



Green Bay is the home of Lambeau Field and the Green Bay Packers. Each fall the state of Wisconsin follows their Badgers on Saturdays and then the Packers on Sunday. Many consider the Green Bay Packers to be America's team and the fan base goes far beyond the borders of the state of Wisconsin. I have known many people who have "watching a football game in Lambeau Field" as priority must-do on their bucket lists.

As they say in football jargon "upon further review" Green Bay has so much more to offer as a city. One of the highlights of the region is Green Bay Country Club. Back in 1991 a group of friends and investors organized to form the club. Early months were spent on developing the vision for a superb golf course and family venue for its members. The demand for high-end golf was there and construction began in the fall of 1992.

Dick Nugent and Tim Nugent laid out a wonderful track on the rolling terrain. There is quite an elevation change as the holes meander through wooded areas with water that is beautiful and in play on quite a few holes. Many native grasses have been incorporated into the layout and provide for a rustic and natural look of the land.

After the original design there have been a few minor modifica-

The Green Bay trail

Just like the Green Bay Trail, Marc Davison, CGCS, covered a lot of miles and a very logical and strategic path to Titledtown. *By Bruce Williams, CGCS*

tions under Tim Nugent's eye, including the addition of a few more tees and bunkers over the last two decades. The course opened in 1995 and received accolades for being one of Golf Digest's Top 10 new courses that year. Over the years, GBCC has hosted many state events and is still considered one of the places on the 'must play' list in Wisconsin.

GBCC membership is typical of most private clubs with a broad spectrum of professionals who own small businesses, practice law, medicine, as well as corporate executives. While one would think there might be a vast number of Green Bay Packer players and executives at the club, they in fact only constitute a small portion of the membership. However, make no mistake that green and gold are the club's prominent colors.

On the days the Packers play the club has learned to work around the game. It is pretty typical to have a shotgun start on game day so members and their guests can then head out to Lambeau Field and tailgate or attend the many parties hosted in town. The clubhouse and golf course are pretty empty after kickoff.

GREEN BAY TRAIL. If you have never heard of the Green Bay Trail then you may not be from the Midwest. History books say woolly mammoths traveled this route 12,000 years ago during the Ice Age. In the 1600's French explorers Joliet and Marquette used it in their exploration of the Americas. The Potawatomi Indians used the trail to traverse the area from Chicago to Green Bay for hunting and trading until the early 20th Century.

The trail served as a mail route between Fort Dearborn in Chicago and Fort Howard in Green Bay. In 1832 the trail became an official post road by an Act of Congress. In 1836 the first stagecoach service was initiated



Under Tim Nugent, there have been just a few minor modifications to Green Bay Country Club, including more tees and bunkers.

between Chicago and Green Bay and the trail would eventually be named Green Bay Road.

Great things came along that road from Chicago to Green Bay during the last couple of centuries. So it is not surprising the person responsible for the construction and conditioning of Green Bay Country Club also made that symbolic trek.

HEADED NORTH. Marc Davison, CGCS, grew up in the Chicago suburb of Hillside. Like many people in the business he spent his early years working on a golf course. Hillside Golf Club was owned by his grandfather and Marc became a part of the family business. A few summers were also spent at his uncle's golf course on the west side of Milwaukee called Edgewood Golf Club. He spent a total of six summers in Milwaukee as he was inching his way up the Green Bay Trail.

Marc's next stop was to work as the assistant superintendent for Rod Johnson, CGCS, at Pine Hills Country Club in Sheboygan,

Wis. An opportunity opened for a superintendent position at Lomira Country Club, near Fond du Lac, and Marc calls it a true trial by fire in his first head superintendent job.

After that first year at Lomira CC opportunity knocked and Marc was drawn back to Sheboygan where he worked for Don Clemens during the construction at Blackwolf Run in Kohler, Wis. Don left after bringing Marc in and then Marc took the helm with building and maintaining the first 18 holes and then the third nine holes and fourth nine holes that would comprise the full 36 holes at Blackwolf Run. The stint in Kohler amounted to seven years of operations with five of those spent with some form of construction.

As Marc's skills grew in the construction and project management arena he became well known throughout Wisconsin's golf turf community. It was no surprise when he was asked to join the initiatives that would become Green Bay Country Club after several years of construction.

