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E-mail: switte@tribune.com

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E-mail: Boomding@aol.com  
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Three putting surfaces at Makray, the 3rd, 4th and 2nd cut into the existing stands of oaks.  
(photo credit: Luke Cella)

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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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# Involvement

*The long days of summer have ended and cool temperatures have returned at night. All the turf has survived and the kids are back in school. There is no need for aerification or overseeding this fall – riiiiight.*

*The committees  
certainly set the  
tone and shape  
the Board of  
Directors.*

The PGA Tournament has come and gone and the Chicago area is back to normal. Baseball season is winding down and football season is breaking huddle. I hope everybody made it through the summer without too many problems. Personally, my tee banks had a lot of crabgrass and a couple of my greens had a touch of anthracnose this summer. Unfortunately, like most, my staff gets smaller during this time of year. This always makes aerification and planned projects even more difficult to accomplish. With golf leagues played into September, my aerification is pushed farther into late September or even early October.

As fall approaches, so does the MAGCS Championship on September 25th at Makray Memorial Golf Club. I had the chance to play there last month at a park district function and Superintendent Chris Blake has it playing well. I really like the layout and variation of holes. I hope everybody can take some time out of their busy schedule and make the trip to Barrington. Also, we will be playing at Tom Prichard's place – Ivanhoe C.C. on October 2nd for ITF/MAGCS combined college championship. Plan to come out and support the ITF and compete in this fun event. Next on our calendar is our big event, the Midwest Turf Clinic at Medinah. (I've been trying to get golf included that day) and it will be held on November 1st. Tony Kalina assures the day will be extremely educational with breath-taking entertainment. This event is our celebration for another year and the end of my Presidency even if we don't play golf.

I hope everybody enjoyed this golf season. The Arrangement committee did a great job covering both the south and north side of Chicago this year. Now, I urge you to think about getting involved with MAGCS. Join a committee or run for the Board. The 2006 elections are around the corner and we will have committee sign up sheets at the Midwest Turf Clinic. I have been involved for about ten years. I started on a committee and would suggest you do the same. The MAGCS is a strong Association because of its committee structure and involvement. The committees certainly set the tone and shape the Board of Directors. Committees are responsible for many projects and tasks: writing articles, setting up arrangements, seeking educational topics and speakers, meeting with other industry professionals, etc. If you have the desire and admiration to sit on the board, then make that commitment. This experience will be greatly rewarded.





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# Would our Jobs Be Easier?

*Friday during The Open Championship, there was a lightning delay here at the course, and I happened to be in the Pro Shop. The Open was on TV. A group of us were watching while waiting for the all clear signal. Mrs. Fitzgerald said "Look at that course, isn't it just ugly."*

"No, I think it looks really great," I replied.

"But it's not green. It looks like our course in Arizona during the winter," she said.

The conversation continued with me explaining that the course was playing the way golf was intended to be played, and that you have to play a different game on courses like the ones in the Open Championship rotation. I said, "When you play courses like that, you have to play a ground game, not an aerial game like the one we are used to playing here in America."

Mrs. Bulthuis heard me say that and asked, "You mean I'm supposed to hit the ball on the ground and not in the air?"

I explained to Mrs. Bulthuis what I meant by the ground game: how you have to play shots anticipating how the ball will roll after hitting it to a certain area. I still don't think she was buying into what I was trying to explain. She is probably still thinking: *why do we let someone who's telling me to hit the ball on the ground take care of our golf course? He doesn't seem to know anything about the game of golf.*

Then Mrs. Koch said "My husband and I played over there and I didn't like it. When we finished the 9th hole we weren't anywhere near the clubhouse;\* it was really windy; and some of them didn't have any water coolers on the course."

"And I bet you didn't see many beverage carts over there," I said.

"Yes, you're right," she replied.

This whole conversation made me start to think about many things. I'm not picking on Mrs. Fitzgerald, Mrs. Bulthuis or Mrs. Koch. They are great members, very supportive of our operation, and cause us no problems. But, are they a reflection of what the American golfer thinks? We all realize how much the game has changed over the years, how the game is played differently here in America than it is in other parts of the world, how we strive for perfection in our golf courses, but I never realized what the golfers' thoughts were until I had this conversation.

