

Having mentioned the fine job A. J. Huey did in assisting with the charitable hole, I would also like to mention that he has recently changed employment—he is now with Chicagoland Turf, and MAGCS wishes him well in his new position.

Another golf event that merits mention took place last month—the annual Pro-Superintendent Tournament, held on May 6 at North Shore Country Club with superintendent **Dan Dinelli**, CGCS and PGA professional **Tim O’Neal** serving as our gracious hosts. The golf course was beautiful, as was the day, and the Illinois PGA once again done outdid themselves in running this always-fun event (though perhaps not as much fun as it was when it was alternate-shot format and pros got to recover from all the fun places their supers hit into). Taking the cake for best pro/super team of 2004 were **Corey Ferrell** and **Don Ferreri** of Seven Bridges Golf Club with a –15. Second place went to **Kevin Marion** and **Ed Fischer** of Old Elm Club with a

–11, while third went to **Doug Bauman** and **Brian Thomson** of Biltmore Country Club, also at –11. And just because it’s nice to see your name in print, dead-last place was won by **Dennis Callaghan** and **Mike Matchen** of Wilmette Golf Course with a +1. Congratulations to all participants (because everyone who participates in this event is a winner simply by getting to spend a great day golfing with their professional counterpart), and thank you to North Shore Country Club, **Dan** and **Tim** for their generosity in hosting this event.

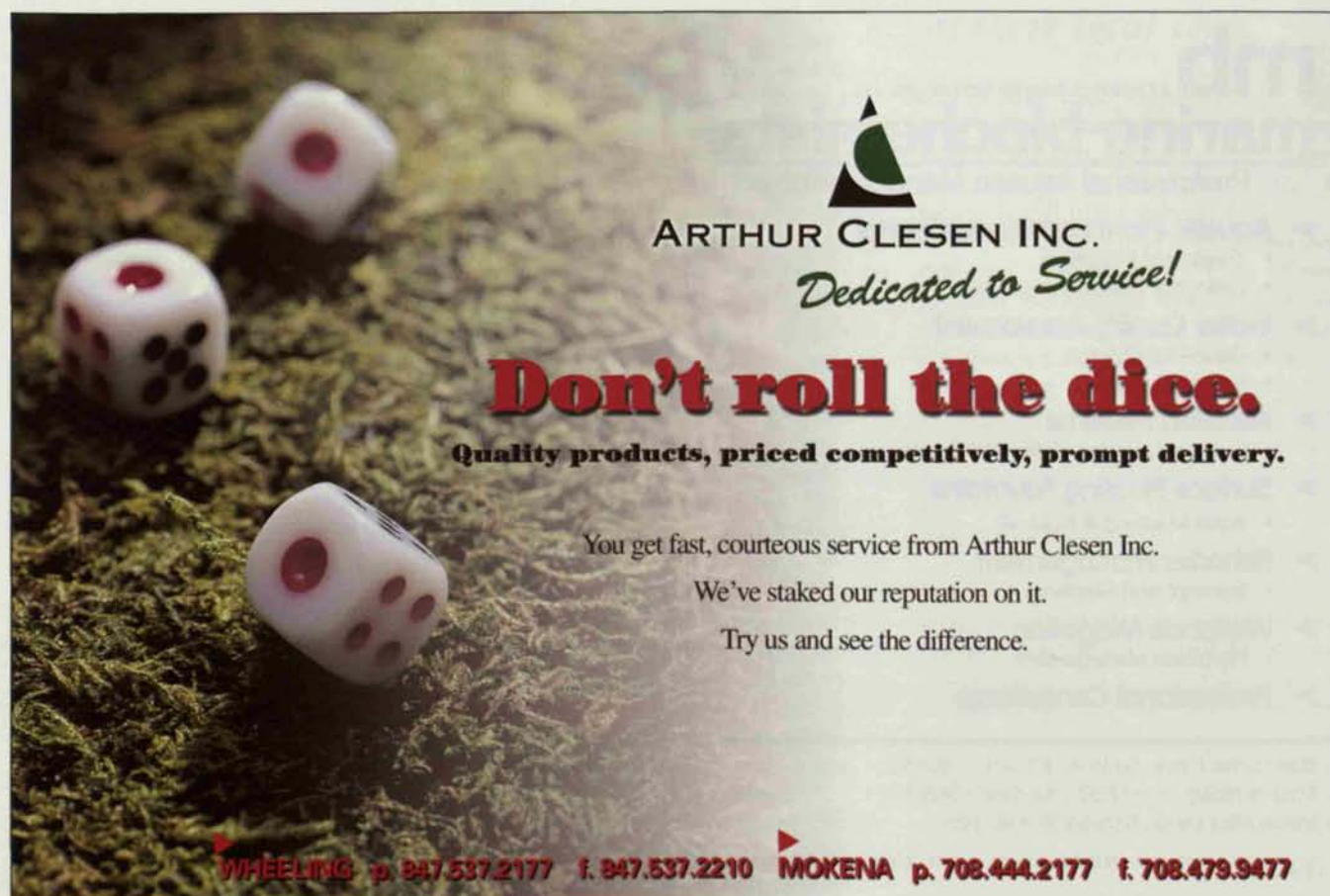
The April 23rd issue of *Golfweek’s SuperNEWS* featured a very flattering and informative article about the CDGA’s InteractiveTurf Web site. **Brian Thomson** of Biltmore Country Club gives the superintendent’s side of the story, while **Lee Miller** describes the technical side of things. Quotes from **Oscar Miles**, CGCS and **Paul Vermeulen** give the piece even more oomph, and it is very clear from this article that IT is a


