



Image 4: At Tamarack, golfers find hole-location indicators at the 150-yard mark on each hole. This "customized" system consists of mini-flagsticks constructed out of old flagsticks cut short and fitted with top studs to each end. The indicator flag is red, white or blue depending on hole position.



Image 5: Tamarack's hole-indicator flags are simply 1/2" diameter practice green flags in red, white or blue.

This system is simple and keeps the flagsticks on the putting green uniform and clean. Not many people tamper with the 150-yard marker so the red, white and blue flags don't get hassled. On par-3 holes, we use the tee sign to hold the indicator flag. (See image 6.) The system has been in place since June of last year and the feedback has been positive.



Image 6: On par-3 holes, Tamarack places the indicator flag with the tee sign.

The Final Analysis

Each of these systems works to different degrees, some are more accurate than others. The pin sheet gives exact locations, the rotating schedule gives a generalized area, and colored and small flags delineate one of three positions. A superintendent has many options to use to give away hole locations on his or her golf course. Once some type of system is in place, it can be difficult to take away, so give it some thought and keep it consistent and simple. As somewhat of a purist about the game, I personally don't agree with giving the hole locations away from afar. Perhaps because it doesn't make much difference with my skill level, but more so because of all the yardage information we provide nowadays. Part of the game used to be "clubbing" oneself, now golfers use yardage books, sprinkler heads and global-positioning systems to dial in shots. We do live in the age of information. Golfers want to know "where the pin is," and through many different systems we are able to give them that information.



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The Slop on Slope and Course Ratings

Being given the opportunity to do a golf course grow-in this year was a privilege, from the planning stages to the mowing of the first blades of grass to the WSGA (Wisconsin State Golf Association) coming out to rate the golf course.

Slope is an indicator of how difficult a golf course plays for all golfers with handicaps above scratch. The USGA course rating is the USGA's evaluation of the playing difficulty of a course for scratch golfers under normal course and weather conditions . . .

It was interesting to see how many different factors are involved in coming up with the Slope and course rating. Around the first of October, the WSGA came out and within a month we received our preliminary numbers, preliminary because several of the greens were already covered. With that long fall we had, I just couldn't get the covers on soon enough. (That was meant to be facetious.) To my amazement, we had garnered a slope of 123 and a course rating of 72.1. That is from the tips, no less. I was amazed because I thought to myself, "Our course is harder than that, that can't be right." Our pro didn't seem to think anything of it. He knew something I didn't. At this point, I decided to schedule a meeting with John Warren, the director of course ratings for the WSGA. My curiosity was getting the best of me and John was more than happy to come on out and clarify things with me as he has done with so many before.

Slope and Course Rating Defined

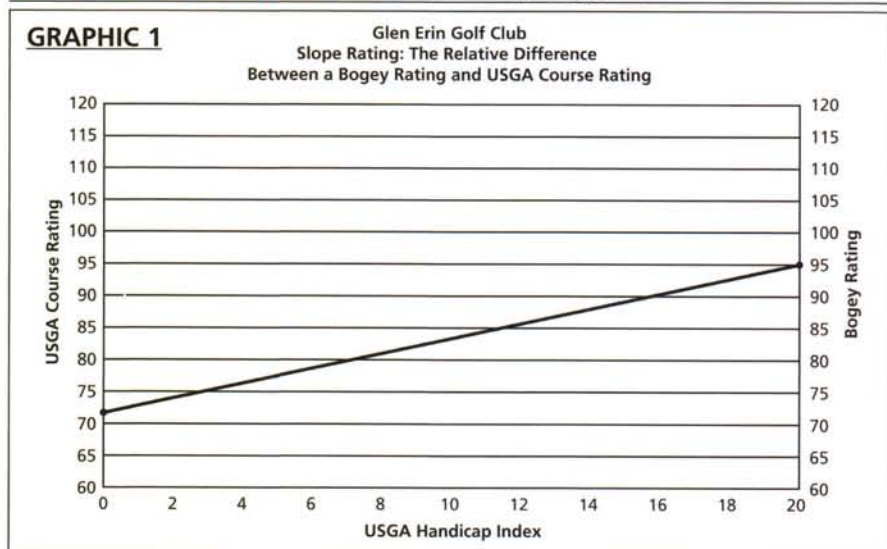
Slope, as defined by the USGA, is the difference between the bogey rating and the scratch rating multiplied by a fixed value (5.381 for men and 4.24 for women). Slope is an indicator of how difficult a golf course plays for all golfers with handicaps above scratch. The USGA Course Rating is the USGA's evaluation of the playing difficulty of a course for scratch golfers under normal course and weather conditions for the purpose of providing a uniform basis on which to issue USGA Handicap Indexes. With definitions clarified, I will use Glen Erin's numbers to illustrate how the formula for Slope works.

