



Tall Fescue in Your Future

Turf-Type Tall Fescue! Back in the 80s we started to receive reports that Tall Fescue had been improved to a point that it would not completely embarrass us as professional turf managers. Reports of Turf-type tall fescue were highly exaggerated. The versions we were sold twenty years ago were better than the predecessor Kentucky-31, but not of a quality that would be encouraging enough for anyone to want to use on a golf course. We all know Kentucky-31. A tough as nails tall fescue, which resembles a green blooming onion more than anything else. It is clumpy and bunchy and does not form a sod that anyone could ever mistake for good. However, it had its high points. Tall fescue as a rule is drought tolerant, heat tolerant, shade tolerant, and wear resistant. It just looked horrible. Notice the past tense in that previous sentence. We now have real Turf-Type Tall Fescue!



Tall Fescue research

You may have noticed ads in recent issues of the fine publications that cruise over your desk for more and more tall fescue. The reason for this is that they are really good. REALLY GOOD! Not take out your fairways and convert them to tall fescue good, but good, none the less. They are definitely good enough to use in your rough, especially under trees and in other low maintenance areas. For years a utility grass or forage grass, tall fescue now has many applications that can be exploited to your advantage on a golf course.

I first encountered these new varieties in Nebraska six years ago. On a tour of the University of Nebraska turf research facility in Mead, I was directed to a section of plots and asked to identify the grass. I knew Terry Riordan was trying to put one over on me. It looked like bluegrass from eye level looking down, but upon closer inspection I could tell it was tall fescue (no distinct mid-vein). It really looked good. It was mowed close and formed a dense, dark green stand of turf. What makes these turf-type cultivars so good? Well to be honest they look more like Kentucky bluegrass and have some great attributes that KBG does not. They have a thinner blade than in the past. Not as thin as the improved varieties of KBG but as thin as the old school, Marion or Park varieties. They do not look clumpy. They form a uniform surface that I can envision hitting a golf ball off of. Some of the newest varieties of tall fescue actually claim to have rhizomes. Barenbrug Seed Company has a product that they are touting as Rhizomatous Tall Fescue or RTF. Many other companies as well are staking the claim that they have discovered or developed rhizomes in their tall fescues. I will not debate this point because it does not matter to me or you. What matters is whether it will form a tight full turf. It will.

(continued on page 12)



Tall Fescue breeding

The greatest test for the strength of a grass is to harvest it as sod. Tall fescue was being harvested as sod last year in Chicago with no netting. Anyone who attended the Illinois Turf Foundation's Field Day at the Midwest Golf House in September had the opportunity to see some transplanted tall fescue sod first hand. It was impressive. Laid not many days prior to the event, it was rooting into the soil on that beautiful day. If you did not get a chance to see it that day, it is still there. You may have to ask where it is to find it. You will notice it this time of year as the best looking section of rough left of the first hole of the Sunshine Course.

With its resistance to heat and drought, tall fescue is well suited to the conditions that exist around bunkers.

Why am I selling you so hard on the tall fescue? Well, I think it is good. I think it is good for the industry and good for our public image. Tall fescue roots deeper than most other turfgrass. This allows it to draw water out of the soil that could not be reached by other grasses. Less irrigation is needed to sustain the turf because of this attribute. It can look good with less fertility than Kentucky bluegrass. It can grow well in the shade. At this point it appears to be susceptible to fewer diseases and insect pests than Kentucky bluegrass in our area. So, less pesticide should be needed to maintain this grass. As I mentioned before it is wear tolerant. Why not use it at the end of your cart paths? You know those areas that you are constantly resodding or extending with more gravel or paving. It also germinates quickly, so if any wear begins to show you can over-seed the area and expect quick results. How wear tolerant is it? It has been used with success on football fields in this area, and it is the new grass of choice for Grant Park in downtown Chicago. If it can handle the throngs from the Taste of Chicago, Blues Fest, the Air and Water Show, etc... it can probably handle your course.

Getting back to this shade tolerance, tall fescue is not as shade tolerant as fine fescue or as *Poa supina* but it is better than Kentucky bluegrass and looks more like Kentucky bluegrass than any other choice. Tall fescue may have a place in those areas that just will not sustain other grasses due to low light. Laying tall fescue sod will increase the chance of out competing some of those pesky weeds, like knotweed, that seem to proliferate in these areas.