one-of-a-kind doohickey that we Midwest superintendents are very lucky to have at our disposal.

While you are magazine-hopping, check out **Kane** and **Witte** on page 28 of May’s *Golf Course Management* (between the ads on pages 27 and 29).

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# Is Perception Reality?

*I, along with many of you, happen to be employed in an industry that serves millions of people annually. It can be a very rewarding career, when everything goes right and all is well in the universe. Unfortunately, this cosmic alignment rarely happens. The problem for many of us is that this is expected. Everything going right and perfect conditions are expected daily. Why does this happen? Why are we subject to such scrutiny?*

Last fall I attended the 38th Annual Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium. Some of the top turfgrass experts in the country were featured speakers. Dr. Joe Vargas and Dr. Ron Calhoun came from Michigan State University, while Dr. Frank Rossi from Cornell University and Craig Currier from Bethpage State Park flew in all the way from New York. Dr. Bruce Clarke from Rutgers University, Mike Morris, CGCS from Crystal Downs Country Club in Frankfort, Michigan, and Michael McNulty from the Philadelphia Country Club also came to share their thoughts on this year's topic: "Poa Twenty Years Later."

Called upon to share his opinion on local *Poa* control, the venerable Monroe Miller of Blackhawk Country Club in Madison, Wisconsin, who only missed two of these symposiums in his lengthy career, took the opportunity to declare, "This is the best one yet!" Bob Vavrek, our local USGA agronomist, echoed Monroe's words as he rounded up the day-and-a-half event.

As I listened to everyone speak, but especially while Craig Currier was presenting, I was really taken aback. Craig said something that most of us know, but very few of our customers understand. "It took six years to prepare for one week of golf!" Yes, I know that Craig was discussing one of the 'major tournaments' that seldom come along to any of us. But that is the point. What the golfing public sees weekly on television, especially viewing a major tournament, is definitely not the reality that they can or should expect at their local club. Their perception is that if the turf at Bethpage, Olympia Fields, Medinah or Oak Hill looks so great, so *perfect*,

why can't we have it here? That perception is flawed.

Even so, take the major tournaments out of the picture. What of the weekly Tour events? With the advent of television taping *everything*, these events must portray 'grainless' greens or be subject to the scorn of Johnny Miller. The images must be perfect. And even with millions of dollars and hundreds of volunteers, oftentimes the reality is that these fabulous swaths of pristine turf are pushed to near death. And if Mother Nature deems it . . . turfgrass dies.

