management Program. Terry was formerly superintendent at Woodmar C.C.

.....  
 Also congrats to **Bob Lively** on his big move from McHenry Country Club to Flossmoor Country Club this past July 15. Bob replaces living legend (and hard-working German) **Ray Schmitz**, who will now finally get to settle down and enjoy the retirement thing. **Bill Humphres**, formerly Bob's assistant at McHenry, is now the big cheese there. Good luck and best wishes to all three of these gentlemen.

.....  
 Anyone interested in volunteering to assist **Dave Ward, CGCS** and Olympia Fields Country Club during next year's U. S. Open tournament should drop Dave a line. The seven-day commitment from June 8-14 will surely be well worth it in experience gained in major tournament preparation under a guru such as Dave. Reach Dave via e-mail at ofcc-supt@aol.com or write him at OFCC, 2800 Country Club Drive, Olympia Fields, IL 60461.

.....  
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## June Golf Meeting at Phillips Park G.C.

The June 24th MAGCS monthly meeting was held on a blistering day at the Phillips Park Golf Course in Aurora, with **Lynn Wesson** serving as our host. The newly-redesigned and rebuilt layout (**Greg Martin** architect) proved to be challenging and fun for all in attendance. The day began with another great education program arranged by **Gary Hearn** featuring a demonstration of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) by Michelle Benson of LifeServers, as well as a visit by GCSAA's Darren Powers, who spoke about the wonders of e-commerce and GCSAA's online supermarket. MAGCS would like to thank our day's sponsors—Turf Professionals Equipment Company, Palatine Oil, Central Sod and J.W. Turf—and Lynn Wesson and his staff for providing us with a great day. Also personal thanks to **Marsha Traves** and Patti Thorson of Illinois Lawn, who braved the sun's wrath to run the betting hole and photograph the day's activities. The proceeds from the betting hole (\$685) went to the family of Gustavo Gomez, a grounds employee at Schaumburg Golf Club (**Nick Hongisto** superintendent) who tragically died after suffering an epileptic seizure and falling in a pond and drowning. Please keep this in mind the next time you have the option of doubling your money on the betting hole or leaving it for a GOOD cause.

The Dom Grotti Trophy was won again by **Scott Klingberg** and **Ron Newman** (Spartan Meadow G.C.), with **Mark Bobb** and **Andy Thompson** (Barrington Hills C.C.) taking second place, followed by **Don Ferreri** and **Dave Gelino** (Seven Bridges G.C.) grabbing third. In the 1, 2, 3 Better Ball competition, three teams tied for first place with 139: **Dan Anderson, Chuck Anfield, Bob Kohlstedt** and **Paul Yerkes**; **Charlie Brugler, Ray Schei, Jay Druhan** and **Sean Creed**; and **Don Ferreri, Dave Gelino, Dave Kohley** and **Kevin DeRoo**.



Host Lynn Wesson receives the customary thank-you gifts from Kevin DeRoo.



Gilberto Velazquez, Lynn Wesson, Hans Hopphan and Jim McNair.



Ray Schei, Jay Druhan, Patti Thorson (one of our gracious photographers), Sean Creed and Charlie Brugler.



Ed Braunsky, president Luke Strojny, Greg Thalmann and Tom Savage.



Mike Nass, Tim Byrne, Carl Hopphan and Tom Byrne.



Phillips Park architect Greg Martin, John Gurke, Eric Nadler, Chris Smith, Scott Armstrong and Derek Florian.



Mark Kowalczko, Ken Sheperd, Marsha Traves (our other gracious photographer) and Scott Spier.



Bill Walton, Eli Witt, Denise Gillette-Parchert and James Keene.



The colorful Mike Mumper, Dave Blomquist, Paul Sandall and Justin Schroeder.

(continued on page 34)





MAGCS and John Buck Scholarship winners Kara Meyer (daughter of Dave and Penny), Brian Healy (son of Tom and Connie) and Zachary Behrman (son of Dave and Chris).



Unsung heroes Phil Zeinert, Luke Cella and Tony Kalina run the registration table in the sweltering heat.



Bob Lively and Paul Yerkes buy some alone-time to discuss Bob's big move.

ting to me if something were to happen to one of them. I am attempting to do a little more for those who make me look good.

In closing, I hope everyone is avoiding burnout and surviving this summer. Just think, a couple of months ago when Eddie Braunsky posted on the message board that it was only 90 days to the 4th of July, a lot of you told him to relax. Well, ladies and gentlemen, only 156 shopping days are left before Christmas!