Where else can I use this miracle grass you ask? No-mow areas seem to be particularly well suited for this turf. It forms a tight community that will decrease weed competition and actually has a nice appearance when allowed to grow tall and flower. The blades will give way to their own weight and bow in a graceful arch. It looks like I think a no-mow area should look, uninviting and treacherous. However, the chance of finding and playing a ball successfully out of this area would be low. As a side note

some of your counterparts are actually investigating the use of tall fescue as an ornamental ground cover in landscape plantings.



Tall Fescue at rough height

How about bunker faces? With its resistance to heat and drought, tall fescue is well suited to the conditions that exist around bunkers. This may reduce your need for irrigation on these areas. Less water on the bunker faces means more water on those *Poa* greens when supplies run short.

Tall fescue has been used in areas to our south for years because Kentucky bluegrass can not withstand the heat that is present in the summer. Now, with the advent of these improved varieties, we are seeing a chance to reap the benefits of this oft disregarded grass and not having to sacrifice appearance or playability. There are many new varieties that can be purchased that have been very successful in the Chicago area.

There has to be a down side. There is a downside to everything. One of the down sides of tall fescue is that the appearance is not to the level of Kentucky bluegrasses yet. In addition, it doesn't repair itself as quickly when damaged. However it takes much more to damage it. There is also some concern with over wintering. Tall fescue has a reputation for not successfully completing the first winter after a fall seeding. This can be easily overcome by installing tall fescue sod or trying a spring or late summer seeding. Established tall fescue will definitely over winter in northern Illinois as can be demonstrated on many area lawns. As with

any new development it will take a few growing seasons before all of the kinks are worked out. Be ahead of the curve and start trying some different things now.



Tall Fescue rhizome

There are many options in the market for new grasses and many different directions you can take to fill the niches that exist on your golf course. When selecting grasses, think

about the long term implications of your choices as well as the perception that you are creating. Are you selecting grasses that are environmentally friendly as well as functional or have aesthetics completely taken over your selection process? In a day when everything that takes place on your property is monitored by one faction or another, casting yourself in the best possible light is extremely important. Choosing a grass such as tall fescue can be one of your tools in defending your craft. Recent reports of turf-type tall fescue are not highly exaggerated. Try some on your course to see where it may be applicable before your competition beats you to it.

Rusty Stachlewitz is the Director of Programs for The Lawn Institute and Executive Director of the Midwest Sod Council.



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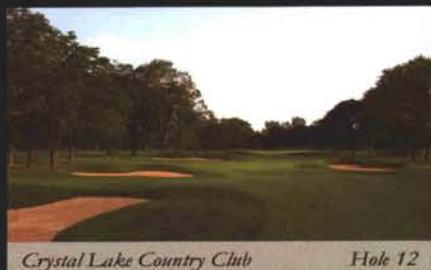
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TETA Moves Forward

Another year has gone by and along with it a new board has been elected by the TETA membership. TETA continues to grow in numbers in the Midwest and from coast to coast. With this growth, creates new challenges that we cannot afford to overlook. In meeting these challenges, TETA cannot forget our basic and fundamental objective which is set in our by-laws and provide the sole purpose for our existence:

"To enhance and promote the image, stature, reputation and skills of the professional turf equipment technician."

It is the duty of every board member to promote you, the turf equipment technician, in a professional and honorable manner. It is their duty to promote this organization to the best of their abilities and to continue doing the work of their predecessors.

I believe the board members have promoted the turf equipment technician and continue to do so. They take great pride in being a part of this association and the things that it has accomplished in the last ten years. The accomplishments are many such as: doubling the membership, establishing our own office that is managed by one of our very own members, and conducting regular educational seminars regionally as well as across the nation. TETA has supported the Equipment & Engine Training Council's (EETC) technician certification testing program and has participated in the writing of tests, like the Reel Technology exam. TETA has also increased the amount of proctors to administer the tests from two to four, allowing more convenient times and places to take certification tests.

Last year was another of TETA's firsts. Members were included in the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS). This added more benefits to the membership by providing different educational opportunities as well as a directory of members. It also provided a line of communication between superintendent and technician in this award winning publication, *On Course*. While TETA members are also members of MAGCS, TETA is still run and managed by turf equipment technicians. These benefits are there for you. Take advantage of them and increase your skills as a technician, learn more about turf and the issues that we face in our chosen profession.

I believe that the job of the turf equipment technician is more than just maintaining and repairing equipment. It is a job that directly reflects on the golf course superintendent. It is a job that can affect the turf and playability in many ways. It requires a special relationship between the technician and the superintendent to create and maintain the highest quality of the turf. Whether it be on a golf course, athletic field, park district grounds, etc. the end result is the appearance, playability and the health of the turf. Together the superintendent and technician create the best playing surfaces possible.