So what can we do? When handed a handful of lemons, how do we make lemonade? This is a challenge that faces us all, especially now with our slower economy and golf rounds spiraling down the stairs. Mike Morris (Crystal Downs C.C.) had some interesting comments. Mike took the offensive approach. No, he didn't take a week off to go fishing or tell his members to all take a hike. Mike realized, as we all should, that this is the information age. He talked to his clients, his members, and asked them what their expectations were. He took the initiative and collected data to determine what his daily green speeds measured. He surveyed his golfers and asked them what 'target' green speeds they would accept. Surprisingly, when he increased speed for a club event and tried to maintain those speeds afterwards, the members asked him to get them back to 'normal.' Last, Mike evaluated his maintenance practices. He evaluated what he was doing to reach his 'target expectations.'

If you haven't heard Bruce Williams, CGCS of Los Angeles Country Club speak about communi-

*What the golfing public sees weekly on television, especially viewing a major tournament, is definitely not the reality that they can or should expect at their local club.*

cation and time management, you have missed something. And if you *have* heard him speak . . . then practice what he is preaching. That is where I, and many others, fail.

I do believe that at times, we are our own worst enemies. One of our greatest detriments is our lack of communication. I know for a fact that we preach to the choir in triumphant unison, but are loath to carry the message to our employers. How well we know that the squeakiest wheel gets the grease. Well, why not intelligently gather some data as Mike did and start squeaking?

Our livelihood demands the best of our abilities. Most of us strive well beyond the expectations of our clientele, but at what cost? Maybe we could all forego a few gray hairs or losing them, and save our employers some money on the way, if we took the initiative to assess the expectations of our customers. Maybe that is the reality of our careers and our lives.





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With input from our membership, each Board member will be responsible for completing a section or two. Results will be compiled into one document and the first phase of the assessment tool will be complete. The second phase will be assessing the assessment tool. From the input gathered, a strategic plan can be developed for the whole chapter.

This assessment tool was designed and put together by a group of individual superintendents dedicated to improving the effectiveness of the chapter. They quickly realized that not all chapters are the same, just as all golf courses are unique. Because

many parameters define success, it is very difficult to compare one golf course to another. It is also difficult to measure chapter versus chapter, and this is certainly not the intention of this project. The objective is to measure the ability of each individual chapter to meet the needs of its own members. One of the most satisfying results of success occurs when an individual comes away from a golf course with an appreciation for the work and efforts that have been completed solely for the golfer's enjoyment. Certainly, opportunity for such success is what the chapter should provide for every member.



*The individual is the main focus of our chapter. Certainly, the individual member's needs and the ability of the chapter to meet those needs, is what the assessment tool truly measures.*

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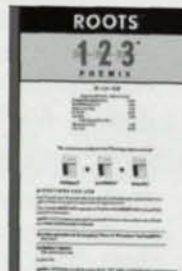


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# A Few Keys to Longevity

*Editor's Note: This "Voice of Experience" comes from Monroe Miller, a veteran superintendent of the Wisconsin GCSA and editor of its award-winning magazine, The Grass Roots. The article originally appeared in that publication's May/June 2004 issue.*

*Joe Kunze, president of the Badger Turf and Grounds Club, invited me to campus on a spring evening to talk to the members of the club at their monthly meeting. I am always glad for such an invitation, maybe subconsciously pleased that someone is interested in what I might have to say.*

Which, obviously, is the first dilemma—what to talk about. Since Joe didn't give me much lead time, I decided the easiest topic to prepare for would be to share with them a few of the things I have learned on the golf course over my 30-plus-year career.

There are entire sections in bookstores dedicated to this general subject matter. Many of them are full of clichés and tend to the very trite. And I could be assured that a group of college-age men didn't want to hear the likes of "It's easier said than done," or "A fool and his money are soon parted," or "Water always runs downhill."

