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# OCTOBER 2005

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### FRONT COVER

Hole no. 16, a 523-yard par 5, at Inverness Golf Club, host of the MAGCS/ITF Combined Golf Day and MAGCS college championship this October.  
(Photo by Jim Trzinski/Trzinski Golf Course Photography)

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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.

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Phil Zeinert, CGCS Elgin Country Club


# Looking Ahead, Looking Back

*October is the perfect time to evaluate our efforts and programs of the past season to prepare programs and budgets for the next golfing season. We all know how vital drainage and irrigation are to successful grass-growing, and this past summer thoroughly tested everyone's irrigation infrastructure. Now is an opportune time to make long-range plans with decision-makers at your facility concerning quality and ample water sources, as well as updated pumping stations and irrigation systems. I was very fortunate this season that several years ago, the entire irrigation infrastructure at my club was updated. The long-range planning committee at Elgin Country Club realizes the importance of this and has plans for updates 17 years from now. And I wouldn't stop with just the irrigation system—take into consideration the other extreme of too wet and update all surface and subsurface drainage. After all, you are protecting the number-one asset at your facility.*

*Fall is the time  
to draw upon  
lessons learned  
to better address  
long-range issues  
like irrigation,  
drainage and  
grass selection.*

Another consideration for long-range planning this fall is the introduction of grasses that are best suited for a particular golf course. This issue is most paramount for golf courses utilizing effluent water in the far southern regions of the United States. This past winter, I played several rounds of golf with members from Elgin Country Club at a golf course in southern Florida. The entire facility is watered with effluent from the surrounding community. As a test run, the club replanted its practice facility with salt-tolerant paspalum to see how the members responded to the playing surface. The test run also allowed the superintendent time to experience growing in and managing the grass. The members loved the new paspalum surface. The entire golf course had a successful renovation this past summer with a surface the members like and a turf that is easier to maintain given the use of effluent water.

On Mondays, when Elgin Country Club is closed, I converse with retired long-time superintendent Bill Leith. During one of our Monday meetings, Bill left me his collection of *Bull Sheets* dating back to the early 1960s. I haven't had a lot of time to read all of the issues, but in browsing through them one person seemed to frequent many editions: Dudley Smith. So many of the things we enjoy with the MAGCS and GCSAA and our golfing community come directly from the efforts of Dudley. Thanks, Dudley.

My 10-year-old son, Jonah, is at a stage in his life where he questions everything. The questions concern nearly every possible subject matter and almost become annoying due to frequency and persistence. There was another person in my life who questioned every single aspect of growing turf and performing the tasks of being a superintendent. His questions at Kishwaukee Country Club were relentless, each and every day. He would approach me at the end of each day with a slight grin to set the stage for another question-and-answer session. This memory always brings a smile. Thanks, Derek. 



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## Change in the Air at 53rd Midwest Turf Clinic

*As the hours of daylight shorten and the 2005 golf season draws to a close, the delights of fall emerge. Fall brings leaves in resplendent color, harvests, college football and morning frosts. As is the case with these fall traditions, our Association's Midwest Turf Clinic is drawing near. Plans are nearly finished for the 53rd Annual Midwest Turf Clinic, which will take place this year on Wednesday, November 2, at Medinah Country Club. On behalf of the volunteers on the MAGCS Education Committee, and the MAGCS Board of Directors, I am proud to reveal the schedule of speakers, topics and theme for this year's clinic. Here's a brief snapshot:*

*This year's edition  
of the Midwest  
Turf Clinic  
addresses many  
facets of change,  
from career moves  
to climate shifts.  
"Da Coach,"  
Mike Ditka, is  
our scheduled  
keynote speaker.*

"Change, Change, Change" is the Clinic's theme this year based on the events that shaped our local Association, industry and profession in 2005. Eleven golf course superintendents, ten of whom are MAGCS members and seven of whom are certified golf course superintendents, will be imparting their wisdom, insights and knowledge on us at this year's clinic along with our other illustrious invited guests.