TETA has come to a point in its existence that requires more than a board can possibly handle. After all, we have jobs just like every member of TETA and work eight hours or more a day. We need more help planning educational seminars, writing articles for *On Course*, contributing to website and more. We need to create committees that bring their creative minds together to create new goals. If all of us start working together we can really make things happen.

During his first inaugural address, John F. Kennedy said *"And so my fel-*

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*Together the
superintendent and
technician create
the best playing
surfaces possible.*

low Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for freedom of man.” I have always been inspired by the words of JFK and I hope you are inspired by these words when I say to you: “My fellow technicians ask not what your association (TETA) can do for you – ask what you can do for your association (TETA). Fellow technicians of the world: ask not what TETA will do for you, but what together we can do for the sake of all turf equipment technicians.”



2007 TETA Schedule of Events

February 24 – TETA Session at GIS Conference, Anaheim, CA
March 13 – Red Max, Komatsu Zenoah 2 cycle engines, Arrowhead Golf Club
April 10 – TETA Board Meeting
April 13-14 – EETC Annual Conference
May 8 – TETA Board Meeting
June 12 – TETA Board Meeting
July 10 – TETA Board Meeting
August 14 – TETA Board Meeting
September 11 – TETA Board Meeting
October 9 – Club Car Seminar, Nadler Golf Car Sales
November 13 – To Be Announced
December 5-7 – IPTC, Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, IL
December 11 – To Be Announced

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the Bull Sheet

John Gurke, CGCS, Associate Editor

DATES TO REMEMBER

March 13 – MAGCS Chapter-administered GCSAA Education seminar at Midwest Golf House featuring Dr. Derek Settle of CDGA and Dr. Bingru Huang of Rutgers University speaking on management of the new bentgrass cultivars.

March 14-15 – Reinders 18th Turf & Irrigation Conference at the Waukesha Expo Center in Suburban Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

March 22 – Class C Assistants Shop Talk at Chicago Golf Club in Wheaton, Illinois, **Jon Jennings, CGCS** and **Michael Heustis** hosts.

April 10-11 & 12-13 – Toro NSN Regional Site Pro Intermediate Training classes at Turf Professionals Equipment Company's Franklin Park location. Contact Steve Eisele at 800-861-8676, ext. 6178 for details.

April 30 – MAGCS Annual Spring Scramble meeting at Indian Lakes Resort, **Chuck Ardell** host.

May 6 – J.W. Turf's Annual Equipment Auction and Consignment Sale, Hampshire IL.

May 12 – 2007 North American Bird Watching Open (on International Migratory Bird Day). More information will be printed in the April issue of *On Course*.

May 14 – MAGCS/ITF Spring Scramble and meeting at Ivanhoe Club, **Tom Prichard** host.

June 18 – MAGCS monthly meeting at Shepherd's Crook Golf Course in Zion, IL, **Craig Lewis** host. The Dom Grotti (superintendent/assistant superintendent), Class C, and Senior Championships will be contested at this meeting.

June 26 – The 7th Annual John Buck Memorial Golf Outing at Bartlett Hills Golf Course in Bartlett, IL, **Kevin DeRoo** host.

On Course magazine and the MAGCS Editorial Committee ask for your help. To continue in our quest to keep On Course a truly member-focused publication, we are asking for contributions and input from you, our readers. If you have any high-quality digital photography that you feel would be of interest to your peers, whether golf-related or not, please submit them. A wildlife siting or cool winter vacation photo might not seem interesting to you, but others might find it highly interesting. If you have an article just sitting in your head waiting to be written, let us know and we can help you get it done. If you have comments or feedback about the magazine and its contents, give us a holler and we'll

see that it gets the attention it deserves. You can e-mail **Luke Cella** (luke@magcs.org), Editorial chairman **Harry Lovero** (hlovero@fvpd.net), or contributing editor **John Gurke** (boomding@aol.com) with any or all of the above. We look forward to hearing from you!