But you have to learn something when you are on the job as long as I have been, and mostly it is good advice, albeit obvious in some cases.

Missing from the list will be the obvious—agronomic advice. My starting point in this is that if you are a golf course superintendent, you had better have plant and soil issues in hand. For most of us, solving cultural problems is the most fun part of the profession.


Anyway, here's the advice I gave that class of future golf course superintendents, in no particular order.

1. Use common sense. It seems so simply, but too often people overthink problems. When you have a farm background like I do, learning common sense was part of growing up.
2. Work hard, all the time and every day at the golf course. Players/employers will notice and respect you for it.
3. As a complement to working hard is working smart. This sounds like a cliché, but it isn't. You can work hard at planting a tree, for example, but if it is in the wrong place you'll get to do it twice.
4. Do what you are told to do when you are told to do it. Don't be offended; remember, everyone has a boss.
5. Be honest to the extreme with everyone you deal with—employers, your employees, the DNR, colleagues, everyone. I once witnessed a golf course superintendent's attempt to blow smoke in the green committee chairman's ear. It didn't work and was a big mistake. Honesty pays big dividends.
6. Set high standards and goals. Overreach. Strive for excellence. If you don't at least aim high, you can be assured you won't get there.
7. Listen. Being a good listener is essential if you are going to turn out the kind of conditions expected of you. You must listen to complaints and criticisms, but it doesn't hurt to listen to compliments, either.
8. Do no harm. Sometimes doing nothing is better than doing something that could have a negative impact. The job is tough enough as it is without shooting yourself in the foot.
9. Function with enthusiasm. Nothing great was ever accomplished without it. And you will find it is contagious to those around you.
10. Practice neatness in everything—the shop, your equipment, your golf course. It sets a good example for staff, and if you are sloppy the chances are your staff will be too. Neatness presents a good first impression. Neatness can help carry you through tough periods due to weather or other conditions out of your control.
11. Look forward, not back. The great things you may have done last year or 10 years ago don't matter much. Today and tomorrow are what count.
12. Fix small problems before they become big ones. Procrastination is a terrible disease and it can really hurt you.
13. Although it goes without saying, it commonly isn't done: cultivate a good relationship with your colleagues at your course—golf pro and clubhouse manager. They see the customers first and last and can be a help to you. It may not always be easy, but it is the smart thing to do.
14. Realize early on in your career that learning never stops. Continuing education should be a top priority of yours until you retire. You have to always try to get better—it is more than just a matter of keeping up.
15. Support the land-grant institution in the state where you work, even if it isn't your alma mater. Science is the solution to many of the problems we face, and agricultural research mostly goes on at our land-grant colleges. You can still cheer for the football team fielded by the college you attended, but local problems are solved locally.
16. Give something back to your profession. Be an office-holder, serve on a committee, host a meeting, attend the phosphorus ban hearing, participate in some way. Don't always let the other person do it.
17. Don't ever forget this: your security depends on the turf product you turn out each day, NOT on

(continued on page 36)



- degrees, CGCS, awards, golf scores or anything else.
19. Communicate on all levels within your organization. This is not the same as socializing.
  20. Fiscal responsibility is paramount. Not many of us work where a budget doesn't matter. In fact, the superintendents I respect most are those turning out a quality golf course with a modest amount of money. They get the maximum of the money they have because they must.
  21. Be a good representative of your organization. Make them proud of you.
  22. Understand golf and its rules. This, of course, does not mean you have to play golf, just understand it. Many of us do not appreciate a busman's holiday and shouldn't have to suffer such because someone thinks we should.
  23. In all things and all matters at work—sincerity. It is easy to spot a disingenuous person.
  24. Do your part in helping train the next generation of golf course superintendents. Provide the practical and vocational training they need and the mentoring that can be so important. As Professor James R. Love always said, this is the best way to repay those who helped you along the way.

