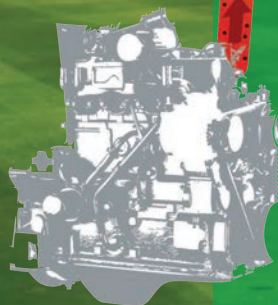


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TABLE OF CONTENTS

## front cover

Going Undercover. The process of covering greens is practiced by many superintendents in the region. Find out who and why in our feature article this month.

Photo credit: Don Cross, CGCS

5

FEATURE

## Going Undercover

Chuck Barber

8

FEATURE

## We Ask You Tell

Luke Cella



MAGCS Hospitality Reception in San Diego on the rooftop is always one of the best attended Association events each year. Thanks Golden Tee Sponsors (page 10).

### DEPARTMENTS

- 03** Director's Column  
Justin VanLanduit
- 11** The Bull Sheet  
John Gurke
- 20** Education Review  
Chuck Anfield
- 22** MAGCS in Motion  
Luke Cella
- 24** Off Course  
Joe Meier

### DATES

## 2013 MIDWEST EVENTS

- 4/30 Midwest April Meeting, Calumet Country Club
- 5/13 Midwest / ITF May Meeting, Beverly Country Club
- 7/20 Midwest Family Night Picnic, Cougar Baseball Game
- 7/22 Midwest July Meeting, Edgewood Valley Country Club
- 8/26 Midwest August Meeting, Crystal Lake Country Club
- 11/14 61<sup>st</sup> Midwest Turf Clinic, Medinah Country Club

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Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS) exists to promote professionalism and integrity, to provide networking, education and career enhancement opportunities to all members who facilitate the growth and enjoyment of golf.

*On Course* is published monthly with original member content. For advertising opportunities please call 630-243-7900.

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# Hello 2013



Justin VanLanduit  
*Briarwood Country Club*

Believe or not we are coming up on the heels of another golf season here in the Midwest. I hope that everyone had some time to relax and recharge the batteries, especially after the last season.

2012 was not only challenging in all aspects of golf course maintenance, it was also difficult to enjoy the game of golf. Hopefully 2013 will be more forgiving and allow us to enjoy some time-out for recreation, networking and education. The 2013 schedule is rounding into form and I'm excited about the venues that will be welcoming us. The schedule consists of our normal monthly functions, and as a committee, we are looking to introduce a new event to try and spark some more participation and excitement.

Starting things off for the season, we will give it another try at Calumet Country Club. Unfortunately, the scheduled College Championship last fall was cancelled due to weather. Superintendent **Matt Harstad** is opening the doors back up for us and hosting the annual Spring Scramble on April 30th. Let's hope that Mother Nature is cooperative and allows Matt to showcase the fruits of his and his staff's labor.

On May 13, **Kirk Spieth** will host the Midwest and ITF in our combined meeting at Beverly Country Club. It has been a while since we've visited this club on the Southside of Chicago and will be a nice chance to play this Championship course. I'm sure the ITF will set up a game to make it fun and intriguing for all.

A change that just came upon us is the June Monthly Meeting. We've pushed it to July 22 and look forward to playing one Chicagoland's hidden little gems, Edgewood Valley Country Club. Superintendent, **Ron McCarthy** will host the July meeting where we will honor the Assistant Superintendent Champion and the Dom Grotti Champion. This is a great event to reward your Assistant by welcoming them to participate, as well as getting the opportunity to spend some time together outside of work and have some fun.

Because of the meeting switch from June to July, this June the Midwest is planning to add a new 9-hole event to its lineup. The idea was favored by many who completed our recent membership survey. The understanding of the time it takes out of one's day for an 18-hole event made this a viable idea and we thought we'd give it a shot. **Chuck Barber** will be opening the doors at St. Charles Country Club for golf and then an informal BBQ at his shop following the event. Dates for these events haven't been set; keep your eyes peeled for those to be released later.

MAGCS will still host the Family Night Picnic at the Kane Country Cougars game on July 20. It is a great time to get the family out of the house and spend some time with everyone. Games are always exciting and how can you beat a night at the ballpark with family and friends?

