

The hole story

Superintendent Owen Coulson shared with GCI an outstanding photo essay of his maintenance crew's spring aerification regimen at Vestavia Country Club, Birmingham, Ala. [Check out this issue's app version to view the complete photo essay.](#)

"Two times each year the membership gives the golf course to the golf maintenance crew so we can 'tear up' the great playing surface that they've been enjoying," Coulson says.

"Each spring and fall for the last eight or so years we have been tweaking our process of aerification to get it perfect. Each time we actually get pretty close but we can usually pin point at least one little tweak here or there. This process has been made easier because of our record keeping from previous years, which includes everything down to quantity and type of pizzas we order for the crew on aerification day (2013 was 15 total for a crew of 22 - 4 pep; 4 saus; 4 Hawaiian; 3 chicken). Our 'checklist' makes it easier to have a starting place for each step of the process. We may not apply the exact same amounts each aerification, but we cut down considerably on the amount of time we spend during the set-up stage for each step.

"The greens at Vestavia Country Club were first constructed by George Cobb around 1951 and then renovated by John LaFoy in 1989. Then in 2001, the top 6 inches of turf and material were removed and new greens mix was brought in and seeded to L-93 bentgrass.

"With the existing drainage and majority of the greens profile being 24 years old and even the newer/renovated portion being 12 years old, a lot of sub-surface cultivation must take place for them to perform in a way that is suitable for our membership. By utilizing the deep-drill machines along with the larger hollow tine in conjunction with our process, we have been able maintain a putting surface that the membership is consistently happy with."



Great idea



Here's an idea from the United Kingdom. To create a better communication link between the grounds crew and the mechanic, John Critchley, the course manager at Les Mielles Golf and Country Club, St. Owen's Bay, Jersey, UK, has introduced a machine log system. Each machine has an associated clipboard hanging in the mess room, which the operator must complete after use.

"We've had a couple of occasions where poor communication has affected golf course maintenance," Critchley says. "Also, if the mechanic is not on site once you have finished your task, people may forget to report the

faults. It resolves all these scenarios and many others."

To get his crew to buy into the concept, Critchley kept the form simple and clean. It contains blanks for the operator's name, times and dates, and any comments or faults. "It is then the mechanics responsibility to check these and complete any tasks needed," he says. "The crew have taken to this system far better than I thought, it creates organization and professionalism within the department."

Check out Critchley's blog at: lesmiellesgroundscrew.blogspot.com