It took an invitation from some college guys to precipitate my thoughts about longevity. Maybe this list will be a catalyst for you to do the same. If so, let me know. We can share advice with others, demonstrating that to some extent golf course superintendents are all fairway philosophers. 

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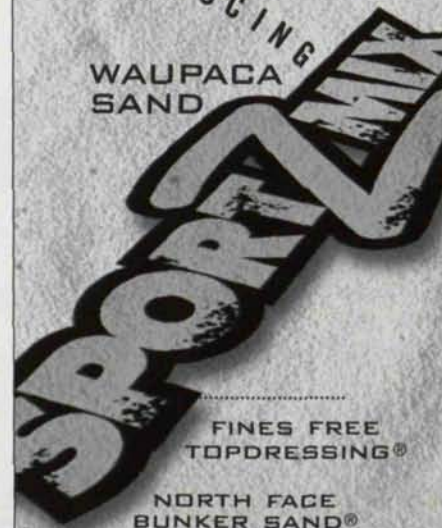
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# The Education Agenda

*Over the course of the year, the Education Committee is responsible for the presentation of education at the monthly meetings, planning the annual Midwest Turf Clinic, arranging the cohosted GCSAA regional seminars, and submitting monthly contributions to On Course in the format of the "Ask the Expert" articles. In addition to these duties, our goals for this year include:*

*Some of the Education Committee's goals for 2004 include surveying the membership regarding their interest in potential education topics, and updating the format of the Midwest Turf Clinic.*

- Provide MACGS members with the opportunity to earn more GCSAA-approved education points (EPs) at the local level.
- Develop a list of potential education topics and survey the membership regarding their interest in these topics for the development of future education programs.
- Review and update the written standard operating procedure (SOP) for the Committee.
- Recruit MAGCS members to speak at monthly meetings.
- Update the format of the annual Midwest Turf Clinic

To fully achieve these goals, we need your help! This summer we will post a survey via the Web site ([www.magcs.org](http://www.magcs.org)) to gauge membership interest on a variety of possible education topics. Please take a moment to complete the survey so that in the future we can provide the type of educational opportunities that you desire. The membership survey conducted last fall showed that a majority of the respondents would like to continue to have education offered at the monthly golf meetings. The survey also showed that members want to hear from fellow superintendents and/or assistants. The MAGCS is rich with members who have tackled various challenges throughout their careers. If you would like to share an experience, please contact me or any member of the Education Committee. Remember, we truly are our own best source of education.

We are still working on ideas for updating the Midwest Turf Clinic. Expect that we will move the annual elections to a different time slot so that they occur at a time when a greater number of voting members are present. We also plan to condense the reading of the committee reports so that the education portion of the program gets off to a faster start. Oral reports will be made by the president and the executive director; committees' annual reports will still be made available in their entirety but in a printed format and/or through the Web site. If you have any recommendations on improvements for the Midwest Turf Clinic, please forward them to me.

Finally, serving on this year's Education Committee are Dave Braasch, Robert Graziano, Pat Maksymiu, Lee Miller, Dr. Randy Kane, Dr. Ken Diesburg, Keith Krause, Doug Davis, Derek Florian, Jeff Donahoe, Larry Tomaszewski, Paul Voykin and Dave Drendel. I would like to thank these individuals for volunteering their time to serve on the Committee.



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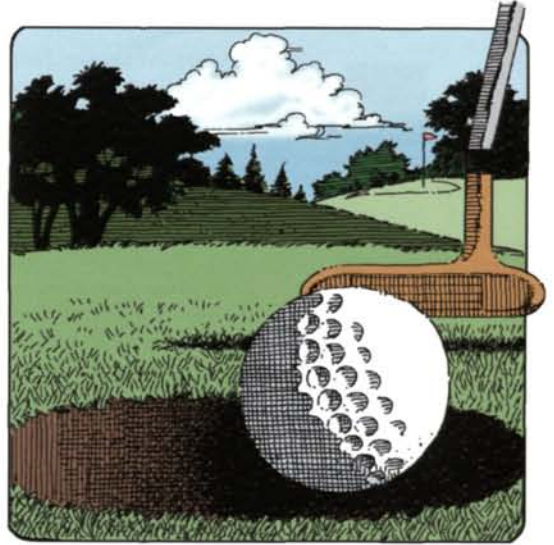
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## *The Putting Green*