It made me wonder whether our jobs would be easier if we were to condition our golf courses differently; or would we be dealing with another set of problems. With our expertise and wealth of knowledge, I am sure we would be able to adapt. We would still have to deal with Mother Nature. There would be droughts and periods of heavy rainfall, wind, cold, heat, etc. What would our members or customers think if we were to let the course go completely dormant during the summertime? Like Mrs. Fitzgerald they would probably think the course was ugly, but would it be healthier? Would our revenues be down because we have no beverage cart? Would we have no players or members because our courses are brown and deemed to be dead, not dormant, by the golfer? Probably. Would we even need the beverage cart to produce more revenue if we were spending less on maintaining the golf course?

*(continued on page 6)*

*I still don't think she was buying into what I was trying to explain.*



Or, would we be spending the same money dealing with a different set of problems?

Would there be a huge debate about how far the golf ball travels if the ground was firm? Perhaps technology in ball and club design would take a backseat to course conditions when the ball flight is not all carry. Sure, the long hitters would still hit it farther, but would it be as big a controversy as it is now? Maybe. Tiger Woods used his driver only once during The Open Championship. I think there are a hundred questions we could ask. There is probably no right or wrong answer, but it is fun trying to think about how things may be different. Would our jobs be easier, harder or about the same?

We have all had to deal with significant weather extremes this summer. Nighttime lows in the 80s, heat indexes of 108-110°, thunderstorms at the wrong time, no rain at all, have made it a very interesting and trying summer to say the least. I have been fortunate to have a Green Chairman who is very understanding

and supportive of our operation. He is one of the few that really understands and appreciates what it takes to produce the conditions we maintain (he likes to cut down trees even more than I do). He thoroughly reads every piece of literature I give him. At this time of year, I really believe that he reads more of the magazine *Golf Course Management* than I do. When I speak to Mr. Lowrie and update him on things happening around the course, and he senses that I may be a little down or worn out, he always ends our conversation with the phrase "Keep the Faith." For whatever reason I kept this saying in my head during the extreme conditions we have had. It always seemed to ease the pain and frustration just a bit and help me think that things were eventually going to be better.

Another little thing that keeps me going is something I picked up from Oscar Miles when I worked for him. Every morning when we would sit down to plan out the day's work, I could read the words Oscar had on the wall behind his desk:

*God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I can not change  
the courage to change the things I can  
and the wisdom to know the difference*

These words have helped me to understand and get through some tough times, and this summer was certainly a tough one. I hope everyone has a very enjoyable and successful rest of the year, and remember, Keep the Faith.

*\*In the book, The Anatomy Of A Golf Course, by Tom Doak, "Links" is defined as "A seaside golf course constructed on naturally sandy ground with undulations formed by wind and receding tides. The first golf courses in Britain were all links. Frequently the term is misused in America to describe a) any course, b) any seaside course, c) a course which does not return to the clubhouse at the 9th hole (as many authentic British links do not.)"*



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## Midwest Breezes



### Ravinia Green Country Club, Tommy Robinson

I had the pleasure of playing golf with Tommy Robinson during the July meeting at Old Oak Country Club. It was incredible to watch Tommy shoot even par on a golf course that he had never played before. If you have ever seen Tommy hit the ball you might think that his score is mostly owing to his power and distance, but what I witnessed at Old Oak was a very analytical and studied game.

Tommy Robinson is gifted with great golf sensibility, and this is evident not only in his game, but in his work at Ravinia Green. He has completely remodeled nearly every hole at Ravinia Green.

Ravinia Green was designed by Packard who had a partiality for enormous, above grade, tilted, saucer shaped bunkers, which drain very poorly after the sand washes out from seasonal rainfalls. When Tommy began remodeling these bunkers, he spent days just hauling the sand away to get at the base of the bunker to begin his shaping. He solved this problem by digging a deep hole with a backhoe on the remodeling site, and pushing all of the old

sand into the hole. With the sand out of the way, Tommy now removes the topsoil with a bobcat and stock piles it nearby. The clay base of the old bunker is now used to build several smaller bunkers, or mounds. Tommy does all of the shaping with a bobcat, and he has discovered that a triplex mower can effectively mow whatever is built by a bobcat, with no push mower or trim work. As you can see from the photos, the shape and style of Tommy's bunkers are beautiful, and functional.

