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Is it real or is it plastic? Rich Harvest Farms uses new technology to solve an old problem- growing grass in dense shade.

Photo Credit: Jeff VerCautren

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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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DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Sharon Riesenbeck, *Waupaca Sand & Solutions*



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...I overheard this quote at the GIS show from my co-worker, Dena Zajdel, responding to the question, "how's the weather down there?" I'm sure most MAGCS members can relate. To me, it really doesn't matter where the conference is held, since I am either on the trade show floor or attending a seminar throughout the day. What does matter to me is that you always find the weather "warm & fuzzy" inside the MAGCS Hospitality Suite.

As Commercial Advisor, I have made some changes to ensure that our sponsors and attendees feel that a MAGCS Hospitality Room visit is always worthwhile. Hospitality Suites can be one of the most abused and expensive of trade show costs. We all know that there are plenty of networking opportunities, both formal and informal, throughout the conference. My only hope is that the MAGCS Hospitality Suite is on your "can't miss list." If you were able to attend, please make a point of thanking your vendor representatives for sponsoring this event. You can find a list of our Golden Tee Sponsors in this issue as well as in the MAGCS directory. If you do business with outside vendors, please encourage them to participate next year.

The other sideline to my job is to raise money for our scholarship fund. The MAGCS Hospitality Room is by far our largest fundraiser. This year we were able to raise over \$2600! Our biggest receipt to date. It's very easy to run a raffle when most everyone participates without hesitation. Thank you all for your generosity! Bob Lively, Jan Jarvis, Dan Cherrstrom, and Rick Wilson can certainly attest to the payback on their generosity. They were the recipients of our hourly \$200 American Express gift card raffle.

Here are some quick facts & figures from that night:

- We consumed over 900 pieces of shrimp and crab claws. I have no idea how many liquid refreshments we enjoyed, but I am confident we got our money's worth by paying a flat fee per person!
- When setting up the menu, we tried a few new things, sushi for one. It turned out to be a big hit as well as many of the other foods.



- We were blessed with 48 Golden Tee Sponsors, two of which are brand new: **La Grange Country Club** (thank you Jeff Brinegar!) and **Arysta Life Sciences** (thank you Sam Wineinger!). We also were fortunate to have several sponsors return to the Golden Tee Club: Conserve FS, Kasper Trucking, and Peat, Inc. Thank you!

Please remember to say thank you to the many volunteers that either solicited sponsorships, sold raffle tickets, and greeted or guarded you at the door: Garry Anderson, Rick Uthe, Tom Healy, John Gurke, Mark Norville, Matt Breeden, Michael Heustis, Steve Stewart, Jeremy Duncan, Mark Kosbad, Keith Copersmet, Howie Shuck, Marsha Traves, Beth Whitehouse, Pete Kiraly, Dan Kisse, Scott Spier, Mike Matchen, Gary Hearn, my co-workers, Dena Zajdel, Brett Grams, Jon Faulks, and Bob and Christine Faulks. I am particularly indebted to Blake

Meentemeyer, current President of the UIC turf club, who graciously offered ten U of I students to help sell raffle tickets in the room.

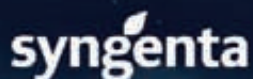
Of course, I am eternally indebted to Luke Cella. He secured the location, brought down the Wii games, mailed all other essential items needed to run the event, coordinated the PowerPoint Presentation



with Ernie Kaplan, took pictures, initiated the web link for sponsorships, sent out reminder notices & invoices, and most of all, put up with me!

I hope everyone made it home safely despite the heavy snowfall that hit Chicagoland between Thursday and Sunday. Just remember there is one good thing about snow, it makes your lawn look as nice as your neighbor's!

Thanks again, and I'll see you in New Orleans! **-OC**



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Synthetic Turf on the Course



How many of you now have, or have had, some kind of artificial surface at your golf course? I am guessing quite a few. As well you know synthetic turf is no longer just being used at putt-putts. From hitting mats that you put out in the spring to large indoor teaching facilities, the new synthetic turfs have a variety of uses. At some point in the future you may be asked to manage or install some type of a synthetic turf. Because there are different styles of turf for each application, it's important you pick the right one.

Synthetic turf history started in 1965, when the famous AstroTurf was installed in the Astrodome in Houston, Texas. The use of synthetic turf became widespread throughout stadiums and ballparks in the 1970s. The synthetic turfs were used in indoor stadiums where growing turf would not be economically feasible. They were also being installed in outdoor arenas where winter sports destroyed the turf surface. In the late '80s they started to get a bad reputation. The synthetic turf was a harder surface than grass and far less forgiving. The surface seemed to cause more injuries than would have been suffered on a grass surface. Synthetics were also less esthetically pleasing for fans. Artificial turf was banned by some soccer teams in Europe because of injuries. Then in the 21st century the next generation of turf was born. This new turf has a sand and/or crumb rubber infill that is said to be even safer than real turf. It can look like real turf from a distance. Synthetic turfs have now been used for everything from backyards to 18-hole golf courses. That brings us to today, when the most common synthetic turf is made out of polyethylene. The blades of grass are made out of polyethylene fibers that are sewn into some sort of a mat material. Textured nylon is also available. With nylon, the fibers are also

sewn into a mat, but they are woven together to create the turf surface. This nylon surface seems to best resemble bentgrass. Today, over 100 synthetic turf companies and distributors can be found on the internet.

