

An Interview With a Golf Course

This past spring I had the opportunity to sit down for a short interview with a golf course.

What's your favorite color?

All shades of green with a hint of tan . . .

Favorite movie?

This Old Sod . . . it's a movie about an older golf course that has withstood time, renovations and all the elements . . . but remains a fan of the game and its traditions. It's sappy but good.

Favorite book?

The Confidential Guide to Golf Courses. That guy, Doak . . . what a pistol. He's full of himself, but he really set the design industry on fire.

Okay, now for some tougher questions.

Where did you come from?

I was a twinkle in the eye of my owner . . . He loves golf and when he saw my mother, it was love. He loved her soft rolling hills, the curves, the swales, the trees . . . well, you know the rest.

Your owner has an ego, doesn't he?

Most certainly. He wants so much for me, but I'm better for it because he didn't spoil me. He had big ideas for me but luckily the architect was prudent, and my owner was smart enough to listen. The architect helped to keep his ideas in check. My owner was ready to spend money, but it was decided that I would be better off keeping it simple.

Your owner is a good golfer.

He sure is. He carries a very low handicap. He wanted me to be big and strong, and hard. He kept talking about length—"Make it long, make it hard." The architect fought him on that one. My property wasn't big enough to handle the length, especially since the ball is flying farther. Again, it was better that the architect fought him about that very idea, because I think I'm tough enough. Not only that, but I get a lot of golfers here that may not otherwise play me if I were harder. Everyone enjoys a challenge . . . but the game is hard enough.

But you are considered a great golf course.

Yes, I am. But I am fun to play. Between the owner, architect and contractor, they made a lot of changes for the better during my construction. They call it "value engineering." I was lucky like that. They all wanted the best for me, so when changes were discussed, everyone had the same goal in mind.

You are not a high-profile golf course, so what makes you so great?

I think my greatness is in my greens and green surrounds. You'll see that everyday golfers, the older guys and younger guys, can access the greens without fear, but it's tough to get close to the pins. When I have tournaments, they can tuck the pins behind hazards and watch the better golfers scratch their heads. Not just the challenge makes me great, though; it's my natural beauty, the ease of walking and my sense of humor.

You have a sense of humor?

This is golf, I'm a golf course . . . you'd better have a good sense of humor!

So your greatness is because you can cater to any golfer?

I guess so. Who's to say what is great. All I know is that just about everyone who plays here enjoys it. The architect talked about placing a premium on the approach shot. I'm not that long, so the long hitters can still bomb it . . . but everyone has to hit the proper approach . . . and from the right position in the fairway.

I'm also attractive, don't you think? Maybe not beautiful . . . but certainly pleasing to the eye. And I don't reveal everything right away. I am not that kind of a golf course.

Tell me about the architect.

He's good. Not one of the biggest names. He really worked me over. He kept working the routing plan until he was satisfied with the right "site strategy." He never seemed satisfied. He and the contractor worked hard at trying to make the golf course the best it could be. Then all of a sudden, I came together.

Does the architect have an ego?

Are you kidding? Of course. But it didn't get in the way of making good decisions about my well-being. He made sure I had good drainage, thank goodness. He often talked about shot values and the essence of the site and a bunch of other stuff. It all sounded corny at first, but I feel better because of it . . . he knew what I should look and act like. He was always taking clues from my topography, my vegetation and my surroundings. He also kept asking my owner who would be playing.

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What's his favorite hole?

He takes a lot of pictures. It's kind of weird, but I guess he appreciates me. He likes my par 4s, the short ones. He says they're fun.

What else can you tell me?

My superintendent is great. He nurtured me during grow-in. That's a tough time for a golf course. I was particularly troublesome during my youth. I have sand-based greens and my soils are sandy. That made me even more temperamental. That makes it tough to keep enough water and food on my new turf. That was hard. But he kept an eye on the construction and I am grateful for his attention. It's entirely different now that I am older. I don't need as much nurturing, but I do get sick now and then, mostly when it gets hot.

What makes him so good?

He keeps me in great shape. Most superintendents do, but he keeps me really fit. The owner sometimes

asks to get me green and lush, or whatever. But the superintendent likes me lean . . . he calls it "hard and fast." He doesn't overfeed or overwater me and I feel better because of it, and I don't get sick as much as some of my friends.

Do you have a favorite time of year?

You would expect me to say winter when I get to sleep. But actually, it's September. That's when I look and feel the best. The nights are cool and the days are warm. Assuming I get through the summer, I look and act great in September.