Recently, your Editorial Committee hit the road to sunny Hillside for a closer look at how this magazine is produced. We all know that articles are written (not ENOUGH of them, by the way), and that from the authors they go to Luke Cella for editing. But from there, it's a little less clear-cut. For example, did you know that once Luke has all the goodies for an issue of On Course,

he works closely with our longtime graphic artist Mark Karczewski to put everything where it goes and to add the creative touches that define our top-quality monthly magazine? And while all that is going on, did you know that Mark is working hand-in-hand with Kurt Paulson of Darwill, the company that prints and distributes On Course in order to get it in its finished form to your mailbox? It's all true, and the group comprised of editor Luke Cella, contributing editor me, Mark Karczewski, chairman Harry Lovero, TETA representative **Wes Danielewicz**, and members **Todd Schmitz**, **Virgil Range**, **Darrick Robbins**, **Josh Murray**, **Keith Krause**, and **Fred Behnke** were treated to a close-up look at the process and the facility in which it takes place. Led by Senior Account Executive Mark Pageau, we were guided on a step-by-step look into the inner workings of Darwill and how our magazine is ultimately produced. Darwill is a family-owned business since 1951, and has been in its current Hillside location (on Roosevelt Road across from that cemetery where Al Capone is) since 1993. They are open and running 24 hours a day, 6 days a week, and produce 2 to 3 million pieces of mail per month. Along with On Course magazine, Darwill produces numerous brochures, technical bulletins, calendars, and yes, the dreaded junk mailings. It was truly fascinating to see the machines and people responsible for producing what you are reading right now, and a great learning experience for all in attendance. We sincerely thank Darwill and Mark Pageau for hosting us, and for the fine work they do for us. To check them out, go to www.darwill.com and have a look around.



Senior account executive Mark Pageau shows the committee how our magazine is produced.

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On Course near completion—the "uncut" version.



After final trimming, what's left of the production process heads to the recycle bin.

.....
CDGA and MAGCS bid a warm welcome to **Sang-Kook (SK) Lee** who started March 1st as the web-based Interactive Turf (IT) Program Coordinator. SK brings a wealth of experience in web programming, digital photography, and agronomic/fertility expertise to complement the already-strong plant pathology knowledge base at Golf House. He has an MS in turfgrass science from Iowa State University under Dr. Nick Chrisitans, and is currently a PhD student in the Michigan State University's turfgrass program. We look forward to meeting and working with CDGA's newest addition to the family.

.....
In other exciting news from CDGA, a new research-grade Olympus BX 51 compound microscope is planned for purchase thanks to the generous support of the area golf course superintendents associations (including, of course, MAGCS) and the Wadsworth Endowment. This new microscope will replace the existing one purchased in 1985 by Dr. Randy Kane, and completely blows it away in its technological advances and capabilities. Look for digital images from this new bad boy in upcoming IT scouting reports. I'm all tingly.

Just a brief reminder to all MAGCS meeting attendees: Please be considerate to our hosts, educational presenters, and fellow members by turning electronic devices to the off or at least the vibrate position once you are inside. Likewise, read the dress requirements on your meeting notifications and understand what is expected. Regardless of whether it is Business Casual, Professional Business Attire, or whatever, leave your hats on the hat rack or in your vehicles—they do not belong indoors.

.....
On January 23, 100 MAGCS members convened at the beautiful and very exclusive Rich Harvest Links facilities—home of the 2009 Solheim Cup—for its monthly meeting. Hosts **Jason Funderburg** and **Jeff VerCautren** and the very attentive staff ensured that our day was one to remember for a long time. Upon entering the facility, it was clear that this would be a slight departure from the norm with numerous security personnel guiding us to our destination, and red Lamborghini with really weird door hinges greeting us inside the meeting hall. The morning's education forum was a high-energy presentation given by Mr. Todd Gray, Senior Vice President of Wells Fargo Financial and covered the basics and benefits of fleet leasing or traditional purchasing of golf course maintenance equipment. Prior to Mr. Gray's presentation, **Don Ferreri** gave his GCSAA Chapter Delegate's update, which was not only as exciting as its

name implies, but also tastefully brief. Also taking the podium was Janice Moy from Kids Golf Foundation and Kelly Hyne, LPGA representative and tournament director for the 2009 Solheim Cup, with short presentations on their respective programs. Following the main education event and a great lunch, we were treated to a really interesting tour of Mr. Jerry Rich's automobile collection flawlessly conducted by Jason Funderburg. But the fun wasn't over yet—those who hadn't succumbed to sensory overload proceeded to the new grounds maintenance facility for a look around. The entire day could not have been better thanks to Mr. Rich and the people at Rich Harvest Farms and to our day's generous sponsors—**Nadler Golf Car Sales, Inc., Hollembeak Construction, Inc., JW Turf, Inc., and Turf Professionals Equipment Company.** Thank you everyone for a memorable January meeting!



Hosts Jeff VerCautren (L) and Jason Funderburg of Rich Harvest Farms.

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Todd Gray of Wells Fargo, discusses capital purchasing and leasing options in one of the most unique settings for an educational event.