The drought of 2005 certainly had a significant impact throughout the entire northern Illinois region. Along that front (pardon the pun), Doug Sistrerson, M.S., operations manager and research meteorologist for U.S. Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory in Woodridge, IL, will address our group on weather conditions and forecast information modeling. With any fortune, Doug's presentation will be accompanied by an abundance of much-needed precipitation. His insights and outlook on regional climatic weather "changes" will be interesting and informative.

For Tim Anderson of Naperville C.C., Dave Blomquist of Twin Orchards C.C., Mike Mumper of Lakeshore C.C. and Joel Purpur of Park Ridge C.C., 2005 started out with a serious "change" when these four distinguished, veteran, certified golf course superintendents made the big move. What is it like to leave one prized superintendent's position for another after being so successful at one club for so long? They went from being longstanding, highly regarded superintendents at some of the finest-conditioned private clubs in Chicagoland, to being the "new kid on the block" at a new club this year. These gentlemen will share their experiences with the "changes" they faced in 2005 during a roundtable discussion. This morning roundtable will be moderated by Paul Voykin of Briarwood C.C., whose style and wit alone may be worth the price of admission.

The MAGCS welcomed four new, first-year superintendents to the neighborhood in 2005. What a season it must have been to "pull the reins" for the first time as superintendents. Nick Baker of Riverside C.C., Jeff Pozen of Downers Grove G.C., Brian Racette of Lincoln Oaks C.C. and Tim White of Prestwick C.C. will disclose the "changes" they experienced in their first season during a discussion entitled "Changing Hats—A Roundtable of the MAGCS's Newest Superintendents." This afternoon roundtable will be moderated by the Merit Club's Oscar L. Miles, CGCS, whose "L" stands for "Legendary."

Also on the docket, Mark Esoda, CGCS, of Atlanta C.C. in Atlanta, GA will be presenting "Managing Change for Personal and Facility Success." His tips, techniques and advice promise to be copious. The MAGCS will be the

*(continued on page 6)*



"guinea pigs" for Mark's new GCSAA seminar on the aforementioned topic. He will start making the circuits with this seminar in 2006. He has a wealth of skills and views on the subject of communicating "change" that he will be sharing.

"Changing Directions—The Ethics and Leadership of Change" is the name of the address to be given by Dr. Keith Krasemann. Dr. Krasemann is a renowned author, consultant and lecturer on business ethics and leadership, time and change management, and personal development. Dr. Krasemann is a professor of philosophy and director

of Asian studies development programs at the College of DuPage in Wheaton, IL. His expertise is clear, and his presentation should be outstanding in entertainment, content and delivery.

Our keynote speaker is former NFL coach and player, "Da Coach" of the Chicago Bears for many years, Mike Ditka. Mike played or coached in the National Football League from 1961 to 2000. Mike has three Super Bowl rings: one for Super Bowl VII, as a player for the Dallas Cowboys; one for Super Bowl XII, as an assistant coach for the Cowboys; and of course, one for Super Bowl XX, when

he was head coach of the Chicago Bears. A 1988 inductee into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Coach Ditka is a Chicago sports icon and legend. He is also an author, actor, restaurateur and TV color commentator. His accounts of playing and coaching pro football and reflections on life will surely entertain us.

We have planned an exciting clinic. Come early to ensure a good seat. You do not want to miss the Midwest Association at its finest. Hope to see everyone on November 2.