How do you feel now?

Fine, thanks. But I know that I'll need some work eventually. Probably some bunker renovations. It happens to all of us. Some of my older neighbors have had two or three major surgeries already. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. All you can hope for is a good architect, contractor and owner.


Anything soon?

There's always something going on around here. The superintendent stays busy making sure everything works. This year I'll have trees removed that have been causing me some slight discomfort.

Do you admire any other golf courses?

Sure do. Shinnecock Hills and Cypress Point are a couple. They have a natural elegance to them. They don't pretend to be anything but what they are. There are dozens of others, but those two really offer the standard.

What do you want to be remembered for?

I don't want to pretend to be anything other than what I am. I like what I am and want to react to my environment as naturally and gently as possible. The game will be better off for it. 

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Thunderbird Country Club's Rebirth as Makray Memorial Golf Club



On June 17, 2002, Thunderbird Country Club closed its doors to undergo a large-scale renovation and redesign. After two long years and a lot of hard work and dedication on the part of course superintendent Gordon Kappe and grow-in superintendent turned director of agronomy Chris Blake, the course reopened this past Memorial Day weekend under its new name, Makray Memorial Golf Club.

Though much of the old layout is still evident, several significant changes have been made. For starters, the front and back nines have been switched. Also, holes 4, 7, 8 and 17 underwent redesign. The par-3 fourth hole, for example, used to play uphill to the green. The direction of the hole, now reversed, plays downhill from an elevated tee to a narrow 50-yard-long green that is tightly guarded by a pond all along the right side.

To make all of the necessary changes required hauling in 1,000,000 cubic yards of clay. A large portion of that extraordinary amount of fill was used to construct a berm along the entire south edge of the course, which runs parallel to Northwest Highway. The berm, which has been seeded with a wildflower mix, stands 15-20' high and has helped reduce noise coming off the busy road. The rest of the fill was dedicated to extensive shaping and mounding that is featured on the course. In stark contrast to the relatively flat Thunderbird Golf Course, the new Makray Memorial is anything but. The creation of mounding not only adds to the aesthetic appeal of the course, but also should improve drainage.

While all of that fill dirt was coming in, removal of a large amount of problematic peat occurred from the area that is now the 18th hole. All of this peat was hauled to an out-of-play area located behind the driving range and

buried in three holes measuring approximately 90' wide by 70' deep, then capped off with clay.

Also rebuilt were all 18 greens, tees and fairways of the new Makray Memorial. Greens were built with a 90% sand/10% sphagnum peat moss mix and seeded with G-2. Tee construction used a 70% sand/20% sphagnum peat moss/10% humus mix. After careful research, Princeville was the choice for seeding tees and fairways. The primary reason for the selection of Princeville was its excellent heat-tolerance.

Like the greens, tees and fairways, all of the bunkers have also been rebuilt, with some added, some removed, all reshaped and deepened. A mechanical rake cannot get into many of the new bunkers. Therefore, all 31 bunkers will be hand-raked. A three-man crew accomplishes this task each morning. The sand selected for the new bunkers was from Best Sand in Ohio. It is a white sand and drainage and playability have reportedly been good thus far.

Also installed during the construction were a new pump station and irrigation system. The new pump station is a Wadsworth VFD with two 75-horsepower pumps and one 15-horsepower jockey pump. The irrigation system is a modified double-row with approximately 900 Toro 750- and 780-series sprinkler heads and Toro Sitepro central control.

Aside from the course itself, other project highlights include a 60,000-square-foot bentgrass driving-range tee, a new 4,500-square-foot maintenance shop, and a 24,000-square-foot clubhouse that is currently under construction.

—*Brian Mores*
Inverness Golf Club

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Paving the Way With Brick at Hinsdale Golf Club

Several years ago, the board of directors at Hinsdale Golf Club budgeted to install paths to five teeing areas. Prior to this, there were no paths on the golf course and wear areas were beginning to develop.

Superintendent Bob Maibusch, CGCS, states, "My greens chairman and I began talking about whether we should use asphalt or concrete, and he was not ultimately happy with either option, so I suggested using brick pavers. He liked the idea, and told me to proceed. We ended up spending all of the money earmarked for five holes on just one hole, but fortunately the members loved the finished product and we have proceeded to use the pavers on all of our subsequent path work."

Bob contracts the work to a company called Arcadian, out of Elburn, IL. The pavers are made by Unilock in Aurora. Before Bob installed his first path, he toured the manufacturing plant at Unilock and he was impressed with the durability of the pavers and ability of the manufacturer to provide more pavers in the future to match in exact color and texture.