I am going to concentrate on the golf applications for synthetic turf. There are things to look for when judging the quality and the type of synthetic turf you are going to buy for your particular use. Just as with bentgrass greens, the lower the height and the denser the turf the faster the green can be. To judge the turf, bend your sample in half. Compare the number of fibers stitched into the mat. Look also at the pattern of the stitching. That is probably the best way to judge the quality of your samples. If, in your application, the turf is needed



All the best turf starts with a plan. Above are the conceptual drawings of indoor practice facility at Rich Harvest Farms.

only for short chipping and putting, the nylon surface may be the type you need. The nylon will give you a fast surface with little maintenance. For applications that allow longer chipping, where a true reaction to the ball is needed, you will want to lean towards an infill product. The infill will give you the same reaction as a ball hitting a USGA green. In one of our applications we have a sand-filled bunker next to a target green. With the bunker splash of the sand, the target green's turf needed the

(continued on page 7)



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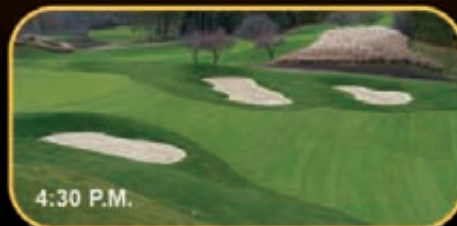
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infill style material to take the sand from the bunker. There are also mats that duplicate the color, look, and reaction to the club of a real bunker, if real sand is not feasible for you. The U of I has this bunker matting at their home practice facility. For teeing surfaces either application fits. It will come down to the level of maintenance you want to put forth after the installation of the tee. The best surface for the tees that we could find with a low maintenance was the EZ Tee product. From Rye and Blue to St. Augustine and Zoysia, every variety of turf has been duplicated to fit every possible application.

There are a number of locations where it makes sense to install synthetic turf. From basements to rooftops, indoors and out, artificial turf opens a number of doors for customers wanting a turf surface but unable to put down real turf. I have been assigned two different projects at my facility. The first was to add four tees using synthetic turf with an extensive hardscape around the tees. This teeing area had three existing tees in a heavily treed shoot. Because of limited sunlight, growing grass would be difficult. Removing the trees was not an option. In this project we added a tee to lengthen the course and we updated the landscape and synthetic turf. We used Nova Grass, an infill product. The second project is a 9,000-square-foot indoor practice area in an old horse arena. This area will be used for overnight guests and as a teaching facility for our membership. This project includes a target green for chipping, a sand filled bunker, three EZ Tee teeing surfaces for chipping, fringe and approach shot areas, rough areas, an 1800-square-foot putting green, and even fifteen-foot-tall synthetic trees to add artificial landscaping to the area. Just about any location can be accommodated with synthetic turf.

When you have found your location and know the scope of work for your project, here are some tips for construction. When you are mapping out the area keep the carpet sizes in mind. Fit the dimensions of your project to the dimensions of your carpet rolls in order to limit waste. Example, if the rolls come in a twelve-foot width, you don't want to have a fourteen-foot-wide area. You would be wasting ten feet of material

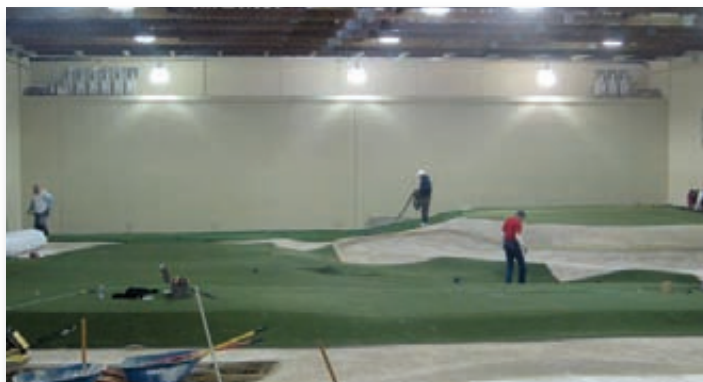
if it couldn't be used somewhere else in the project. Once you have picked the type, size of turf, and the location for your application needs, it's time for the base. The turf can be installed on a couple of surfaces. Crushed aggregate seems to work the best when shaping a green. The turf can also be installed directly on concrete for a tee line at a driving range. Whatever material you install for your base, it must be compacted and smooth so that stretching does not occur in the future. Limit the slope of your green. Be careful not to make your green installation look and act like a putt-putt with a clown nose and a wind mill by adding too much undulation.

