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SEPTEMBER 2012 Volume 66 No. 5



From the back of the green looking up the 14th fairway at Big Foot Country Club. It is a 368-yard dog leg par 4 that places a premium on your drive location to set up your approach.

#### FRONT COVER

The 5th hole at Big Foot Country Club aka "The Grand Canyon" is only 366 yards from the tips and rough funnels on both sides to fairway. However, (there's always a however on holes like this) the green awaits to challenge you. 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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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Chuck Barber, St. Charles Country Club



# The Message

*As I write this I am watching lightning flash and thunder roar. The good news is we needed a little bit of rain to aid in recovery and to water in topdressing sand. The bad news is that we didn't finish topdressing and with four greens that haven't been topdressed still to go the question is: will we be able to finish? More than any other year, 2012 forced me to examine, re-examine and re-re-examine each decision I made as a superintendent. That didn't include just scrutinizing the management of the golf course agronomically, chemically and culturally; that also included managing our staff, our equipment fleet, and myself much more carefully.*

Record heat, humidity, drought, severe thunderstorms, mechanical failures, turf stress and the need to be on-site more than a typical year leads me to ask if I was trying to do too much. All of us feel, in one way or another, pressure to maximize the golf course and minimize inputs: Firm, fast greens and clean playing surfaces free of debris, divots and excessive traffic stress were my focus this year. We all know what our challenges are from golf course to golf course. The choices we make in managing each property is what makes each golf course different and excellent in their own way.

I entered the month of July of 2012 feeling very good about the prospects for the rest of the summer. I left July with damaged turf, slower, softer greens and the prospect of having to recover from a July second only to 1921 in high temperatures. When it became apparent that the long-term forecast for July was going to be 'challenging', I made a decision to change up as much as possible to save stress on our turf. Further, we switched the staff's schedule to keep them out of the heat as much as possible. We worked from 5 a.m. until noon straight through. We began alternating mowing and rolling greens, we abandoned sand topdressing

for a few weeks and we did what every salesman likes to say: We doubled the rate and shortened the interval. In short, we made a great many changes in our normal routine so we didn't do too much.

The price we pay for this is a changing golf course something our membership had to adjust to on fairly short notice. I communicated via email, clubhouse posting, newsletters and through committee and board reports to send an important message. That message was that we were going to adjust our plan based on the cards that we were dealt and the resulting playing conditions would change, albeit temporarily. I knew first hand that doing too much in the challenging environment we were experiencing could have disastrous results. I erred on the side of healthy turf and while we experienced slight to moderate turf mortality (I don't lose turf, I kill it. I can see it, I didn't lose it. It's right there, it's just frikkin' dead. Thank you Brian Sullivan for that nugget.) in some areas, we are healthy over 99% of the golf course. The mantra I repeat to our membership, their guests, the staff and club management is that you can do more with healthy turf than with stressed turf.

*(continued on page 4)*

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My guess is we'll hear some horror stories through the grapevine about grass dying on area golf courses. I'll dispel any mystery: Grass is dead today here. Some of it was my fault and decisions that I made were either incorrect or wildly incorrect. I don't intend to make those mistakes again. I will learn from them and I CERTAINLY don't want to make the front page of Dr. Derek Settle's "Weekly Scouting Report" for physiological decline two weeks in a row again. More of it was grass that never stood a chance for a variety of reasons we all can relate to: poor drainage, air movement, and sunlight. We communicate the need for these components of a turfgrass system and we live with the choices we make alongside our employers. The message is simple: The more of each, the healthier the turf.

I think we'll all enjoy the rest of this year and begin to recover, enjoy a bunch of aerification and resume many of the cultural practices we might have skipped during 100 degree weather. Heck, we might even play golf again? I was somewhat successful in getting that message out and educating our membership about the consequences of severe weather coupled with poor growing environments.