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (\text{Bogey Rating}) - (\text{Course Rating}) & \times & 5.381 = \text{Slope} \\ 94.9 & - & 72.1 & \times & 5.381 = 122.68, \text{ rounded up to } 123 \end{array}$$

Graphic 1, page 14, depicts Glen Erin's numbers charted.

Chances are, you are employed by a club that has been guilty of modifying the course by adding length and obstacles, thinking that the changes you have made will increase Slope, which in turn will increase your marketability as well. Sure, that will increase Slope—NOT. Why? The changes made were probably done so as to impact the scratch golfer more than the bogey golfer, hence your Slope rating has actually declined. I know what you're thinking, and I will ask you this to help clarify the above. Have you ever heard a bogey golfer complain that a course is not hard enough? I didn't think so. The only way to

(continued on page 14)



increase Slope is to proportionately increase the difficulty of the tees (holes) for the higher-handicap golfer.

The Rating Process

The course ratings are derived by evaluating each hole from every tee and every shot as seen through the eyes of a scratch and bogey male and female golfer. It's kind of like playing air golf. Those of you who have a tendency to play air guitar in a bar because you've had too much to drink can relate to this. By the way, take some lessons; you're not as good as you think. The obstacle stroke value, in conjunction with the effective playing length, are the key factors in the rating process. The ten obstacles considered are:

1. Topography
2. Fairways
3. Rough and Recoverability
4. Out of Bounds/Extreme Rough
5. Water Hazards
6. Trees
7. Bunkers
8. Green Target
9. Green Surface
10. Psychological

The obstacle stroke value is determined for scratch and bogey golfers by analyzing the ten obstacle factors and their effect on the respective golfers on a hole-by-hole basis. The range value for each obstacle is given a number between 0 and 10, 0 being of little influence and 10 being a great deal of influence. The four adjustments for effective playing length are:

1. Roll
2. Elevation
3. Doglegs
4. Prevailing Winds

To illustrate the process undertaken by a course rater looking through the eyes of a male scratch golfer, I will use hole number three at Glen Erin Golf Club, a 378-yard par 4. This is only an abbreviated version of what a course rater will do! (See Graphic 2.)

GRAPHIC 2



The rater will first stand on the tee and shoot the official yardage with a laser gun. While on the tee, the following observations are made: the prevailing winds are at the golfer's back, no trees or bunkers will be a factor in the wide landing area, but the landing area is about 200 yards out from the tee before falling down into a valley. As defined by the USGA, the landing area for a male scratch golfer is at 250 yards; because the landing area for this particular hole falls short of this, a point adjustment will be made. For the sake of illustration and generalization, we'll say the tee shot was assigned an overall point factor of 5. The rater will now move to the landing area and observe the shot into the green. He sees that the trees on the left are not much of a concern, a point factor of 1. The green target is wide, but extremely shallow, a point factor of 5. There is no out-of-bounds or water hazards, a point factor of 0. There are four steep-faced pot bunkers guarding 70% of the green, a point factor of 6. He will now move to the green and examine the surface. The green surface is relatively flat, but does fall off to the front left, a point factor of 4.