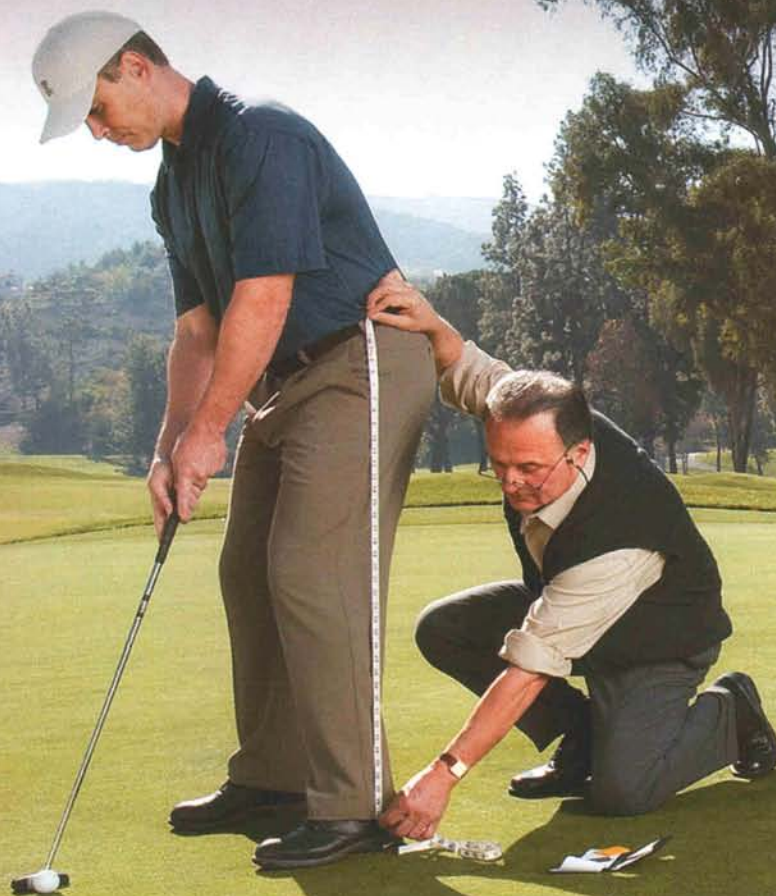
Tommy has also gotten away from the Packard/Harris concept of placing substantial amounts of sand on slopes that will wash out with every rain. The remodeled bunkers are flat, with just enough sand flashed upwards to alert the golfer of the bunker's presence. But be aware, there are several hidden bunkers at Ravinia Green that Tommy has hidden behind other bunkers and mounds. Tommy feels that a golf course doesn't have to show all of its secrets during your first round.

When the bunker shape is complete, Tommy installs

*(continued on page 9)*







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tile and pea gravel drainage. For coring out the sand cavity, Tommy lays a roll of sod, upside down around the perimeter of the cavity. He then runs a sod cutter for two or three passes, set deep, along the inside of the sod roll, removing the soil that the sod cutter peels away. After the topsoil is re-spread around the embankments, against the upside down sod roll perimeter, and the final layer of sod is placed over the upside down layer of sod, the cavity ends up being approximately 4 inches deep where the sand meets the bluegrass edge.

Tommy also grows all of his annual flowers in-house from seed. Over the years he has collected seed from some rare and interesting flower varieties. When I played golf at Ravinia with two of my boys we stopped and admired these huge salvia flowers. They were just beginning to flower, and they are only half way to maturity. Tommy tells me that these Salvia flowers grow up to seven feet tall. He collected the seed from this variety many years ago on an estate, and he has successfully perpetuated from seed all of these years.