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*I'll dispel any mystery: Grass is dead today here. Some of it was my fault and decisions that I made were either incorrect or wildly incorrect. I don't intend to make those mistakes again.*

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The trick is to have a willing audience eager to learn and to understand the challenges. Many of us aren't lucky enough to enjoy a surplus of understanding employers, customers, and members. Sometimes the stress only escalates even after the heat subsides. One of the reasons I love writing for *On Course* is to learn more and understand what is happening at each course in the area so I might pick up a trick or two and improve things for my current employer. I encourage each of you to contribute as much as you can to the magazine because you might learn something about yourself and help others reading your content at the same time. **-OC**

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## FEATURE I

Kyle Haines, *Onwentsia Club*



# Preparing For Projects in the Future A Homegrown Bentgrass Sod Nursery

*In what turned into one of the hottest summers on record, it seemed many of us were left counting the days until August to catch any sort of relief. For the third consecutive year we were dealt intense heat with unfavorable growing conditions throughout all of Chicagoland. With August came overdue rain showers, cooler soil temperatures, and highs and lows that brought things back to reality. While most of us are now enjoying the shorter days and preparing for the last stretch of events, this year (more than others) will be a refreshing feeling getting our hands dirty and transitioning into project-mode.*

Whether it's drainage, seeding and sodding, renovations, or just getting after cultural practices, we all have something we're looking forward to working on this fall. Here at Onwentsia Club, we've begun expanding our fairway nursery. Being an older club with little work done to our fairways, we try to keep as much sodding in house as possible because of the many varieties of older bent grasses found throughout the golf course. Once established, we then use our own polystand surplus for our other ongoing projects such as fairway expansions and new green complexes.

About this time last year, we began harvesting cores from the least contaminated areas of fairways for creating the first phase of our fairway nursery. Cores were pulled using the Toro 648s with  $\frac{3}{4}$ " hollow tines set at 2.5" spacing and at about a 2" depth. With the site prepped and irrigation already installed, the cores were then spread to approximately a 1" layer over a 7000 sq ft area. Next, the site was dimpled in with the Sand Pro for leveling and to create pockets for a light seeding. Lastly, the cores were covered and kept moist for a quick establishment giving us usable sod by this recent summer.

*(continued on page 7)*



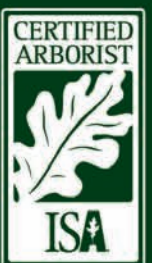


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products, playing with rates, cultural practices, and giving great insight into issues we've faced such as localized dry spots and disease pressures.

Even if it's not a nursery expansion you're working on this fall, good luck with any of your off-season projects. **-OC**



Cores are pulled and harvested from existing stands of bentgrass/Poa fairways and greens.



The cores are then spread out by hand on the prepped site to a depth of 1" or so.



Using a sand rake tire tracks, the cores are then "dimpled" and prepared for a light seeding.



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## FEATURE II

Doug Myslinski, *Jacobson Golf Course Design*

# MAGCS Members Are Everywhere



*Brad Helms and his son after a victorious day on the diamond.*

*As volunteers on the MAGCS editorial team, we all hope to contribute informative, educational, and/or humorous editorials to our fellow members. As I struggled to come up with a topic that all of you would find useful, the idea occurred to me as I sat in a Village of Palatine Planning Commission meeting. Odd you say? Indeed! But as I took my assigned seat on the volunteer/appointed commission forum, I noticed a name plate from a councilman that occupied that seat during their regular meetings. The name on that plate was Brad Helms, who happens to be a Certified Golf Course Superintendent at our local Palatine Hills Golf Course and a volunteer/ elected councilman for the Village of Palatine. I began to wonder that if the two of us in the business of golf are volunteering our time and knowledge, how many others in our industry are doing the same. And most importantly, why should we? With the likes of superintendents, architects and consultants, there is vast experience with environmental issues, permitting, budget management and people management to list a few.*

Brad summed it up so well by saying, "As a superintendent I strive to provide the best golf experience for our customers while also enhancing and protecting our environment to the best of my ability. As a volunteer councilman, I try to promote a good experience for our residents while also considering the environmental impacts each decision carries." Despite the differences in these two jobs, Brad is able to find the balance pleasing people and maintaining good environmental practices, all while tending to his family.

