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front cover

St. Charles Country Club #1 Quarry Hole this Spring. It is this year's site of our first nine hole walking event. Mark your calendar for June 10th and plan to join us.

Photo credit: Luke Cella



The wettest April on record proved to be one of the most trying for local area superintendents. (Morris Country Club, photo credit: Andy Weadge)

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2013 MIDWEST EVENTS

- 5/13 Midwest / ITF May Meeting, Beverly Country Club
- 6/10 Midwest Nine Holer, St. Charles 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 61st Midwest Turf Clinic, Medinah Country Club

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Time to Move




Dave Groelle, CGCS
Royal Melbourne Country
Club

What a difference a year makes! We went from the warmest spring ever to the coldest spring in 20 years. I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say that we can't wait to get back to "normal." Whatever that is!

How are we doing? My first message as President I spoke of accountability. Our first goal was to improve the timeliness of our publication *On Course*. To accomplish this several changes were made. The first was to hire a new printer. The second was to create an editorial calendar. This essentially sets up each publication in advance. We began asking for articles now instead of later. Some have asked, "Why do you need my article now if it is not going to be published until July?" The reason is very simple. Most of our content is not time sensitive. In other words, the articles we receive can be read and are pertinent at any time of the year. Second, the offseason provides most of us ample time to write. We have seen that if allowed to wait until summer, work seems to get in the way. By having as much of the content available earlier, we can set up each month in advance. This helps us get the finished product to the printer in a more timely fashion.

The other change that was made is the Luke Cella is now in charge of the layout of the magazine. Essentially we are completing everything in house now, with the exception of publishing. This allows for much more efficiency. By the way did you notice the new layout and design? What do you think?

You may have also noticed a digital version of *On Course* is now available. It is available to all members via the website. If you have a chance, check it out! It is great. For those not ready for a digital version don't worry, we'll still be sending a hard copy in the mail. The digital version however is available much sooner. We anticipate that you will have access to a digital copy on the website the first week of each month. The hard copy will usually arrive a week or two later. That explains some of the delay in getting the magazine delivered. Printing and postage can take about two weeks. So, to get you an issue on time in the mail we need to submit a finished product to the printer two weeks prior to first of the month. This is why we need the articles sooner. Make sense? I am very pleased with what we have accomplished so far. With your help it can only get better. Thanks to all of those who have contributed to *On Course* by writing an article. As always, we continue to need more, so think about writing an article soon.

To close, I recently had the opportunity to attend the 2013 Chapter Leaders/Executives Symposium that was held in Lawrence, KS at GCSAA Headquarters. I traveled with Luke Cella and it was my first time to the home of the GCSAA. There were 50 people in attendance from different 30 chapters all around the country. I took many things away from the event. What I was most proud of was the strength of MAGCS. It was very clear to me how blessed we are to have the membership we have; members who are willing to participate and contribute to the growth of our chapter as well as the game of golf. We are in a great place professionally and only getting better. So I encourage you to take advantage of all that MAGCS has to offer. Come out to a meeting, participate on a committee, write an article, volunteer to be a Board Member. It is our members that make us great and will continue to move us forward. Here's to a great season. 



Dave poses with Old Tom outside GCSAA HQ.

The Urban Forest

PHOTO CREDITS: CHRIS SCHNEIDER

Chris Schneider, *Horigan Urban Forest Products*

In 1862 Henry David Thoreau spoke on behalf of nature in his essay, “Walking.” Thoreau implies that nature is a deity. He describes it having “absolute freedom and wildness.” He suggests that nature is an autonomous force functioning unpredictably.

If we accept Thoreau’s interpretation of nature, people are inconsequential in nature’s wild path.

Today, human beings live on a densely populated planet with limited resources. With our growing needs and limited resources, we are obligated to maintain not only our built environment, but nature’s wild world as well. With oceans, trees, air, soil, and any other resource, our relationship with nature depends on how well we use and respect it. Think about our forests, not just large stands of trees in remote areas, not just the wild side of nature and our role within it, but our urban forests as well, the trees that stand within our built environment.

By considering our urban forests as a resource, we can better understand our place amid nature’s wild and free enterprise.

How well do we encourage the growth of our urban trees, and how well do we utilize their material? Rooted within our built infrastructure are proud stands of urban trees. These trees use the same air that we breathe. They experience the same weather and feel the same temperature as the humans who walk under their branches. Just as we maintain and restore our buildings or homes, we must care for urban trees in a way that ensures their longevity and their maximum potential for growth. We can act as stewards for our urban trees, rather than as bystanders existing among them. As stewards, we will improve the quality of our trees and reinforce our relationship with the environment.