### 53rd Midwest Turf Clinic & MAGCS Annual Meeting

November 2, 2005

Medinah Country Club

#### "CHANGE, CHANGE, CHANGE"

##### Tentative Agenda

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 7-8 a.m.              | Continental Breakfast & Registration   |
| 8-8:30 a.m.           | MAGCS Annual Meeting   |
| A.M. Moderator        | Paul Voykin, GCS @ Briarwood C.C.  |
| 8:30-9:30 a.m.        | Mark Esoda, CGCS @ Atlanta C.C., "Managing Change for Personal and Facility Success"   |
| 9:30-10:30 a.m.       | Doug Sisterson, M.S., Meteorologist, Argonne National Lab, "Climatic Weather Changes"  |
| 10:30-10:45 a.m.      | Break  |
| 10:45-11:30 a.m.      | "Changing Places—A Roundtable of MAGCS Veterans 'On the Move' in 2005"<br>Tim Anderson, CGSC @ Naperville C.C., Dave Blomquist, CGCS @ Twin Orchards C.C.,<br>Mike Mumper, CGCS @ Lakeshore C.C. and Joel Purpur, CGCS @ Park Ridge C.C. |
| 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | Lunch  |
| P.M. Moderator        | Oscar L. Miles, CGCS @ Merit Club  |
| 12:30-1:15 p.m.       | - Ray Gerber Award Presentation<br>- Fred Opperman Award Presentation<br>- Chapter Delegate Update<br>- President's Award Presentation<br>- Scholarship Donations Announcement<br>- Elections  |
| 1:15-1:45 p.m.        | "Changing Hats—A Roundtable of the MAGCS's Newest Superintendents"<br>Nick Baker @ Riverside C.C., Jeff Pozen @ Downers Grove G.C.,<br>Tim White @ Prestwick C.C. and Brian Racette @ Lincoln Oaks C.C.                                  |
| 1:45-2:00 p.m.        | Break  |
| 2:00-3:00 p.m.        | Keith Krasemann, Ph. D., College of DuPage,<br>"Changing Directions—The Ethics and Leadership of Change"   |
| 3:00-4:00 p.m.        | Mike Ditka, NFL Player, Coach and Pro Football Hall of Famer<br>Keynote Address: Commentary from "Da Coach"  |
| 4:00-4:30 p.m.        | - Election Results<br>- Past President's Address<br>- Gavel Pass<br>- New President's Address<br>- Adjournment   |



# Is the Tree Program Working for Your Club?

*A tee with a shade problem, due to trees having been planted too close to the teeing area.  
(Note: Images do NOT depict "Bad Tree Country Club.")*

*As Henry Beard observed in Mulligan's Laws: "You can hit a 200-acre fairway 10 percent of the time and a two-inch branch 90 percent of the time."*

*... the very grandeur that prompts us to value trees can adversely affect maintenance of turfgrass, especially on tees, fairways and greens.*

Golfers may grin in validation of his calculus, but it also suggests the ambivalent feelings about trees in golf course architecture. On the one hand, trees are unquestionably among the most visually appealing features of many parkland courses found throughout the Great Lakes region and elsewhere. Beard's quip also captures the tree's uncanny intrigue as a properly deployed design element.

But trees can also be problematic for the strategic integrity of a given hole; and because unlike, say, bunkers, trees are not static entities, their rapid growth can compromise a well-conceived original design. What's more, the very grandeur that prompts us to value trees can adversely affect maintenance of turfgrass, especially on tees, fairways and greens.

Equilibrium in a course's tree program is possible, however, and what follows is an object lesson in the problems typically found on many golf courses I have consulted with. The fictitious name of the otherwise anonymous course provides a clue to the success of their old approach.

## **Case Study: BAD TREE COUNTRY CLUB**

Purists argue that it is doubtful that trees even have a place in terms of a course's strategy considering their vulnerability to storms, disease or other forms of instantaneous elimination. This is a debate relegated to academia, or the taproom by the actual state of affairs at many courses I have visited, including Bad Tree.

At Bad Tree, a very prominent property in the Great Lakes region, I was flabbergasted by the negative effect the tree program, or absence of one, had

*(continued on page 9)*





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on this classic layout, whose design dates to the early 1900s. Studying the club's early aerial photographs revealed that the golf course architect specifically intended for certain trees to influence the layout, playability and strategy in a certain and limited way. In round numbers, this meant only about 300 specimens in the entire layout, which occupies roughly 175 acres.

As frequently happens, an esteemed member with the best of intentions decided to start a tree-planting campaign in the mid 1960s. This continued in the years following, all without involvement of a professional golf course architect. The result, needless to say, was a lot of trees, the placement of which often seemed random, devoid of planning for future consequences.

During an initial visit, I asked the greens committee chairman if the club knew how many trees were currently on the golf course. He responded that he did not know but indicated that the committee was

aware of the existing tree program's downside: This wonderful, formerly spacious design had wrongfully evolved into a tight course with fairways framed by huge tree canopies.