The pavers are installed on 8-10" of compacted stone. Four inches of base would be sufficient for carts, but Bob occasionally uses his paths for moving heavy equipment and materials, and the extra base has held up well.

"The brick pavers are certainly expensive, but they should last much longer than asphalt or concrete and they are so much more attractive than asphalt or concrete."

Bob reports no problems with traction under golf shoes or soft spikes; no frost-heaving; and no issues with durability. One other thing that Bob likes about the pavers is they can be temporarily lifted and put back in place for irrigation repairs or drainage projects. The only maintenance issue with pavers is weed growth in the cracks, which necessitates spraying two or three times a year.

—Bradley Anderson, CGCS
Midlane Country Club



What's News at Joliet Country Club

I always look around Chicagoland and wonder why folks insist that longevity is hard to come by in this business. Mark Kowaliczko is a good case in point, having been at Joliet Country Club since 1986. The University of Illinois graduate and past president of the Chicagoland Superintendents Association moved there after serving with Mike Nass at Bryn Mawr Country Club during the mid-1980s. Mark grew up in the Joliet/Lockport area and spent several seasons working for Ted Mochel at Joliet C.C. during those formidable teenage years. That experience motivated him to pursue a career in turf management. He and his wife Diana have four sons: Zenon (12), Zachary (10), and 8-year-old twins, Christian and Chandler. In fact, young Zenon is cur-

rently on a student ambassador trip to England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. I didn't ask whether he took his clubs or not.

Mark tells me that his course hasn't been spared by all the May and June rains. The creek that runs through the property has come out of the banks on two occasions and while he notes no major turf problems as a result, he feels like all the time dealing with wet bunkers has prohibited him from addressing some details in his landscaped areas. Additionally, prior to the onset of any major heat, he predicted doing some small solid-tine aerification in some of his low-lying fairway areas. (Can I confess to thinking that was a swell idea and doing some

of that myself a few days after talking to Mark?) In fact, Mark said he has never irrigated any less to date than this year, but also hadn't started up the system any earlier (can we even remember that it was so dry back in April?).

The difficult economic times also have not completely spared Mark's club. Two years ago, a new clubhouse was built on the site of the 18th tee, a project that resulted in the building of a new hole. While that project was approved by 90% of the membership, it resulted in a significant membership loss. Additionally the club has changed from non-equity to equity membership. However, Mark reports 20 new members this year and (did you know?) that the Joliet and Plainfield area has been reported as being one of the top-10 growing areas in the country. On the equipment end, the club has initiated a leasing program and Mark has worked that into a line item on his operating budget.

Agronomically, Mark reported great results this spring in his initial year of using Primo and Proxy on the putting greens. He also reports experimenting with differ-

ent foliar products during the summer months, but the bulk of his fertility program is based on granular organic products.

Joliet C.C. was established in 1905 as a nine-hole Tom Bendelow layout and the greens are characteristically small, push-up soil affairs. Mark strongly feels that any success he has achieved in maintaining today's lower mowing heights can be attributed to 15 years of deep-tine aerification in the spring and fall accompanied with sand topdressing.

For those of you new to the Association, Mark is always easy to spot at our winter meetings. It's not uncommon to see his sport coat complemented by a plaid vest or a pocket square. I guess that makes him a traditionalist of sorts (and the envy of those of us who are fashion-challenged). Mark also comes across as a very soft- but well-spoken individual, no doubt one of the qualities that has contributed to his longevity at Joliet Country Club.

—Brian Bossert, CGCS
Bryn Mawr C.C.

A Solution for Aerating Poor Soils at Crystal Tree Golf & Country Club

For the last two years, Les Rutan, superintendent at Crystal Tree, has been topdressing fairways in the spring and fall with Dakota 440 topdresser at 25 tons of washed mason sand per acre.

Les has been applying the sand in two to three applications as opposed to attempting to brush the material in with one application. He started this program primarily to provide an inorganic amendment to the thatch development at the surface. The soils at Crystal Tree are so poor

that conventional aeration and core processing would not provide a suitable topdressing source for integration with thatch development.

The aeration method that has worked very well for Les is the Airway Slicer, which has done an outstanding job of loosening the soil and opening up channels for root development and water penetration.

—Bradley Anderson, CGCS
Midlane Country Club

Eradicating Moss on Greens at Prairie Landing Golf Club

Superintendent Tony Kalina has found a sure product for moss eradication on greens. The product is called Quicksilver, a turf and ornamental herbicide made by FMC. It is a concentrated form of carfentrazone, the same active ingredient of Speedzone broadleaf herbicide.