The battle for the MAGCS Regular and Senior crowns will be on August 26th. **Steve Van Acker** and Crystal Lake Country Club will be our host for these Championships. Steve wanted to host the event a bit earlier on the calendar so it didn't compete with our fall aerification schedules and every thing else that seems to happen at that time of year. These are small adjustments worth trying out; hopefully we can see more people competing for the top spot this season.

To wrap up the season we will all get the pleasure to experience the latest golf course addition to Chicago when we are welcomed by **Michael Heustis** and Chicago Highlands Club. The golf committee is looking at a new format for this event, so stay tuned. We look forward to playing this new track and couldn't ask for a better way to round out the end of the season.

We all know it can be a challenge to get away for an event but we hope to see you this year. Participation is key in keeping these events alive and supporting our fellow members as they roll out their best to host us. Plus I ask, why shouldn't you reward yourself with a day of fun? These events can be a good way to enjoy friends and colleagues and a great way to get some answers through networking and meeting people like yourself in the industry.



# Going Undercover

PHOTO CREDIT: DON CROSS, CGCS

Chuck Barber, *St. Charles Country Club*

We've all seen the perfectly square tarps covering greens from a variety of viewpoints. We observe their presence or absence from perimeter roads around area golf courses. They can be seen from a bird's eye view while we fly overhead to and from local airports.

For some, they can be seen comfortably from the relative warmth and comfort from our offices in the winter months if you are a superintendent who chooses to cover greens (all or some) over the winter.

Ben McGargill puts the greens at Wynstone Golf Club 'undercover' for the winter months. "Anything that is primarily *Poa annua* gets covered. Prior practices were to only cover greens adjacent to water because it is windier. There were still problems with ice damage on other greens. We tarp everything on the golf course now."

For 23 years Don Cross, CGCS at Skokie Country Club has been going undercover. The benefits Don realizes include protection from desiccation, wildlife damage, pedestrian traffic and winter sports enthusiasts.

PHOTO: BEN MCGARGILL



One of the many covers that go down each fall at Wynstone help to protect the *Poa annua*, especially on shaded sites.

That's just the tip of the iceberg for Cross as far as covers are concerned. Don is a strong proponent of deep-tine aerification late in the fall or early in the winter months. This practice provides some space for freeze and thaw expansion. Further, Don sees a noticeable increase in early spring root growth from this process. Finally, the greens at Skokie Country Club are in top form earlier than they would otherwise be. The soil temperatures reach optimal levels for root growth and shoot growth undercover.

McGargill also indicates that going undercover has taken away most of the winter stress on the *Poa annua* populations at Wynstone. "The only turf loss we have had in the winter has been on little lobes that do not get covered on the edges of the greens. Bentgrass is fine, *Poa* sometimes has issues."

Both McGargill and Cross agree that it is not a problem free enterprise. "The covers we use (permeable) certainly do not solve all potential winter issues," says Cross. The covers at Skokie will allow water from rain or snow melt to infiltrate which can complicate things. Further, they do not provide protection from ice accumulation, damage, or fungal pathogens like *Microdochium* or *Typhula*.

Manpower and storage are also a concern for those going undercover. "It takes a staff of six people 30 minutes per cover. The entire process takes roughly 10 hours," McGargill notes.

"The Cover Shuffle" is how Don Cross characterizes the biggest challenge for Skokie Country Club going undercover. The shuffle starts when "the warm days in spring may come sporadi-

cally and are then followed by sharp temperature drops.” Cross manages the temperature fluctuations by removing and the re-installing the covers periodically as the weather dictates. “We have to manage the temperatures so as to not let too much early spring growth to occur too soon. Further, we can’t uncover them too early and cause a fallback in progress (enhanced growth, greening) made to that point. Therefore, we may pull them off for brief periods and put them back on if the temperatures dictate this”. Cross notes that 2012 was an exceptional year in as much as the covers came off March 13th and there was no need to reinstall the covers.

McGargill agrees that their biggest challenge going undercover is “putting them on and taking them off.” Storage is another obstacle as the covers take up a lot space but if dried adequately they fold readily and don’t require heated storage. The replacement interval, for McGargill, is roughly every 7 or 8 years. “They become brittle and tear easily at that point. We have been replacing our worst two tarps each year. That pace will quicken in the near future as half of our tarps were purchased in 2009.”