Again, the image is not unappealing in itself; but, sadly, the damage to the golf experience is immense. Even as the committee acknowledged the problem, members were reluctant to have any of the trees removed. Twenty years in this field tells me the prevalence of this attitude is roughly equal—90 percent—to the probability of whacking that two-inch tree branch between you and the green. It is very difficult for club officials to give the green light to remove a tree that Jane Doe donated to the club, in memory of John, years ago.

It is implausible to ignore such sentiments in devising a tree program, so a little creativity is required. Acknowledge members' contributions in the tree department via a substitute memento, perhaps a plaque in the grillroom, a bench on the course, that sort of thing—a simulta-

neous nod to the traditions of the club and the benefits of at least some change.

My experience at Bad Tree also duplicated a scenario common among previous clients, that is, failure to correctly prioritize the tree program, which they viewed as incidental, amidst a comprehensive renovation involving new or revamped teeing grounds, bunkers, cart paths, drainage, the works. These other items needed attention, this I conceded, but the tree problem required immediate action since it had implications for all other design options being contemplated.

Shortcomings in the layout specifically related to trees included diminished playability. For example, impinging tree lines made using a driver off many tees—even ones where the hole's yardage indicated it ought to be a necessity—a foolish choice, as the fairways were undulating and pitched toward the woods. The problem was exacerbated by landing areas

(continued on page 10)

*This hole was so overplanted during its 60-year-plus history that the tee shot has no margin of error; the trees force golfers to hit iron off the tee. Driver is not an option.*





seemingly apportioned for PGA Tour pros: 100-140 feet (tree line to tree line), in many instances.

The flip side is enhanced “playability” in ways that the architect of record plainly did not envision. Dogleg fairways are usually circumscribed by trees where such fauna exist. For better or worse, advances in club and ball technology, and therefore ball flight, have fundamentally altered the proportions of these older dogleg configurations. Whereas they once rewarded the shaping of shots around trees, modern shot trajectories simply fly the tree and the corner of the dogleg, often at the tee shot’s zenith. The tree can be returned to the strategic equation by juggling other proportions of the design. Moving the tees back is the most obvious one, naturally, but there are other tactics available. Narrowing the fairway opposite the dogleg with a hazard, to name one, can encourage players to try to cut the dogleg, while making it

the low-percentage play.

Still, while the obsolete dogleg tree is, in effect, too small, too big is a much more ubiquitous problem in tree programs. Because of overgrown trees at Bad Tree, as little as one-third of the total square footage of most tees was effectively usable. In some cases, overhanging trees dictated club selection and ball flight, even on longer holes—okay for those of us proficient in hitting that “stinger” 2-iron, not so good for the rest of us. The difficulty was compounded by generally inadequate “bail-out” areas for missed tee shots.

This problem’s obnoxious cousin is a canopy substantial enough to block a significant portion of the green from all but a discreet area of the fairway, in turn demanding not just a shaped shot but a “tricked up” slice or hook. From the sublime to the ridiculous, this situation existed in 11 iterations at Bad Tree.

Marginal tree programs even have nonplaying victims. A round

with the greens committee chairman at Bad Tree included a conversation with two gentlemen who had evidently spent a good deal of the day searching for and playing balls in the woods. They complained about poor turf conditions in the dense forest, concluding that the club “needed to find a superintendent who could grow grass.” I felt compelled to respond that the most talented superintendent in America could not possibly grow healthy turf in these areas with virtually no sunlight. Even the bulging tree roots pointed to the lack of water and nutrients; worse, the same phenomenon was at work on numerous tees and fairways.

Most disheartening, though, was the shot-making challenge posed by the tree canopy between fairway bunker and the green, thus largely eliminating the possibility of extricating oneself from difficulty with a quality bunker shot. Such “double jeopardy” golf predicaments, I tried to explain diplomatically, were

*Again due to overplanting, the back right corner of this green doesn’t get morning sun and will experience more disease problems than the rest of the green due to lack of air and sunlight.*