Tony has made two applications to his Pennlinks greens, which are cut at 130. The first was in mid-May at 1.0 ounce per acre in two gallons of water per 1,000-square-foot application rate. The second application was 30 days later at 0.50 ounces per acre.

Tony reports that the moss quickly turned orange-brown; it then shriveled and died, and there was virtually

no phytotoxicity. As the moss shriveled, the bentgrass immediately began tillering into the void.

As an experiment, Tony went over an area of one green at a 2x rate and later monitored no harm to the bent turf. Tony hastens to point out that anyone attempting to use this product on his green should experiment on check plots first, especially if the greens have any *Poa annua* concentrations.

—Bradley Anderson, CGCS
Midlane Country Club



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the Bull Sheet

John Gurke, CGCS
Contributing Editor

DATES TO REMEMBER

August 9 – MAGCS monthly meeting at Biltmore Country Club in North Barrington, IL, **Brian Thomson, CGCS** host.

August 14 – MAGCS Kane County Cougars Outing at Elfstrom Field in Geneva, IL.

August 30 – 2004 John Deere Team Championship at Crystal Lake Country Club, **Steve Van Acker, CGCS** host.

September 13 – MAGCS monthly meeting at Oak Grove Golf Course in Harvard, IL, **Paul Sandall** host. The MAGCS Annual Championship will be contested at this event.

October 4 – Rutgers University Professional Golf Turf Management School begins its fall session.

October 5 – MAGCS/ITF Fall Golf Day and College Championship at Calumet Country Club, **Keith Peterson** host (for those few of you not attending the Rutgers thing).

Please send your thoughts and prayers to Wayne and JoAnn Otto and family—Wayne was recently diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic carcinoma with metastasis to liver and lung, for which there is no treatment or surgery. At the time of this writing, plans were being rapidly formulated to get Wayne to Munich, Germany and the Klinik St. George where hyperthermic treatments have proven successful. Hope . . .

GCSAA has announced the winners of its 2004 essay contest, which is open to undergrad and grad students pursuing degrees in turf science or

other golf-related fields. Third place was taken by Patrick McCullough of Clemson University with his scintillating essay, “Pre-emergence Herbicides May Exacerbate Genetic Instabilities of Ultradwarf Bermuda-grass.” Now, how did THAT not win?

Pat Norton, CGCS recently penned a very good article titled “More of a Tropical Atmosphere,” which was printed in *The Green Breeze*—the official publication of the Greater Cincinnati Golf Course Superintendents Association. To paraphrase and condense, Pat’s theme was based on the need (especially in the ultra-competitive public course sector) to convey a warmer image to our patrons. To do this, it is necessary to have the right people in the key managerial positions who will convey this “tropical” atmosphere through sound business decisions and smart marketing, resulting in a better bottom line. Hey Pat—you “coulda been a contendah” for a Ray Gerber Editorial Award if you’d sent this thing our way!

Sight seen: While watching television coverage of Sunday’s final round of the U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills, I caught a glimpse of a bright red head assisting with the cup placement on the now-infamous seventh hole. The head belonged to **Jon Jennings, CGCS** of Chicago Golf Club, who was one of the fortunate few who DIDN’T get blamed by USGA’s Tom Meeks for “letting the seventh get away from us.”

On Wednesday, June 30, the 4th Annual John Buck Memorial Golf Outing took place at Pinecrest Country Club in lovely Huntley, IL. The event was a four-person scramble with proceeds helping fund scholarships awarded through MAGCS and the Kane County Farm Bureau Foundation in John’s name. The order of the day is fun first, with a little golf thrown in with the

prizes, food and drink. The winning team with a 12-under-par 60 was **Dave Kohley, Rick Wilson, Al Wheatland** and **Clark Peterson** (winning by scorecard playoff over Gale Stenquist’s team). Dave Kohley also won the long-drive contest, while **Mark Gilmour** took closest-to-the-pin by knocking his tee shot on the very first hole of the day to within two feet (and that shot held up all day). The winning raffle ticket for the 2004 John Deere CS Gator drawn by J. W. Turf’s Kelli Eberly turned out to belong to Paul Seylers’ two-month-old baby. (Paul is manager of a JD store in the Quad Cities and is the brother of Ambrose Seylers, who owned Buck Brothers.) Congratulations to all the winners, especially this year’s MAGCS John Buck Memorial Scholarship winner **Tony Doruff**, son of Sharon and **Ron Doruff** of Steeplechase G.C.




