

The Oakland Hunt

GCI's man about the Carolinas, Trent Bouts, files this dispatch from November's hunt at the Oakland Plantation Turf Farm.

Each fall, general manager Rick Neisler III and the folks at Oakland Plantation Turf Farm stage several hunts for clients and other industry members across three tracts that make up the roughly 10,000-acre property. Golf course superintendents in the Carolinas prize a place on the invitation-only hunts like they do a

turfgrass professor at North Carolina State University, did a bit of nail-biting in his stand because one bear flatly refused to give up the corn pile he or she was gorging on down below. After considerable thought - that's what professors do after all - Miller, took a few steps down his ladder and swinging by one arm, combined yelling and flashlight glare, managed to scare off the beast.

Later that night, hunters including Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association executive director, Tim Kreger, found themselves stranded in a different fashion - stuck on a conked out pontoon boat on the Cape Fear River.

"We were jugging for catfish when the engine gave out," he says. "Fortunately we were one of two boats and the others found us and towed us in. There were a lot of jokes flying back and forth. It's dark and cold and you're not pulling in any fish but it's great, you can't buy laughs like that."

For all the good humor, golf course superintendents rarely leave their work far behind. For years now, Avery and fellow veteran, Butch Sheffield, CGCS from North Ridge Country Club in Raleigh, N.C. have made sure to bunk in the same cabin.

"I've got to admit there's a lot of turf talk that goes on," Avery says. "In its own way it's nearly as educational as some of the formal seminars and conferences out there. It's a great environment to check in with guys about how their year has been, what they've tried, what's worked and what hasn't."



70-degree day in August.

"I don't even think for a second when my invitation arrives," says Ray Avery, the veteran superintendent at Longview Club in Charlotte, N.C. "I don't bat an eyelid. I just pick up the phone and say 'OK, I'm in.' Then I worry about how I'm going to make it work"

It turns out that Avery is as sharp with a shotgun as he is as a superintendent. Since his first Oakland hunt in the early '90s, he has fired his gun 19 times and brought in 18 deer.

But it's the camaraderie, the stories traded around the bonfire and the simple fact of sharing an experience, that he values most of all. "Rick (Neisler) is the hunt master and he is very serious about every aspect of the hunt itself and taking care of the property, but once you're done it's all about relaxing and winding down," Avery says.

For example, Grady Miller, a

CUT THE MUSTARD



Our condiment correspondents forwarded this dipatch into GCI's intergalactic HQ, apparently the grounds crew over at Winnetka Golf Course, Winnetka, Ill., recently put the call out for more mustard.

No, they're not training to beat the world hot dog eating record (58 franks in 12 minutes).

Instead, these guys are requesting any and all empty French's Mustard bottles 14 ounces or larger. Apparently, they use these condiment containers to carry a sand-seed mixture to fill divots and ball marks.

And while all yellow mustard may seem the same, the bottles are not, says Super Henry Michna.

Super Henry Michna recently told The Chicago Tribune that while French's Mustard may be good, their bottles outrank all others. "Because of the nozzle," he says. "The sand's able to come out quickly enough and it's got that nice curvature to the bottle. It's good ergonomics."

Michna reports he was prepared to go buy several bottles of mustard and empty out their contents, but decided to ask the community for help. He posted the request ("Wanted Dead or Alive... mustard containers that is!!!") on his blog, wgcsuperintendent.blogspot.com.

So, if you have an empty French's mustard bottle that is 14-ounces or larger, you can forward it to the Winnetka Golf Course clubhouse, 1300 Oak St., Winnetka, IL 60093.

QUOTABLES

"You could put him on the moon and you'd still have a great golf course."

— Georgia GCSA president Anthony Williams, CGCS, about the expertise of William Shirley, the association's 2010 Superintendent of the Year.