GRAPHIC 3		USGA	USGA	Nine-Hole		Nine-Hole	
MENS		Course	Slope	Course Rating		Slope Rating	
TEE MARKERS		Rating	Rating	Front Nine	Back Nine	Front Nine	Back Nine
Black		72.1	123	35.4	36.7	123	123
Orange		69.9	118	34.3	35.6	118	118
White		67.4	113	32.9	34.5	113	113
LADIES							
TEE MARKERS							
White		72.4	121	35.3	37.1	119	123
Green		68.7	115	33.5	35.2	114	116

The Stimpmeter measures the green at a speed of 8.5, a point factor of 3. Once all of the point factors are assigned, the rater will look at number three as a whole and assign it a psychological score—what kind of havoc will this hole wreak on the golfer's mind—for a point factor of 3. This same process will occur on the other 17 holes, all from the various perspectives of the scratch and bogey male and female golfers. Once all of the point factors have been compiled for all 18 holes, the numbers are then entered into a course rating computer program provided by the USGA. The calculation gives you your total course rating for each set of tees, male and female. Glen Erin's numbers are shown in Graphic 3.

The Course Rater Fallacy

Off the record, has your golf course ever cancelled a course rating due to the fact that your membership or owner dislikes a rating team deemed "easy raters?" You know what I mean. Your course gets rated and you didn't get the difficult numbers you were looking for, then your buddy at Wacko Country Club tells you that "you should keep canceling until you get this rating group, they'll give you harder numbers." It's bull malarkey! If you were rated a 72.1 with a Slope of 129, you're still going to have those same numbers when the other team gets done, give or take a tenth of a point. The fact of the matter is, all course raters must be certified by one of two USGA Course Rating Calibration Seminars held annually. For checks and balances, your local association, whether it is the WSGA or the CDGA, will perform dry runs and compare notes to

make sure the teams are calibrated with each other. So remember, the next time you want to cancel a scheduled rating because you think you are getting an easy team, forget it—it's not worth the phone call.

The Test

Now that we all have a better understanding of Slope and rating, it's time for the test. Each of two golf courses is about 6,800 yards long with a par of 72. Course "A" has a course rating of 73.1 and a Slope of 120 and that train leaves Chicago at 2:30 p.m. traveling at a speed of 56 mph. Course "B" has a rating of 69.4 and a Slope of 128, and that train leaves Chicago at 2:37 p.m. traveling at a speed of 62 mph. At all handicap levels, which is the more difficult golf course? If you said Course "A," you're right. If you said Course "B," read the article again. If you are still trying to figure out what the trains have to do with this, give it up, you're a lost cause.



Sources and References Cited:

- Mr. John Warren, WSGA Director of Course Rating
- "The Course Rating Game" by Rick Pledl. March/April 2000 issue of Wisconsin Golfer.
- USGA
- WSGA

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the Bull Sheet

John Gurke, CGCS
Contributing Editor

DATES TO REMEMBER

February 10-15 — GCSAA's International Conference and Show in Atlanta, Georgia.

February 12-13 — MAGCS Hospitality Suite sponsored by the Golden Tee Club at the Marriott Marquis Hotel from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. each night.

February 18-21 — Toro NSN Site Pro Training Classes at Golf House in Lemont, Illinois. GCSAA will award 1.7 CEUs for attendance. Call TPEC for details.

February 24-28 — Indiana-Illinois Turfgrass Short Course at the Holiday Inn in Willowbrook, Illinois.

February 25-26 — Southern Illinois Grounds Maintenance School and Trade Show in Collinsville, Illinois.

March 11 — MAGCS monthly meeting at Golf House in Lemont, Illinois.

March 12-13 — Reinders Turf Conference at the Waukesha Expo Center in Waukesha, Wisconsin. More details follow.

March 20 — CDGA/USGA Green Seminar at Medinah Country Club, **Tom Lively**, CGCS host. Again, details follow.

First off, congratulations to Pam and **Brian Bossert**, CGCS (Bryn Mawr C.C.) on the birth of twin boys on December 26. Briggs Ivan (6 lb., 5 oz.) and Brock Eli (6 lb., 2 oz.) are healthy and a handful!

On February 24th through 28th, the Midwest Regional Turf Foundation

and the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation, in cooperation with Purdue University and the University of Illinois, will sponsor the Indiana-Illinois Turfgrass Short Course at the Holiday Inn in Willowbrook. The objective of this program is to provide basic information to those who are employed or considering employment in the turf industry. It will focus on basic turfgrass management, soils, fertility and pest management. A veritable who's who list of educators will be conducting lectures and hands-on laboratory sessions. For more information, call Bev Bratton at 765-494-8039 or Tom Voigt at 217-333-7847.