Fortunately, there are companies already making great strides in developing the quality of our urban forests. They have established themselves as inspiring specialists, caring for and encouraging the growth of urban trees. These master arborists prune, trim, and treat to maintain a vital, high quality resource. Their trade focuses on growth and not removal. For a sustainable environment, the objective is to encourage the growth of urban trees unless nature gives us no alternative. From Thoreau’s perspective, nature is inevitably unpredictable, and as the result of harsh weather or infestation, urban trees do succumb. However, when these trees come to rest on the urban surface, they need not die in vain.

If we are stewards, then we must utilize what wild nature provides. Despite every effort to ensure the welfare of an urban tree, some fall by nature’s hand. In drastic winds, heavy rains, lightning, or infestation urban trees can meet their demise. Then begins the long and perilous journey of decomposition, or even worse, mulching, and urban trees are all but lost. However, as stewards, we can extend the life of an urban tree by using its wood. Rather than cutting lumber exclusively from remote forests, we can use lumber from urban trees. By utilizing the resources that nature provided, our actions are more in harmony.



A portable band saw mill can hew some large logs.

Today, in addition to skilled arborists, there is a select group of urban sawyers. They harvest the many species of fallen urban trees like ash, birch, beech, catalpa, cherry, elm, ginkgo, hackberry, hickory, black locust, honey locust, soft maple, hard maple, white oak, red oak, pine, spruce, sycamore, and black walnut. With modern sawmills and dehumidification kilns, companies with urban sawyers work diligently to cut and dry the material from fallen trees. For every urban tree utilized in the lumber market, one less healthy tree from a remote, stable forest is needed for our day-to-day lumber use. And with growing national interest in green energy and sustainability, people begin to understand that urban lumber is a necessity and not a luxury. As the demand for urban lumber rises, more sawyers are then able to distribute it.

Today, in addition to skilled arborists, there is a select group of urban sawyers.

With milling systems designed around bandsaws, sawyers are able to produce lumber at a high yield and an efficient rate.

From thin and narrow dimensional planks to thick and wide wooden slabs, the goal in producing urban lumber is to extract the maximum amount of serviceable yield. This yield goes into wood products like beams, benches, cabinets, chairs, cladding, desks, doors, framing, flooring, headboards,



Urban trees become very unique and original pieces of lumber

molding, tables, trim, shelving, and more. By becoming such wood products, urban trees extend their lives and communities are sustained. Sawyers seize the opportunity to produce the most unique and original pieces of urban lumber.

Like snowflakes, there are no two trees alike. There are no limits to what we can achieve when we respect our environment and use fully what nature has given us. @

Below: What is the value of timber on your golf course?





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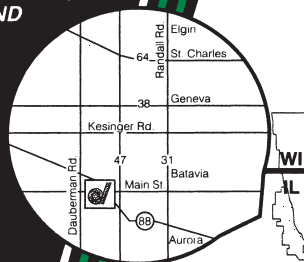
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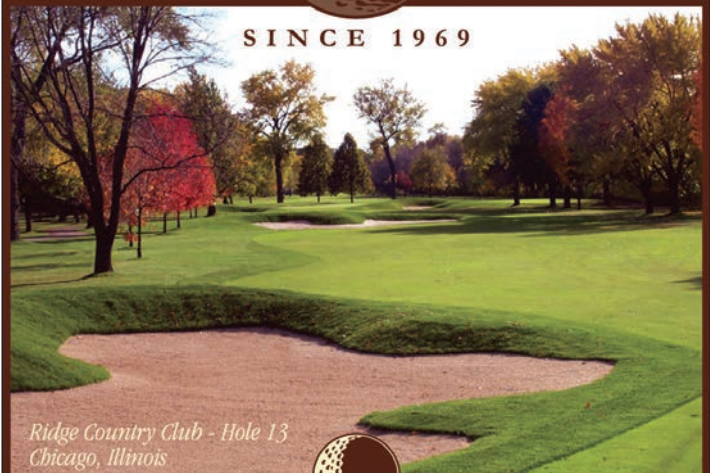
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Todd Quitno, *Lohmann Companies*

PHOTO CREDITS: TODD QUITNO, LUKE CELLA

For a group of course designers, builders and shapers who didn't even know what social media was 5 years ago, we certainly spend a lot of time thinking about it these days. Maybe you're like we were 18 months ago — determined to do something in that realm (to better communicate with your customers) but not at all sure how to go about it.

Well, there are dozens of “valuable” ways to do it, and we keep developing new strategies as we go along. We wanted to share a couple of those with you here.

Let me say first that as superintendents and club/course managers, you have a leg up on us course designers and contractors. We at Lohmann Golf Designs and our sister construction firm, Golf Creations, are doing all the basic things we should:

- Creating a central, “branded” portal— the blog at our website — where colleagues and customers can read our news, be engaged, respond and generally interact;
- Regularly supplying that blog with new content (so visitors always have something new to read);
- Providing via Facebook further, image-centric content that is informational, not sales-driven; and

- Using Facebook and Twitter (along with our traditional e-mailing list) to drive colleagues and customers to our blog/website.