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Bob Williams *Retired*

*I believe that most golfers feel that a golf course is a little bit of paradise.*

- From my personal observation over 60 years, people from management and executive positions in industry are historically the most successful green committee chairmen at private country clubs. People with professional backgrounds, especially doctors and lawyers, are generally the weakest prospects as green committee chairmen at private country clubs.
- Most daily decisions by a golf course superintendent pertaining to the conditioning of the golf course, are generally the most critical to the club's daily overall operations. Decisions by a general manager or club owner could supersede, however.
- Every superintendent should accept the responsibility of developing his course in addition to maintaining it. "Status quo" will not cut it in the long run. Keeping up with the most modern technology is a must in our profession.
- In my opinion, golf courses should present the golfers with both active and passive recreation. The active phase is obvious. The passive benefit comes from their appreciation of the landscape features, terrain, lakes, flowers, wildlife, trees, etc. I believe that most golfers feel that a golf course is a little bit of paradise.



## BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

*At its meeting on July 18, 2002, the MAGCS Board of Directors:*

- Registered thank-you letters from Kara Meyer, recipient of an MAGCS Scholarship; Lincoln School, for a donation in memory of Drew Bemis, son of Dean Bemis; Juanita Ebel, for support and comfort during John's illness and upon his passing; and Ken and Paula Hearn, for a contribution to the Derek Hearn Scholarship Fund.
- Noted that Zach Behrman, son of Dave Behrman and recipient of an MAGCS Scholarship, has earned a \$1,500 Legacy Scholarship Award. These grants are funded by Syngenta to benefit GCSAA superintendents and their children and go to students pursuing careers beyond the turf industry. The MAGCS congratulates Zach on this honor.
- Discussed current registration protocol for monthly golf meetings. Noting that registration for the July meeting at the Merit Club had prompted some concerns from membership, the Board decided to try a new approach for future meetings. Instead of registration commencing immediately when forms arrive in the mail or via e-mail, registration will begin on a designated date several days AFTER all members will have received their registration notices. It was reported that in the interests of allowing as many senior members as possible to participate in the Merit Club senior championship, several Board members had given up their spots for this particular monthly meeting.
- Voted to fund the purchase of a plaque honoring all past presidents of the MAGCS. The plaque will be on display at the 50th Annual Midwest Turf Clinic and thereafter, at Midwest Golf House in Lemont.
- Noted that the directory update will be coming out in August.
- Noted the October 7th deadline for applications or nominations for the Environmental Leaders in Golf Awards (ELGA).
- Affirmed that opportunities remain to host a monthly golf meeting in 2003. Interested superintendents should contact Mike Mumper.





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# No Bull! It's a Bearish Summer for the Golf Business

*Even before last September's terrorist attacks, the U.S. economy was in decline. Now, the stock market is fluctuating wildly but for the most part, flat or trending down. Unemployment is at the highest rate we've seen in more than a decade. It's not a stretch to surmise that fewer recreation dollars in the pool might mean a decrease in rounds of golf played. National Golf Foundation statistics suggest that while new courses (especially high-end public courses) continue to enter the market, the number of golfers nationwide has held steady between 24 and 27 million. As of late June, industry sources were estimating rounds in Illinois to be down between 20 and 22%.*

Then figure in our fickle Chicagoland weather. Last year's disappointing fall (especially in light of recent warm autumns), then a chilly, wet spring, then several strings of scorching, humid days this summer all took a toll on rounds—and revenues. The anecdotal evidence is there; just peruse the Message Board on the MAGCS Web site. The following are the musings of several Midwest member superintendents.

## **Fred Behnke Mount Prospect G.C.**

If there's an issue at the forefront this year, it's will we recover from 2001, and how?

Our head pro here used a "Perfect Storm" analogy for last year. The stock market was down, the weather was marginal and then came the events of September 11. People hunkered down in a sort of bunker mentality and didn't want to go out anywhere. 2001 was a bad year, one of the worst we've had.

All the same, at Mount Prospect to date we are about \$35,000 behind 2001. We started out slowly with the weather and perhaps the economy being factors. I say "perhaps the

economy" because we're not really taking that hit. Our fee structure offers golfers a lot of options. If you need to get out there in prime time, you'll pay full fare, but we have a lot of gradations in our rates. This concept of demand pricing is actually taking hold even at places where previously it was one rate, whether you are man, woman, child, senior, whether it's morning, noon or night. Managers are going the extra mile to make their rates palatable, to get golfers to come out. Even so, I think the economy is affecting the high-end public courses.

On nice days here at Mount Prospect, we are busy from dawn to dusk. Give us the weather and we'll put the players on the course. We can expect to creep closer to making up our present deficit if the weather holds up. Any time it gets over 90, even into the high 80s, you can count on people disappearing.

## **Jules Peuvion, CGCS Arlington Lakes G.C.**

I think we are feeling the effects of golf being somewhat overbuilt right now. Too many courses are competing for a limited amount of dollars. With the economic condi-

tions, the people who have jobs are afraid to leave the office because they feel insecure; with the way things are, you don't know when your number's going to come up. And it seems that the people who are out there and into golf do not have the discretionary dollars to play right now, especially at the high-end courses. When you look around, people are holding their money, especially with stock invested in companies like World Com! Another factor: people today have so many options for recreation that they're not playing golf.