Just like the Green Bay Trail Marc Davison covered a lot of miles and a very logical and strategic path that brought him to Green Bay from Chicago. His many years of working in the family business along with a significant amount of construction experience made him the perfect candidate for the job. While most of the superintendents in Wisconsin don't come from Chicago and are not graduates of Iowa State University's turfgrass management program, can't think of a better fit than Marc who paid his dues as he worked his way north from the Windy City.

MAKING IT GREAT. When one tours the Green Bay Country Club the first thing you notice is the attention to detail throughout the property. The 18 holes of golf are spectacular, but there is much more to the club than that. Marc not only has the normal 18 holes that most superintendents manage but there is an 18-hole putting course with bentgrass turf, an aquatic center, and a clubhouse he oversees. The put-

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COURSE PROFILE



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ting course is something in most superintendents' skill set but the aquatic center and building maintenance take some additional skills.

Always up for a challenge it was the trust of the facility's board of directors that placed those additional tasks into Marc's hands. Managing people, projects, and infrastructure all fit naturally into the scheme of things. Marc knew the more you manage at a facility, the more valuable you are to your employer.

WINTER UP NORTH. Most northern golf course superintendents wish they had a dollar for every time they have been asked the question of "so what do you do in the winter?" Davison shared that the winter is not as long as you think in Green Bay. The course opens with greens mowing starting around March 15th through April 1st and usually the last mowing takes place around Nov. 1. That would mean about a week later to open and a week earlier to close than in his native Chicago. People love their golf in Green Bay and know their season is short so they get in a lot of golf during that green grass growing period. The club wisely has a golf simulator it uses during the winter months along with the normal food and beverage activity.

THE TEAM. Staffing is seasonal for the most part. Marc is very proud of his crew and has many people that have been with him for many years. He is fortunate to have two assistants, a great equipment technician and a facilities manager that work cohesively as a team. He does add some college students during the summer to his normal April 15th to Oct. 15th seasonal staff.

A large part of the success Marc has had at Green Bay Country Club is the support of the facility's board of directors. There is a high level of mutual respect and the membership considers the golf course to be their No. 1 asset and fund it accordingly.

CHALLENGES. No golf course is without its challenges. The greens were originally planted to Penn Links 20 years ago. Over the years there has been some segregation of the turf and also the standard onset of *Poa annua*.

Marc manages for the bentgrass to be dominant, but that fight continues to be a challenge as his *Poa annua* populations were definitely in check.

Bower Creek runs through the property and impacts several holes. Almost every winter there is some erosion of the creek banks. This requires attention in the off season with the use of stone boulders to

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fortify those creek banks. Moving large stones and boulders to remote areas bordering the rough and fairways is a delicate project that takes place late fall into early winter.

THE DAVISONS. Every trip is a lot more fun if you have someone to share it with. Marc did not make the trip alone. He married his high school sweetheart from Hillside, Ill., 30 years ago and Laurie has been at his side as he moved his way up the Green Bay Trail to his final destination at GBCC.

They have five children between the ages of 16 and 26. While the golf course takes up a fair amount of Marc's time he is happy to live nearby and able to

participate in all the family and school events in the area. The Davisons are a big hockey family and several of the kids are playing at the collegiate level. In addition to hockey the family enjoys soccer basketball and golf.

THE FUTURE. With a mere 20 years under his belt at GBCC I can see that Marc has found a great home for himself and his family. He really enjoys the projects on the course, in the clubhouse and any other challenges that come his way.

Most improvements are done in house with the club staff and that is very rewarding for Marc and his team. His long career is midway and he looks forward

to many more years at the club. He comes to work excited and invigorated every day. His spirit is contagious and he has become a mentor to many. I believe that Marc is as lucky to have Green Bay Country Club as they are to have him.

We have all heard about the frozen tundra of Lambeau Field. That term comes from a comment made by NFL Films founder, the late Steve Sabol, about the Ice Bowl (played on Dec. 31, 1967) in which temperatures reached 15 below zero on game day.

Yes the ground was frozen and that game was memorable. But when you stand on the 14th tee at Green Bay Country Club and see Lambeau Field in the background

your only thoughts will be on the outstanding playing conditions that you are enjoying.

Green Bay is Titledown USA. Green Bay is an outstanding city and GBCC is a phenomenal club with a magnificent golf course. Who knows, in another 15-20 years Marc Davison just might get those Packer tickets he has been on the waiting list for 25 years.

It would only be deserving and the ultimate stop on the Green Bay Trail. **GCI**

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