*With most golf players, the quality of the putting greens of a course determines one's estimate of its excellence. If the greens are good, the course has much merit; if they are bad or indifferent, no word of praise is forthcoming – "rotten" is usually the term employed. However we may regard the judgment of the player, the fact remains that he is never satisfied if the greens are poor, no matter how excel-*

*lent the rest of the course may be. From this trait of the player it follows that the first consideration of the greenkeeper must be to secure and to maintain putting greens of high quality. If with a reasonable amount of funds he can not accomplish this end he does not deserve his job. There are very few valid excuses for the turf on putting greens going bad. For the moment the only one that comes to mind is brown patch; but with due care this can be avoided, or at least its effects greatly minimized. First-class putting greens can be established and maintained in perfect condition everywhere in the United States where bentgrass succeeds. The method is easy:*

- *Drainage*
- *A few inches of good top soil*
- *Ammonium sulfate for fertilizer, and used freely as long as clover appears in the turf*
- *An occasional top-dressing of good compost, best applied monthly during the first two years*

*The green may be sown to South German mixed bent seed, or, better, planted with stolons. It is astonishing how quickly this method makes a green of superb quality. It is astounding how quickly the same green will deteriorate from neglect or if any other known method is used. These facts ought to be*

*known and appreciated by every greenkeeper. It is quite proper to judge a greenkeeper by his greens. It is a very rare case where he can prove an alibi for poor turf on his greens. In nine cases out of ten where the turf is bad he has done some foolish thing by way of experiment. The regular putting green is not the place to experiment, except perhaps a little spot on the edge of the green where possible injury to the turf will not be disastrous. Good greens do not necessarily mean expert greenkeepers, but bad greens practically always mean inefficient greenkeepers.*



## References

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*May 16, 1925*



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| Accurate Tank Technologies          | J. W. Turf, Inc.                     |
| Aquatic Weed Technology             | Kaplan Paving                        |
| Arthur Clesen, Inc.                 | Koelper Golf Course Construction     |
| BASF                                | Larry Tomaszewski/AXA Advisors LLC   |
| Bayer Environmental Sciences        | Lebanon Turf Products                |
| Brookside Laboratories              | Lemont Paving                        |
| BTSI                                | Lewis Equipment, Inc.                |
| Burris Equipment                    | Marine Biochemists                   |
| Charles J. Fiore Co., Inc.          | Martin Design Partnership            |
| Chicagoland Turf                    | Martin Implement Sales               |
| Clarke Environmental Mosquito Mgmt. | Master of the Links                  |
| Clauss Brothers                     | Meadow Equipment, Sales & Service    |
| Commercial Turf                     | Nels Johnson Tree Experts            |
| Conserv FS                          | Old Dutch Sand Co.                   |
| Dirt -N- Turf Consulting            | On Target Animal Damage Control      |
| D & P Construction                  | Palatine Oil Company                 |
| Duntzman Turf Farms                 | Prime Turf                           |
| Frenzer Topdressing                 | ProSource One                        |
| G F Structures Corp.                | Reinders Inc.                        |
| GreenCycle, Inc.                    | Riverwalls Ltd.                      |
| Growing Solutions, Inc.             | Simplot Partners                     |
| Halloran & Yauch                    | Syngenta                             |
| Harris Motor Sports                 | Timberline                           |
| H & E Sod Nursery                   | Trzinski Golf Course Photography     |
| Hollembeak Construction             | Turf Concepts                        |
| Huber Ranch Sod Nursery             | Turf Professionals Equipment Company |
| Hydrologic Water Management Systems | Waupaca Sand & Solutions             |
| Illinois Goose Control              | Wild Goose Chase                     |
| Illinois Pump                       |                                      |