Sure, weather is an issue too. The fortunate courses this summer are the ones that have leagues guaranteed because then you've got that booked time and the golfers are going to play. You don't lose the discretionary or fair-weather golfer where leagues are involved.

The question in our field is, where is the bottom line? We can all do a better job as superintendents. Maybe we have to give up a piece of machinery or an application of chemical that perhaps we were spraying preventatively—now, we might hold back. Perhaps this was a luxury in the past. What we as

*(continued on page 40)*



superintendents are doing is getting smarter with our dollars.

### **Dan Sterr Stonebridge C.C.**

I think the economy's impact goes all the way back to last year when we were budgeting for this year. We were told to hold expenses, watch this and watch that. We've been trying to do that and on the expense side, we're doing a pretty good job.

On the revenue side, though, the income just hasn't been there from our guest play, outings and things of that nature. We will do 11 outings this year, which is down from previous years. We've done as many as 17 here. We even had a couple outings cancel this year because of the price, which tells you that maybe they'd rather go somewhere else and pay less or not do it at all. Numbers are down in the pro shop. If numbers are down in the pro shop, then food and beverage is going to be affected too because it means people aren't here.

The members just bought this club a year ago, on May 4, 2001. The membership is now trying to establish a baseline for us to work off of financially. We are still in the process of figuring out what our numbers should be.

As far as hosting the [LPGA Tour's] Kellogg-Keebler Classic, I don't know that we can put a finger on anything that puts it in the category of financial success or failure. Overall, the tournament was a success with very positive exposure for our club, but to what degree, we're not sure. I know that even during the tournament, people approached our membership director about applying for membership. If the event brings in even two or three members, we're that much ahead.

### **Luke Strojny, CGCS Poplar Creek C.C.**

At Poplar Creek, we have typically had a lot of outing business, and that has fallen off considerably this year. On the corporate side, for instance, we used to do a lot with Motorola—anything from golf outings of varying sizes to Christmas parties—and we aren't now. As for the regular outings, such as the charitable

events, participation might be down about 15 to 20%. They're not getting the play they used to. An outing that used to be 144 golfers might be down to 120 or less, a double shotgun might now be a single shotgun.

If you look in the sports section of the newspaper, you see a lot of courses advertising special deals, more so than ever before. In my 18 years here, before this we maybe had one coupon in the paper. We've done it three times this year.

The weather has contributed, too. This spring was so bad. We probably lost 10 out of 12 weekends where it was just awful. We're about 20% down in revenues right now. Since June, all the way through now (mid-July), we're packed. Prior to this, though, it was awful. A decent fall could lessen the impact, but you can't count on that.

The good news is, the leagues are a steady cash flow and our leagues—ranging from homeowners' associations to corporate—are pretty much full. If we lose somebody, somebody is waiting to come in. Plus, we redid our learning center this year and just opened it in the beginning of June. We have a 50-station driving range, putting green and chipping green, and practice bunker. That's bringing in a lot of money.

As superintendents, we are striving to be smarter with our money. I'll do everything possible to avoid cutting staff, but I can look at a certain chemical and say, maybe we won't spray this right now, as long as it doesn't impact the integrity of the golf course.

### **R. Brian Green, CGCS Sunset Valley G.C.**

We have just completed our monthly budget meeting with many concerns left to be answered. Last year's numbers were not good—at that time, we pointed to weather, September 11 and the economy. This 2002 season has been much slower than anticipated. The words "weather" and "economy" are falling on deaf ears and serious cuts are in the offing. I know things have picked up considerably the last few weeks,

but those numbers weren't crunched yet. Everyone has cut expenses or held the line but the revenue side of the equation is serious. We are 2,400 rounds down YTD as of July 1. That would represent a 20% decline from anticipated revenue. Our driving range is having far greater concerns. This facility is five years old and separate (one mile) from the course. Its revenues are off greater than 30%.

Many plans are in place, including more advertising (something we never before had to do), cutting staff, winter golf, continuous cart path, deleting pro shop merchandising, offering specials immediately at the driving range.

We have always had more business than we could manage. That seems to be something in the past. Another painful note is all other programs in our park district revenues are way up—i.e., all other athletics, camps, classes. Golf will continue to be under a magnifying glass for awhile.

### **John Gurke, CGCS Aurora C.C.**

At a private club, the economy part is somewhat factored out of the equation. Our membership is still full (barely), our rounds are about the same, but outings on Mondays have drastically decreased (therefore, we ARE somewhat affected by the economy, but most here would say it's a good thing for the clubhouse and pro-shop staff to get one day a week off). I guess we see more transition in membership during hard economic times—more leave, but others who are not affected seem to take their place.

As for the weather, the main thing it affects is course conditioning and my budget (i.e., more heat and humidity equals more money spent on irrigation water treatments, electricity to run pumps, repairs to irrigation components, labor for afternoon watering and chemicals for turf diseases). It also affects morale and the personal lives of those who spend all their waking hours at the course (me and my assistant). We are tired, and our wives are tired of not having any help around the house.