Not to be overshadowed, the Southern Illinois Grounds Maintenance School and Trade Show will be held on February 25th and 26th at the Gateway Convention Center in Collinsville, Illinois. Contact the Madison-St. Clair Extension Unit at 618-692-7700 for registration information.

As if you haven't had enough opportunities to improve your knowledge, here's another to put on the schedule: The 16th Reinders Turf & Irrigation Conference at the Waukesha Expo Center promises to be bigger and better than ever. Held every two years since 1971, the event features nationally known speakers, offers enlightening seminars and brings a variety of industry manufacturers together—all in one place. This year's conference takes place from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. March 12th and 13th. More than 40 educational sessions are scheduled covering a wide range of topics, such as turfgrass management, combating turf diseases, golf course irrigation systems, equipment maintenance and more. The conference will also feature a trade show with more than 65 manufacturers displaying products and services ranging from equipment to control products to

lawn-care accessories. Among the featured speakers are Pat Jones, publisher of *Golfdom* magazine, Wayne Horman of the Scotts Company (RoundUp Ready Bentgrass) and Dr. Joe Vargas of Michigan State University ("Latest Trends in Turfgrass Diseases" and "Anthracnose Management Strategies"). Added bonus: free doughnuts, free lunch and free social hour each day! Call 262-786-3301, ext. 243 for info.

Dr. Randy Kane reports that the Green Seminar is back on the schedule for 2003, and will be held on Thursday, March 20 at Medinah Country Club. Only now the Green Seminar is new and improved! The meeting will be cosponsored by the USGA Green Section and Mid-Continent director Paul Vermeulen. Save the date and make plans to attend.

This comes a tad late, but is appropriate while we are on the subject of the CDGA: **Lee Miller** (of Interactive Turf fame) married his longtime sweetheart Robin on November 16 in her hometown of Suffolk, Virginia. The two met three years ago in Raleigh, North Carolina, where they both worked on the same golf course—Carolina Country Club. The quaint (nice word for inexpensive) ceremony took place in the same church in which Robin's parents were married 35 years before, which added to the charm of the affair. The rain outside, however, was not so charming—it rained cats and dogs all night long—but according to superstition that is supposed to be lucky. Golf seems to be a recurring theme in the couple's lives, as they spent their honeymoon at the Moon Palace Golf Resort in Cancun, Mexico. Congratulations, Lee and Robin!



(continued on page 18)

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MAGCS sends its deepest sympathies to the **Leuzinger** family on the passing of **Pete's** mother and **Jeff's** grandmother Doris on December 8. With Pete and Jeff as her son and grandson, you KNOW she died a proud woman. You have our condolences, guys.

.....
Because you just haven't had enough of the holidays...
.....

The annual South Side Christmas Party was held on Monday, December 9 at Chef Klaus' Steak & Seafood in Frankfort. The old building has burned to the ground, but they still served the traditional German fare right down to the BIG mugs of Warsteiner and Spaten. Most of the familiar figures were present—**Dudley Smith**, **Pete Vandercook**, **Ray Schmitz** and **Jim Burdett**, to name a few—and many newcomers to this annual ritual popped in as well. Party organizers **Ed Esgar** (Ravisloe C.C.) and **Keith Peterson** (Calumet C.C.) deserve a big hand for a job wonderfully done. The atmosphere was warm and festive for the onset of the holiday season, and the full house of party-goers had a great time.



Kerry Anderson and Jim Burdett.



Organizers Ed Esgar and Keith Peterson work the biceps.



George O'Hara and Pete Vandercook.

.....
The MUCH-younger-but-still-a-tradition West Side Holiday Party was also a part of the circuit this past December. Held at Dave & Buster's in Addison, the affair included an Italian feast for lunch with plenty of refreshments to wash it down while enjoying a friendly game of pool. As has become a "tradition within a tradition," the refreshment fund ran out in midstream, causing a brief but controlled riot. Thanks to **Paul Carlson** of Central Sod Farms, Inc. (our hero), the melee was quashed when he generously reopened the tab. Thanks also to **Gary Hearn** (Salt Creek G.C.) and **Don Ferreri** (Seven Bridges G.C.) for organizing the party.



The three Daves—Nadler, Braasch and Meyer—make an eerie trio, with Dave Braasch having worked for Dave Meyer before working for Dave Nadler... or something like that.



