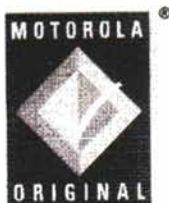


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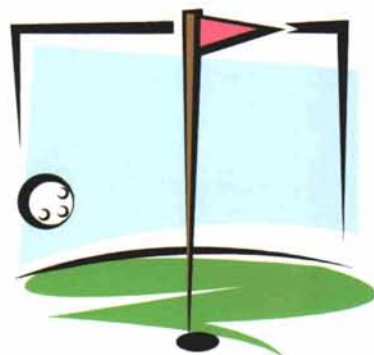
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JUNE 2005

Volume 59 No. 1

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Hole no. 2 at Phillips Park Golf Course, host site for our June golf meeting.
(Photo by Todd Schmitz)

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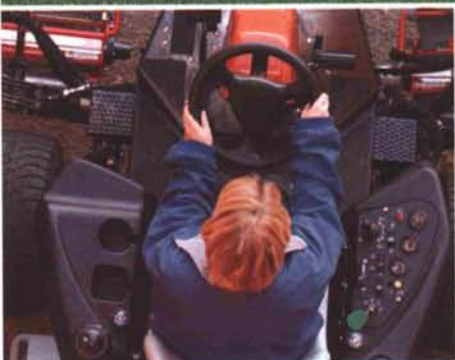
The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance.

We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

The MAGCS member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.



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Weathering the Impacts of Weather

What's with the weather this year! It seems as if the entire PGA Tour event schedule has been altered this spring, right along with the Masters. Heavy snowfall this April in Michigan cost golf courses dearly. Not to mention that Mother Nature took its toll on golf greens and fairways this past winter across the upper Midwest.

Ultimately, in most years, the good and bad weather even out and revenues and expenses do the same.

Weather is, without a doubt, our number-one variable, and how golf facilities approach weather in daily operations, project deadlines and rain-check policies can be the difference-maker to the bottom line.

Historically, attempts have been made to soften the adverse affects of weather. As cart fees became an integral part of the revenue stream, wall-to-wall cart paths became affordable and allowed cart traffic on paths when the course is saturated. And with the growth of golf and the need for increasing revenue streams during the 1990s, golf facilities were also able to spend monies on storm retention and drainage to help reduce the effects of flooding. In addition, weather programs that include lightning detection have made golf courses a safer place while offering detailed up-to-the-minute information to assist scheduling efforts.

Recently, talk of weather is more directly revenue-related, specifically having to do with rain-check policies and golfer perception with regards to weather reports. In tight economic times, golf facilities are softening their rain-check policies to persuade golfers to play during potentially inclement weather. Several members of the National Golf Course Owners Association have been meeting with weather forecasters to clarify weather forecasts. One example would be a rainy forecast for Saturday. The golfer perception is all-day misery and he neglects to make a tee time. On Saturday, it actually rains for only two hours in the morning. If the weather forecast was for the best chance of rain to be in the early morning and eventual clearing, a tee time may have been booked. The combined impact of more favorable weather forecasting and liberal rain-check policies will help revenue streams during wet weather.

Ultimately, in most years, the good and bad weather even out and revenues and expenses do the same. However, what can be devastating is prolonged or severe weather. These events can seriously jeopardize a golf facility, especially during tight economic times. More and more clubs are considering or have taken insurance policies to cover financial losses due to extreme weather.

And with the changing weather coming this summer, historical records and notes become great tools to prepare your facility for budget increases or variances. How will water and labor expenses change should we approach prolonged dry weather like that of 1988? Or what would be some strategies to inform pesticide variances should we encounter the humidity and heat of 1995? One should consider a heads-up to managers and green chairmen should we continue to experience weather not unlike 1995, when the plant protectant budget increased threefold.

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Our Renewed Commitment to PR

Public relations – *‘The business of inducting the public to have understanding for and goodwill toward a person, firm or institution.’* – Webster’s Dictionary

So what is the MAGCS doing in terms of public relations?

As chair of the Media/Public Relations Committee, my goal this year is to get the local media involved with the MAGCS by inviting them to attend our monthly meetings; in the near future, we’d like to have a “media day” golf tournament with superintendents and make this an annual event. I would also like us to have a booth at the annual Chicago Golf Show that is held during the month of March at the Rosemont Convention Center, as this event is well-attended. We need to be more visible at the local golf tournaments, from the Western Open to the Walker Cup. We could resume our involvement with CLTV, maybe make a DVD on IPM.

To get a better feel for dealing with media/public relations, I attended a Chapter Leaders/Executives Symposium with Luke Cella at the GCSAA Headquarters in Lawrence, Kansas during the month of April. This symposium was well-attended by a wide variety of people from both the USA and Canada. This was my first visit and hopefully will not be my last; GCSAA has an impressive building. Our speaker for this event was Jeffrey Cufaupe from Idea Architects; the sole purpose of this seminar was to enhance the chapter by incorporating new ideas, engaging volunteers and members, and undertaking strategic goals and action planning.