Kelli and Danna Eberly on the raffle prize before handing over the keys to its winner.

Speaking of scholarship winners, congratulations are also in order for those who earned the other three MAGCS scholarships: Patrick Maguire, son of **John Maguire** (J.W. Turf); Brianne Smith, daughter of **Jeffrey Smith** (Springbrook G.C.); and Kelly Murray, daughter of **Dan Murray** (Settler’s Hill G.C.). Look for publication of the winners’ essays in our September issue.

Since he’s getting so much ink, let’s talk more about Dave Kohley. As you know, Dave is the current MAGCS golf champion (a title won last September at Shoreacres). What you may not know is that this honor includes the famous Champion’s Chair—a prize its winner keeps for the year of his reign. After an exhaustive search utilizing all of

(continued on page 30)



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MAGCS's resources, a private investigator and chair-sniffing dogs, the chair was finally recovered and delivered to Dave recently. Belated congratulations, Dave, and enjoy!



MAGCS 2003 golf champion Dave Kohley enjoying his prize.

Along with the countless fireworks displays (is it me, or are more and more golf clubs doing these things?) this past 4th of July weekend, another event of note took place—the Cialis Western Open at Cog Hill Country Club in Lemont. Ken Lapp and the staff at Cog once again provided a superior golf course for this yearly stop on the PGA Tour, and the scores showed that even a rain-softened Dubsdread is capable of biting the world's best players in the behind. Thanks also to Tracy Murphy of Murphy's Lemont Paving for hosting the hospitality tent on their property during the Saturday round.

Conversation heard:

Assistant: "Boss? I dropped my radio."

Superintendent: "Where?"

Assistant: "On the third green bank. Under the Toro. While it was mowing. Keypad looks OK."



The result of the epic Motorola vs. Mower battle. The mower was unscathed.

Better late than never . . .

On June 16, the Ivanhoe Club and Tom Prichard held the grand reopening of the 27 holes, which were reconstructed by Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates. The daylong event, called the "Rebirth of a Champion," included a press conference with Arthur Hills, lunch, ribbon-cutting ceremony, a shotgun golf event, and cocktails after, and was a wonderful "welcome back" for the heralded club.

A brush with fame . . .

You know when you're playing golf and your partner putts it halfway to the hole and you say, "Hit it, Alice"? Dave Braasch (Glen Erin Golf Club) recently got to say that a lot. As it turns out, Alice Cooper—ugly, old, rock-and-roll guy who plays a lot of golf—was performing at the Riverfest in Janesville, WI and decided to play a round at Glen Erin, and Dave was asked to play along. Dave reports that Alice was every bit the gentleman (in other words, he limited the makeup to just some eyeliner), although a bit off on his usually-strong game, and even gave him tickets to the concert that night. Some guys have all the luck.

A little bird tells me that Peter Leuzinger has been found safe and sound and living in Elburn, IL. Pete will soon be "spreading the word" with his new (and very fitting) position as consulting environmentalist for Audubon International. Pete will concentrate his efforts on the Great Lakes Region, giving him ample

room to move about and promote Audubon International's programs for golf courses. Congratulations, Pete, and welcome back!

In following up on the news of Paul Voykin's Superintendent of the Year award (from *Golfweek's SuperNews*), the latest accolade paid Paul was Briarwood Country Club's declaration that Friday, June 25 was Paul Voykin Day. The day included golf for the family and friends of Paul, who came in from all over the country, followed by a dinner and testimonial given by Paul's family members and various club members, and a gracious thank-you message from PV himself. In all, it was a great tribute to a great guy, and that's all I have to say about that.

Condolences to the many friends and family of Dr. George W. Hamilton, who passed away on July 9. Dr. Hamilton had been involved with Penn State University's turfgrass program since 1982, most recently serving as its technical advisor for the Two-Year Golf Course Turfgrass Management Technical Program for which he taught courses in cultural turfgrass management and golf course specifications, construction and renovation. All of us at MAGCS—especially those who were fortunate enough to have known Dr. Hamilton—will miss his presence in our industry.



It's August in the Midwest, it's probably hot and humid, and we're all feeling a bit frayed at the edges. Fret not—winter is just around the corner, bringing with it all of those favorite pastimes we enjoy, like sledding, skating, ice fishing and of course . . .



Oh to be winter again, when we can all resume the age-old custom of golf course jeep skiing.