PHOTO: BEN MCGARGILL



*McGargill in his words is not an “active advocate for covers” but he realizes the myriad of problems they mitigate each year at Wynstone as easily seen in the picture above.*

Dan Marco, CGCS at Ruth Lake Country Club in Hinsdale chooses to go a different route. While not necessarily ‘burying’ greens in sand, Marco eschews covers in favor of very heavy topdressing to protect the putting surfaces at Ruth Lake from the

PHOTO: BEN MCGARGILL



*As with most maintenance practices, the “cover shuffle” as Don Cross likes to call it is dictated each Spring by fluctuations in temperature. 2012 was easy, once they came off, they never went back on.*

winter weather. Marco will solid, deep-tine (to the tune of 9” deep) aerify the first week of November and use approximately 60 tons of sand to backfill the holes.

“Just to put them to bed I use 3 semi loads (60 tons) over 3.7 acres of greens, collars and minor extensions.” The entire undertaking takes 2 staff members, a TyCrop brush type topdresser, a large Dakota material handler and about 3 hours of time.

According to Marco, the first mowing of the spring is not as bad as you might think with the volume of sand he applies. “We get about three mowings in prior to needing to sharpen reels. Further, we use older units to make the first few mowings and only greens are dry of morning dew.” This method has been successful for the A1 putting surfaces at Ruth Lake since they were grassed in 2005.

Whether or not superintendents choose to send greens undercover for the winter is a function of many variables: does the grass require it, does the growing environment demand it, are the covers in the budget, is there space to store them, is there adequate manpower to handle them, and much more. @

PHOTO: DAN MARCO, CGCS



*Dan Marco, CGCS prescribes 60 tons of sand to cover all his putting surfaces each fall at Ruth Lake Country Club. He really likes the outcome each spring on the aggressive A1 cultivar.*



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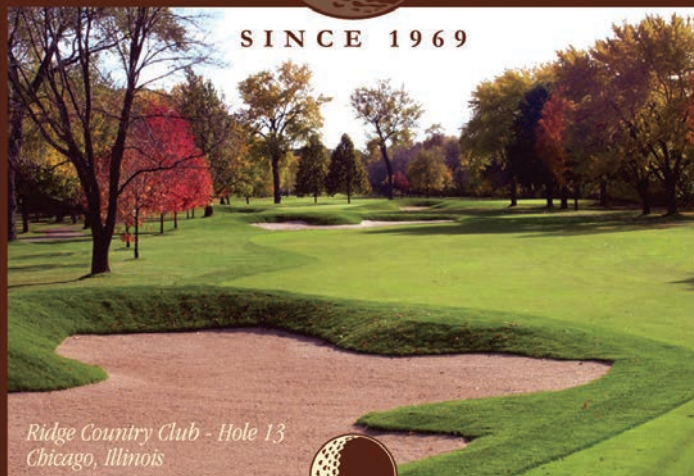
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The new board of directors for the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS) is going to meet for a strategic planning session on November 28, 2012. Your input from this survey will be used to guide future activities of the association. Your answers are greatly appreciated and will help us set the agenda for the day. Please take a moment to complete a short survey. Answers will be kept anonymous.

# We ask You Tell

Midwest Membership Class:

- ☐ Superintendent  
☐ Assistant Superintendent  
☐ Commercial Member  
☐ Retired

Luke Cella, MAGCS

Thanks to all those that filled out our Annual Membership Survey this past December. The board used the information gathered to plan upcoming events and to guide their decision making process.

Of the respondents, most reported they attended two Midwest meetings per year and that Turf Science is the most important type of education at this stage in their career followed up by professional development. For the first time in my history of conducting surveys of the group disease management has NOT topped the list of education topics that you would like to see offered at our meetings – granted it is still up there but soil testing and result interpretation, environmental stress on turf (winter injury/shade/heat), and plant growth regulators surpassed it.

As far as the meetings go, the majority felt that between \$75 to \$100 is fair for a full day of education including food and beverages. This cost fluctuates based upon the fee for the host club, speaker expenses and honoraria, and is set to break even for the Midwest.