What I liked about this seminar was that Jeffrey broke the larger topic into categories that were important to individual chapters. Luke and I participated in separate categories to gain more information. This took place throughout both days; unfortunately, Jeffrey became ill on the second day and the “inmates” (attendees) took over after Steve Mona gave his speech. If you ever get a chance to take a seminar by Jeffrey Cufaupe, please enrich yourself with his ideas. I took a Personal Development Profile (DiSC) and really found out what kind of person I am and how to work with others who have completely different personalities or traits.

Jeffrey also talked about maximizing the staff-volunteer partnership by defining roles and expectations of the Board/staff, updating SOPs, believing in your mission and vision, and effectively managing/developing needs of the membership. Another session talked about trends impacting the golf course superintendent’s profession, from chapter operations to what members find meaningful. The biggest concerns are TIME, placing a premium on fun because of information overload, people wanting clear value for their time/money, and people wanting to network with others who are most like them and get real-time solutions. People are going to communicate more via the Internet by accessing interactive chat rooms and links to turf schools.

The last session was entitled “Securing the Future” and dealt with mentoring your successor, creating a vision for your association, creating a strategic plan and using a chapter assessment tool. You can see that our chapter has already implemented these ideas. This seminar gave me a good base to work

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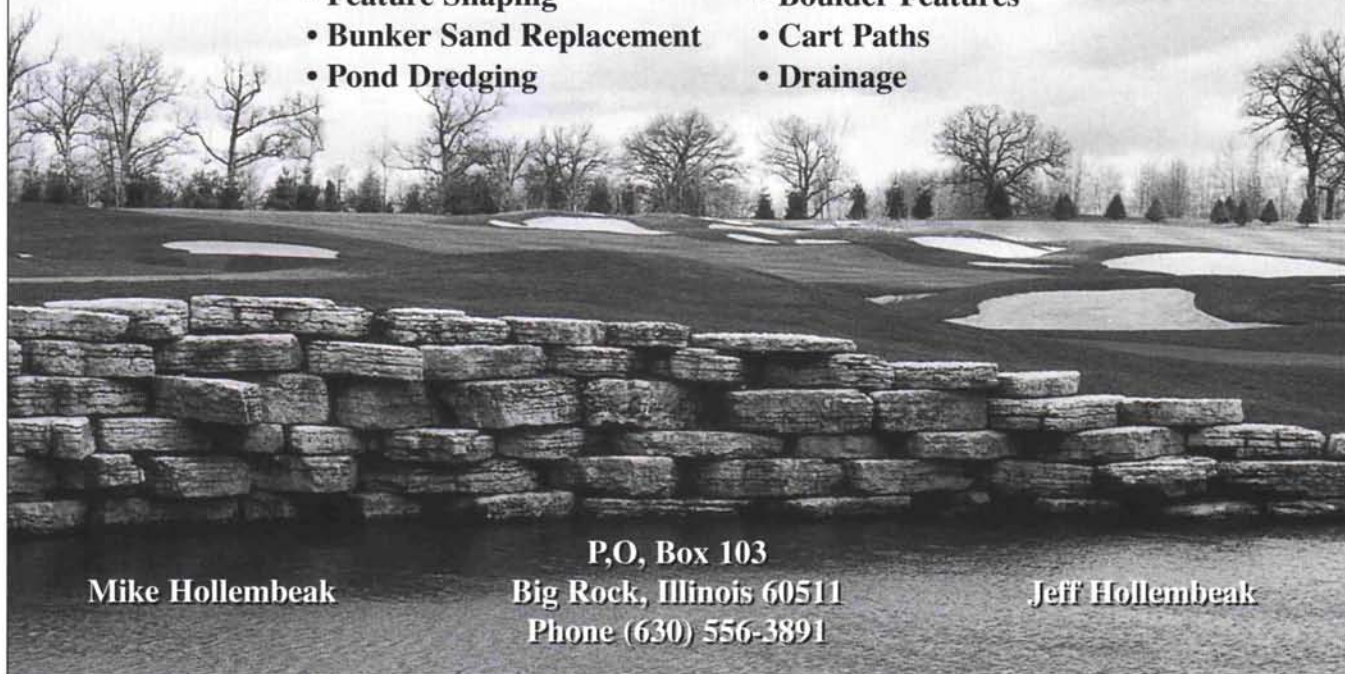
*The Media/
Public Relations
Committee has
generated a number
of ideas for getting
the local media
more involved
with the MAGCS.*

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Naturalized areas can be a boon to wildlife. Golfers beware!

Unmowed Rough: Research Update

Native and naturalized unmowed roughs are popular at many established and newly constructed Midwestern golf courses. Superintendents have come to realize that these areas often reduce labor, fuel use and pest-control chemical use compared to mowed areas that receive more intense management. In addition, since these areas use native and naturalized plants that are well-adapted to the locale, potential pest and environmental problems may be reduced. Finally, native and naturalized areas can enhance the golfing experience and increase wildlife habitat and diversity.