I feel synthetic turf is going to help our industry grow. It brings golf to sites that don't have the resources to maintain a traditional facility. Synthetic turf is being used in junior golf facilities. More and more indoor sites are being added to support golf throughout the winter. There are hitting bays in just about every retail golf store. Teeing lines are being installed at virtually every driving range to help preserve turf in the fall and spring. I have even heard of a tournament site that had the membership carry 1x1 foot synthetic hitting mats for ball placement to prevent divots in the fairways before the tournament. Where ever your facility and whatever your synthetic turf application, I hope this article helps you in any decisions you need

to make when tackling your project. Synthetic is not just for putt-putts anymore. **-OC**



A 3-D view the the finished space. Grow lights not included.



The grass is unrolled and the bunker is lined.



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FEATURE ARTICLE II

Joel Purpur, CGCS, Park Ridge Country Club

Steep Grass Faced Bunkers

The Option of Watering Underground

In the Midwest, we rarely go through a year when non-irrigated turf does not turn brown from drought. Water is the life blood of the turf that superintendents manage. Irrigation technology is continually advancing, but an area that does not seem to be accurately "dialed in" is the uniform watering of steep grass faces in today's golfscape.

At the 2005 GCSAA convention, Luke Baker and I were talking about how to do a better job watering the steep bunker banks at Park Ridge Country Club (not knowing a drought would soon follow in the Midwest). We know that many superintendents utilize small mist type heads which seem to work, but the word on the street is that the mist heads are not totally dependable or durable and therefore create another headache. Others also throw water onto the banks from the outside. Luke and I exchanged thoughts about drip irrigation, but I was skeptical because I was not aware of anything that would hold up commercially. I had only seen drip irrigation on nursery stock and on home lawns. Shortly after our "drip" conversation, we walked into the Toro booth and right in front of us was a display featuring a newer line of drip irrigation that looked to be a good heavy duty grade. Soon after, Larry Collins set up a meeting at Park Ridge with a representative from the Metafin Company who handled the drip components. We viewed the products and set up a small test grid to see how quickly (or slowly) the grid "sweat" out its water. The main lines are not just tubing full of holes like some of the rubber ones that you may have seen in the gardening department. The drip tubing uses special emitters to close and seal the drip hole when it is not irrigating. After an impressive demonstration we were cautiously optimistic and decide to try a test area on the south facing 18th green bunker face.



If there ever was a good time to test the set up, the drought of summer 2005 provided conditions to challenge the best of systems. Installation of this type of irrigation was a first for us, and our methods were more or less trial and error. Our techniques have since evolved, but what follows is the method used on the first trial bunker, which worked fairly well for installing the grid tubing into existing fescue turf.



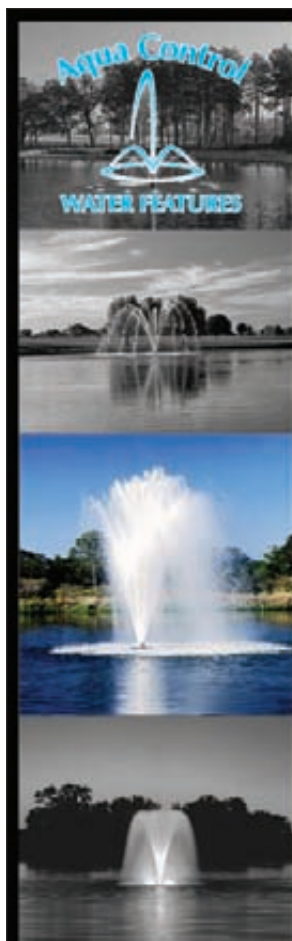
The crew at Park Ridge Country Club cuts a trench for the new drip tubing.

The grid was dotted out with paint using 12" to 18" spacing, with the closer spacing at the top of the grid. Next a slit trench was cut into the turf using a reciprocating edger. Our goal was to get the tubing at least 3" under ground. The edger blade was not deep or wide enough, but provided a good start. Our crew followed the edger and deepened the slit by hand using a flat-bladed shovel which created more of a "V" trench. Once the slit was deep and wide enough, the tubing was placed into the trench and tapped down with a 1x4" piece of

wood. Sod staples were installed to keep the tubing from lifting up. Then the sides of the slit trench were pressed closed as best we could. Now all that was left to do was to tie the system into an existing water source.

Utilizing a nearby water line, we glued in a standard "T" to supply the grid. Next a pressure regulator, screen, and controller were installed. A standard rectangular access box fit well

(continued on page 11)



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