As far as the meetings that have golf included in them, our members ranked the order of importance when deciding to attend as (most important to least):

- Education offered
- Day of the week
- Venue – host club
- Starting and ending time including travel distance and time
- Cost
- Golf prizes

The majority of members would like to see the outings on Tuesday (106) followed by Mondays (82) respondents with a start time between 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. Most attendees' employers pay for their meeting attendance and the meeting costs start to become an issue when over \$100 to attend. An overwhelming 174 respondents said they would be interested in attending a 9 hole event that included education.

There were a few open ended questions and it seemed that a similar vein ran throughout the answers:

If the Midwest could offer that one thing that would make you attend more events, what would it be? More time, less cost, better location (it seems everyone wants one in their neighborhood), quality education, able to take something away. Funniest answer: free beer

## Respondent Breakdown by Class

Membership Class	No	%
Superintendent	129	54.7%
Assistant Superintendent	36	15.3%
Commercial Members	48	20.3%
Retired	17	7.2%
Other	6	2.5%

Do you have any suggestions or comments for future meetings or education events? There were a lot of No's answered here, a few to try and keep the costs in check and schedule more meetings in the off season as opposed to during the growing season. Funniest answer: I love the shop tours (wrong association buddy).

99.1% of you look forward to receiving **On Course** and most of you read it within the first day of getting it, or at least by week's end. Gurke's Bullsheit is the most favorite column, followed by our feature articles and super-n-sites. You appreciate the MAGCS in Motion (Association Updates) and like the directors/president's column as long as they don't get too preachy about life's lessons.

94% of you notice the advertising in *On Course* and appreciate the support of these companies – as publisher, thank you.

The future topics for *On Course* to look into is great and has been forwarded to the editorial and education committees. I'm not printing the topics here, you'll just have to wait and see the articles for fear of a few of our fellow writers may steal some of our thunder. Although one topic that I will share is: You lied, this survey took more than a minute to fill out. As far as going digital, we are working on it and hope to offer *On Course* in a more user friendly digital format that will be in addition to our printed version. We are also reining in our production schedule of the magazine so it appears in your mailbox on a steadier schedule each month.

The Midwest Directory was the next item that we queried all about and everyone except three of you value the directory. Some of you access the directory online, something we hope will work better in the future as we upgrade our website/interface in the coming year. We will continue to print the directory as most want this, as a reminder, please log into the website or look in the 2012 directory to make sure your information is current. We'll be pulling down the data for the new directory and want it as current as possible.

### What do you value most in your membership?

<u>Asset.....</u>	<u>% ranked 1st</u>
Ability to Network .....	65%
Communications (email & OC) ....	50%
Education and Seminars .....	48%
Membership Directory .....	22%
Being Part of a larger group .....	20%
Government Relations .....	4%

We asked a few questions about the website and will use the answers to help us through the redesign. We'll create a new online forum, start up a blog and something that I know I will use (if all of us use it) is a pictorial directory. I'm excited to work on a new website and incorporate newer technologies into my daily routine.

If you are happy with every aspect of MAGCS or share a few ideas to make things better, or feel the Association is broken, we appreciate you taking the time to fill out the survey. To us, it shows you care, and that is what matters. The board reviewed each and every answer and will continue to use the information to make sure the Association remains in your hands. @

### What is the best day for a MAGCS meeting to take place.

<u>Day .....</u>	<u>% ranked 1st</u>
Monday .....	40%
Tuesday.....	50%
Wednesday .....	17%
Thursday .....	10%
Friday .....	3%

### How often do you currently use the Midwest website?

<u>Day .....</u>	<u>%</u>
Once a day.....	1.5%
Once a week.....	14.6%
Every two weeks .....	25.9%
Once a month .....	53.2%
Never .....	4.9%

### What do you look forward to using on the new website?

<u>Item .....</u>	<u>%</u>
Online Forum .....	65.2%
Midwest Blog.....	67.4%
Pictorial Directory .....	54.1%
Purchasing Midwest Items .....	43.12%

### Do you value the Midwest Directory?

<u>Choice.....</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes.....	98.5%
No .....	1.5%

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