### Old Elm Club, Ed Fischer, CGCS



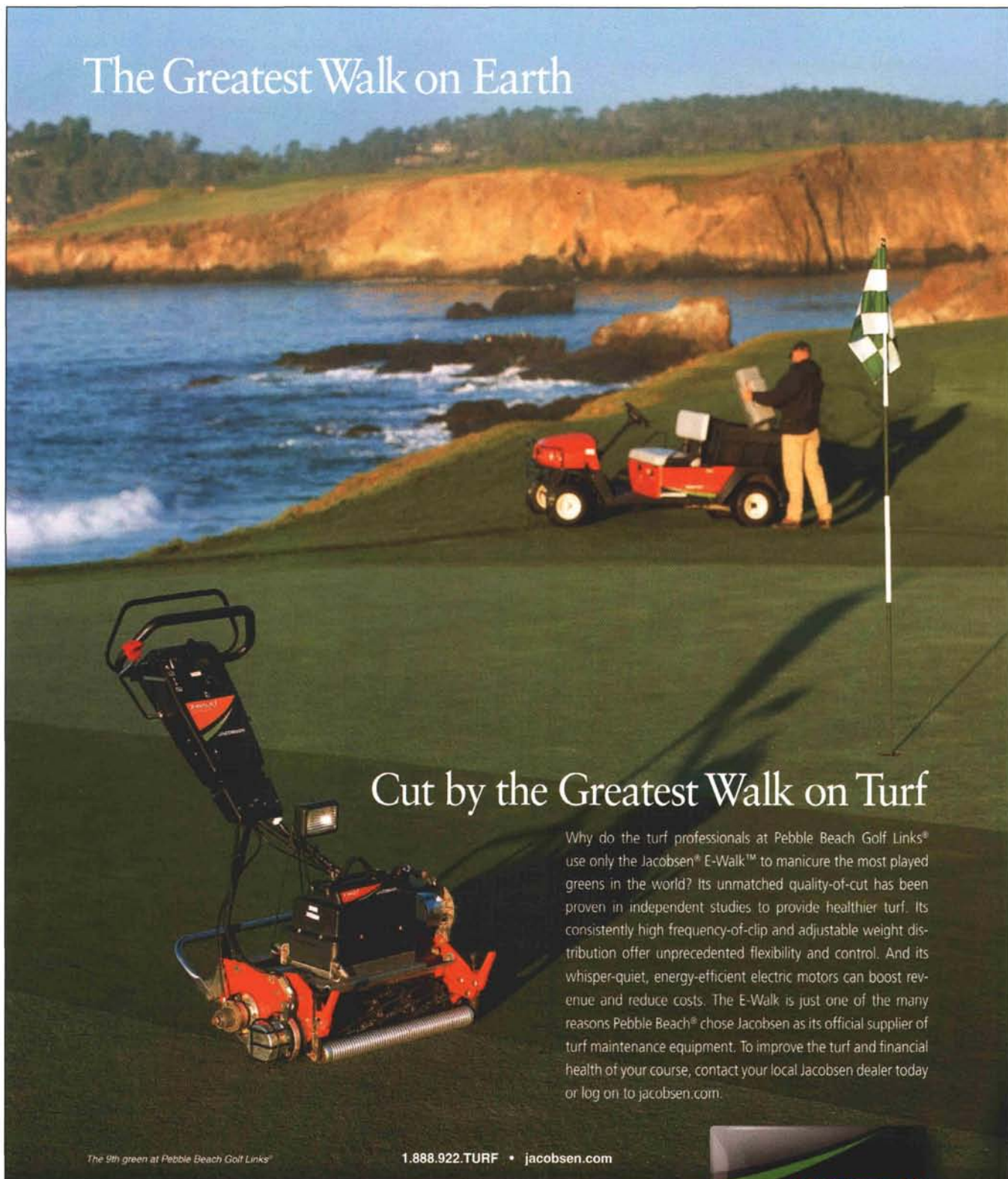
Ed has found a good alternative to putting water coolers on the golf course. On several tees at Old Elm, Ed has placed these very attractive wooden insulated chests which are filled with ice, and water bottles.

*Brad Anderson, CGCS*





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