Very few people in this world today are as environmentally versed as active golf course superintendents. The only other professions that interact daily with our natural habitats are the environmental governing agencies such as the Army Corp of Engineers, DNR and Wildlife Conservation and the EPA.

Brian Green, CGCS, MAGCS and Superintendent of Sunset Valley in Highland Park, often volunteers with the "Friends of the Chicago River" where he has the opportunity to educate all those who care about the environment and about the role of a superintendent. In his words, "I discovered through volunteering that I was able to strengthen our relationship with the governing bodies by showing them that there is a common bond in both of our efforts in preservation." Brian is doing us all a favor by volunteering his time and

knowledge to help eliminate the misconception that golf is an environmental imploder.

By volunteering to share our expertise with the environment or assist in balancing a local village budget, or even coaching a youth baseball team, we also reap the many ancillary benefits that come from being a volunteer. These benefits may include making new friends, learning a new skill or advancing a career, all while enhancing our mental and physical health.

One of the best reasons to volunteer is to help strengthen your community where you live. Unpaid volunteers are the glue that keeps a community together and are often involved in developing plans to improve it for everyone. Becoming involved offers you the opportunity to connect to your community and make it a better place. Most people don't realize that volunteering is a two way street. It can also benefit you and your family just as much as the cause. Volunteering increases your self-esteem, confidence and sense of accomplishment. It gives a sense of pride, especially when many receive the fruits of your labor. Life's views become more positive and future goals are set higher when you are involved in the big picture. Furthermore, it can strengthen a family bond if volunteering includes family members. Start your kids out early with you and chances are, when they become adults, they will positively impact their community too. **-OC**

SUPER -N- SITE

Brian Placzkowski, *Royal Melbourne Country Club*

# Jim Knulty -N-

*Is it November yet?! Not quite, but September will be upon us shortly, which hopefully means we are on the downhill side of another tough summer. It also means it's time for the MAGCS Championship at Big Foot Country Club. I recently had the great pleasure of meeting with this year's host superintendent Mr. Jim Knulty. Jim is one of our association's longest tenured superintendents, having been at the helm at Big Foot Country Club for over 30 years, 33 to be exact.*

Big Foot Country Club is located just over the Cheddar Curtain in Fontana, Wisconsin. This hidden gem is situated on roughly 200 acres of beautiful rolling terrain near the western shore of Lake Geneva. Built in 1924 and opened 1926 this Tom Bendelow inspired design has survived the years to maintain most of its original routing. This 6,669 yard par 73 track with its tight tree lined fairways and tricky greens, provides quite a test for all levels. Over the past few seasons Jim has been hard at work alongside fellow MAGCS member Dave Esler on a project to standardize the bunker style at Big Foot. Over the years minor tweaks have led to a collection of different styles with the membership settling on a rugged naturalized look. Currently they have completed two holes with plans to do a few holes a year over the next

handful of years. Another interesting project Jim is involved in is the utilization of ArborCom Technologies to help him address shade problems that have developed with time. For those of you that don't know, ArborCom is a consulting firm that uses computer modeling to map tree placement and their level of light penetration. This can be a useful tool to help realize the gains that can be made by removing certain trees. This can be very helpful when handling memberships sensitive to tree removal.

For those of you who don't know or haven't had the opportunity to meet Mr. Knulty, I'd like to take a few minutes and give you a glimpse at how he got to where he is today. Jim was introduced to the game at the age of about 10 by his father who was an avid golfer and as a caddie at another



*The Knulty Clan. Jim is pictured in the pink shirt with his arm around his wife Sandy surrounded by their children and grandchildren this past summer.*