But while we really do avoid “selling” our services via all this content, we are continually seeking out and trying to engage with a disparate community of potential customers. Private golf clubs and daily-fee facilities are lucky — they have their communities ready made. It's just a matter of how to best engage them via social media.

Here's an approach we stumbled upon with some of our recent clients:

To start, we've reoriented the way we work with golf properties overall. Today we basically dice up a traditional master renovation plan into smaller chunks that can be tackled annually, if the money is there. In this economy, we've found that clubs are better able to swallow these smaller bites in an orderly, productive, cost-effective fashion. We call this an Asset Management Plan, or AMP.

We're formulating an AMP for a semi-private club client in Wisconsin and we're going to use social media to communicate the scope of that AMP. It makes sense if you think about it. First, it's easy to get members or regular golfing patrons to like a club's Facebook page or visit the blog — they're already interacting with the club online. So instead of asking members and golfers to digest the contents of a multi-faceted, multi-year master plan or AMP all at once, we're planning to dole the information out to them bit by bit via the club's blog, and then drive traffic to the blog with Facebook posts.



Would you follow your local gas station on Facebook?

For example, one week we might discuss tree removal happening on one hole, and use that to discuss the overarching tree removal plans we have for the entire course. The next week we might address the club's investment in a more aggressive top-dressing program, its effect on every day playing conditions like firmness and ball roll. That post might evolve into a further discussion on why a couple of greens still aren't satisfactory, or aren't responding to the program, and may need to be rebuilt or re-grassed.

This approach serves a bunch of really practical purposes:

- It keeps the membership and golfing customer base apprised of what's happening at their course, in an informational way.
- It provides an avenue for promoting common maintenance activities, like top-dressing, in a way that golfers can understand, like better ball roll.
- It demonstrates that investment in the course has been planned out and staged in a logical, cost-efficient way.
- It provides them the opportunity for feedback, because all these social media portals allow for and inherently encourage that feedback.
- And it gets members in the habit of visiting the website and Facebook page, where there's lots of other information the club wants to communicate.



This local course resident might be worthy of a FB post.

I had to laugh the other day when I visited my local gas station, which, like many do, has a convenience store attached. It's all part of a big chain of gas/convenience stores. There was a sign on the door that urged me "Follow us on Facebook!" For what, I thought? I'm not going to follow them on Facebook — I don't care enough about where I buy gas and soda.

But golf courses are different. If you make an effort to stock your blog and Facebook page with meaningful information about your course, the people who play that course will continually come back for more. Most courses have been collecting the email information on members and greens-fee-paying golfers for a long time. Use that list to drive them to your Facebook page. Then tell them what you're doing, like why you've rebuilt or moved a bunker, and how that change will improve play for seniors or ladies, for example.

Here's the important bit: It's our view here at LGD and Golf Creations that the superintendent can and should be the point person for generating that meaningful social media content. He

or she is the person who knows the most about what's happening on the property's most important asset: the golf course. He or she is also on the course every day, meaning he or she can deliver timely info and pictures for your social media portals, every day.

When there's wildlife captured on film (okay, digitally), that's a picture and a FB post.

When you re-edge the bunkers surrounding a particular green, that's a picture, FB post and maybe a blog entry.

When you've drawn up a schedule to punch the greens, that's something golfers will want to know.

We've seen some great "Sunrise Series", where each week the super features a different hole at sunrise—a beautiful time of day that most golfers don't experience.



Even quite technical green-keeping can be featured and explained in this sort of context. We know of supers who have applied plant growth regulator to really lush rough areas in front of ladies tees prior to an invitational — to increase roll in those areas and lessen the chances of lost balls there. That's something most supers don't broadcast (cause they don't want to have to do it on a regular basis!), but tell those ladies via social media you've made special efforts to keep the grass down, they'll appreciate the attention.

Here's another fun and interesting social-media worthy experiment: One of our superintendent friends purposely didn't put any tee markers out the first two weeks of the season — he wanted to see where people would play the holes from, on their own. He reported that almost always golfers played more forward than he would have traditionally "marked" them. That's good info for a superintendent to have, and interesting information to share with golfers, especially in the vain of Tee It Forward.

Of course, in all these cases where you are generating fun imagery, Instagram and PinInterest are two more social media options that are very photo-centric.

The possibilities are pretty much endless, and that's a good thing because implementing this sort of social media campaign is a bit like holding a tiger by the tail. Once you start, you've really got to stay with it or interest will fall away (this is especially true for Twitter). But this is the new best way to communicate with your golfers, and there are dozens of ways to customize it, you just need to find your way. @



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