Don Ferreri and Gary Hearn.



Tom Lively and Sylvia Lima.

.....
Why do we get the raised eyebrow treatment from our superiors when we request capital funds? The January-February issue of USGA's *Golf Journal* ran an interesting item on the comparative costs of golf course equipment versus things they can identify with. The highlights included: A set of aerator tines runs \$10 more than a Panasonic 27-inch stereo television, a triplex greens mower is \$6,450 more than a 2003 Stingray 200 CX power boat (\$26,450 vs. \$20,000), and a power bunker rake actually costs \$2,780 more than a 2003 Ford Focus ZX3 2-door hatchback (\$12,780 vs. \$10,000). Yikes.

.....
GCSAA CEO Steve Mona announced that Julian Arredondo, the association's chief financial officer, will assume the chief operating officer position effective March 1. Mr. Arredondo replaces Chuck Borman, who recently resigned to return to his former role as executive director of the Carolinas GCSA.

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(continued on page 20)

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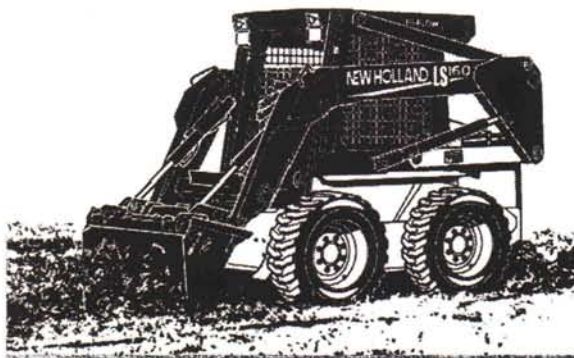


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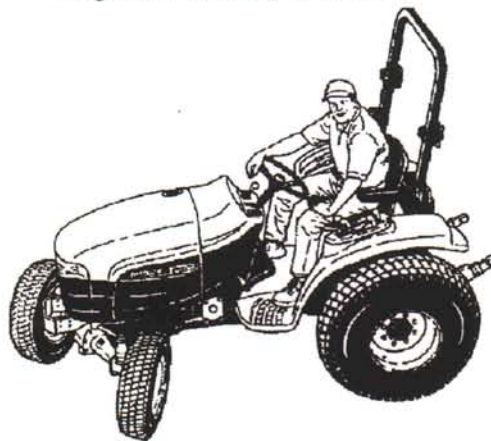


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Peter Hahn of Ridgemoor Country Club has been a busy man this past year. Ridgemoor, with the help of Lohmann Golf Designs and Horizon Golf of Evanston, recently completed the renovation of all 57 bunkers to improve their appearance, address maintenance issues and enhance their strategic roles relevant to each golf hole. The 1921 W. B. Langford course also replaced its crumbling timber walls with stone, and removed 400 trees to help bring it back to the original architect's concept. All this work was done while taking just two holes at a time out of play.

.....
PEOPLE ON THE MOVE . . .
.....

Warren Shafer, formerly of Prime Turf, has started a new company. Growing Solutions will offer a full line of products, including water treatments, fertigation, wash-water recycling and GPS mapping. Congratulations and good luck to Warren in his exciting new endeavor.

Pete Kiraly, formerly at Hilldale Golf Club, is the new superintendent of Schaumburg Golf Club. Best of luck to Pete in his new challenge.

.....
Golf course mechanic seeks position: Mario Godinho has 10 years' experience in a wide range of golf course equipment maintenance. Call Mario at 630-844-9085 or 239-823-9988 (cell) for background and resume.

.....
Finally, this perspective about our business was found floating around the Internet:
.....

Imagine the conversation the Creator might have with St. Francis on the subject of lawns.

GOD: Frank, you know all about gardens and nature, what in the world is going on down there in the U.S.? What in the world happened to the dandelions, violets, thistles and the stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil,

withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of color by now. All I see are patches of green.

ST. FRANCIS: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. They are called the Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers "weeds" and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But it is so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, bees or birds; only grubs and sod worms. It's temperamental with temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing it and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and the warm weather probably make the



Golf Course Funnies

Oopsy! And Lenny the crane truck operator was doing SO well with his new diet . . .