During the past years, we have studied native and exotic grasses and forbs to respond to superintendent questions about creating desirable out-of-play roughs. This work began in 1988 when we studied a group of native Midwestern grasses at the University of Illinois Landscape Horticulture Research Center in Urbana, IL (Voigt, 1993). These grasses were selected for their aesthetic appeal and their tolerance to a variety of environmental settings. After three years of evaluation, side-oats grama, blue grama, purple lovegrass, little bluestem and prairie dropseed demonstrated the potential to perform well in some unmowed roughs (Voigt, 1993).

Results of this evaluation were used to develop a planting plan for an unmowed rough area on the south course at Olympia Fields Country Club in suburban Chicago. While mostly successful, this experience exposed several problems with an all-grass design, including weed invasion, planting methods and golfer acceptance (Voigt, 1996). We learned some golfers accustomed to the previous wall-to-wall mowing were displeased by the unkempt nature of the unmowed rough areas. We also learned that golfers often like to see some colorful wildflowers in unmowed areas; the perception of a “grasses only”

planting was that they were weedy, while the addition of native flowering plants (forbs) created the perception of a “wildflower garden.”

Later, we established a native plant study at three Chicago-area golf courses in full sun or light shade (Voigt, 2001; Voigt, 2000; Voigt, 1999). This research was cosponsored by GCSAA and the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, was established in 1997 and was designed to improve

(continued on page 8)



Tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*) creates a tough, sustainable unmowed rough that is coarse-textured and difficult to hit from.

golf course superintendents' knowledge and understanding of more than 50 species of native grasses, sedges and forbs for planting in out-of-play roughs. Over two growing seasons, the aesthetic values of these plants were evaluated in unmowed roughs and the long-term performance of the plants was evaluated following three different planting-bed preparations. Nodding wild onion, false sunflower, ironweed, Culver's root, rattlesnake master, yellow coneflower, foxglove digitalis, mountain mint and stiff goldenrod can be valuable because of their attractive flowers (Voigt, 2001; Voigt, 2000; Voigt, 1999).

This previous work, along with continued questions and interest from local superintendents, provided the impetus to establish another study in late summer 2000 in which seeded cool-season and potted warm-season unmowed grasses were

evaluated at the University of Illinois Orange Course in Savoy, IL (Voigt and Tallarico, 2004). Seeded cool-season grasses (redtop, orchardgrass, Kentucky 31 tall fescue, Millennium tall fescue, fine fescue blend, Timothy) planted in this study required nearly a year to completely cover the plots at the selected seeding rates. These grasses began flowering in spring 2002 and 2003 (Voigt and Tallarico, 2004).

In this group, the fine fescue foliage was the most ornamental of any of the seeded cool-season grasses each year through midsummer. By late summer, however, this foliage had become matted down and required mowing. Overall, because of their heights, the fine fescue blend and the tall fescues appeared to be the most useful cool-season seeded species in the study. Conversely, the orchardgrass and Timothy were too tall to be used anywhere except in

very far roughs; both species have been grown successfully in shaded unmowed roughs at courses in the Chicago area and could be useful in similar settings elsewhere (Voigt and Tallarico, 2004).

Based on grass performance, mowing the cool-season grasses in this study once per year in autumn or once in spring and once in autumn produced the best season-long appearance. This became apparent during the later portions of the 2002 growing season when all the cool-season grasses required mowing because of woody weed invasion and a generally unkempt appearance (Voigt and Tallarico, 2004).

The transplanted grasses planted in this study were side-oats grama, tufted hairgrass, switchgrass and little bluestem. Side-oats grama and little bluestem grasses required tighter spacing than the spacing (one plant per 2.2 square feet) used in this



Blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) plots at the Landscape Horticulture Research Center in Urbana.



Purple lovegrass (Eragrostis spectabilis) in bloom at the research plot area at the Midwest Golf House.

study; the planting rate was inadequate and allowed excessive weed invasion. However, in two growing seasons, switchgrass planted at the same spacing has covered the plots (Voigt and Tallarico, 2004).

The rust-red little bluestem foliage in autumn was the most ornamental aspect in the entire study. Switchgrass (4-6 feet), little bluestem (3-4 feet) and side-oats grama (3-4 feet) may all be too tall for some unmowed out-of-play areas (Voigt and Tallarico, 2004).

Current Study

In early 2003, Randy Kane, Jonathan S. Jennings, CGCS and I received funding from the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation. Our unmowed rough studies began later in 2003 when we developed plantings at the Chicago District Golf Association's Midwest

Golf House's Sunshine Course located near Cog Hill Golf Course in Lemont. The Sunshine Course is a three-hole course developed to serve youth and those with disabilities, and accommodate golfer instruction. In addition, this course is readily available to Chicago-area golf personnel and is an outstanding site to present research and field day activities of regional interest. The Midwest Golf House short course is an ideal setting to conduct this project. It has areas that border on wetlands in which we can examine species and mixes that provide a suitable buffer between the highly maintained turf and the natural settings.

A unique feature of this work is that we intended to evaluate and employ native plants from Chicago Golf Club (CGC) in Wheaton. Much of the unmowed rough area at CGC has only been grazed since settlement. The plants growing in the unmowed roughs are certainly sus-

(continued on page 11)

Unmowed rough areas may meet with golfer resistance; adding some colorful wildflowers in these areas can mitigate the perception of such areas as being weedy or unkempt.



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