



THE  
BUCKET  
LIST

BY BRUCE WILLIAMS

## ARE YOU LIVING LIFE TO ITS FULLEST? TURFHEADS SHARE THEIR CAREER AND PERSONAL AMBITIONS.

**T**he time will come when your turfhead days will draw to a close. And as you come to terms with the twilight of your career, will you look back at your time as a superintendent and see a collection of accomplishments and milestones? Or, will there be wants and desires left unfulfilled?

What's on your bucket list?

For the uninitiated, the term "bucket list" is an individual's wish list of things to accomplish before they, well, kick the bucket. You may also be familiar with the 2007 movie of the same name that starred Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman as two terminally ill men united to fulfill their personal bucketlists in the time they have left.

While I surely hope that golf course superintendents live long and prosperous lives, we must all face the reality that life is finite and we must prepare for the inevitable. So I approached a number of my friends and colleagues in the golf industry to gauge what's on their bucket lists.

Superintendents are planners, organizers, dreamers and get-'er-done types of people, so I was not surprised to have received a wide spectrum of responses. Surprisingly, individual lists didn't necessarily focus on work-related items, but included a fair amount of personal notes and everything in between. Some are actively working on their bucket lists while others could only see it in the distant future.

At a recent Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents meeting, I polled a few supers regarding their career bucket lists. With a wide array of ages and experience, it was interesting to hear their responses.

One individual dreamed of taking a sabbatical from his golf course so he could be mentored by the superintendent at one of the majors. Imagine taking a year off from your course and shadowing someone like Merion's Matt Shaffer or Oak Hill's Jeff Corcoran.

On the career path a few guys said they just wanted a chance to interview for a top job in the country to see what it would be like. With more than 200 applicants for such

jobs, most believed they have no chance at all and would just like to experience it one time during their career.

There were a few who held the leaders of their organizations in high esteem and would love to serve their fellow members. I am not so sure how much of a bucket list item that is at local chapters as my experience tells me that most chapters are always looking for the leaders of tomorrow. Start on the committee level and through hard work and being engaged, this one can readily be knocked off the bucket list.

Some indicated they can't manage the time off to volunteer at the Big Tournaments and commit a whole week. It is prime time in Chicago and hard to get away. For that bucket list item I suggest that supers pinpoint some regional events or even a member-guest of a peer to see how things are done. In my opinion there is great value in this and mimicry is the best form of compliment.

If there are no plans for a major renovation at your course and you have that on your bucket list then stop over and see someone else in the process and learn from them. If you can't build your own golf course or do a major renovation, then live vicariously through the eyes of others. Amazing how you can watch the progress on superintendents' blogs and even see some great video on renovations.

The general feeling was that superintendents wanted to aspire to greater heights in their careers. In order to do that they felt it was important to think big and dream big. Therein lies their bucket lists.

- **Taking on more responsibility**
- **Working at a higher level club**
- **Hosting a big tournament**
- **Learning from others in the industry**
- **A shot at the big time**
- **Construction and grow in**
- **Volunteering at the Majors**

Maybe some of their thoughts will inspire you to start writing your own "bucket list" and start checking things off while you can.

### MATT SHAFFER

**Superintendent  
Merion Golf Club  
Admore, Pa.**



Matt just came off of hosting an extremely successful US Open and one would think he has fulfilled just about everything that can be imagined during a professional turf career. But Matt is a guy with forward vision. His list includes:

- Write a book
- Go on a fly fishing trip and fish so much my elbows lock up
- Go to Mongolia and see where Genghis Khan came from
- Bike across the USA with my brother
- Hunt in Alaska
- Retire and not get fired!

All I can say is what a book that would be, take me with you on that fly fishing trip and odds are that you will retire happily with one of the best careers in the industry.

### PAT SISK

**CGCS  
Milwaukee Country  
Club  
River Hills, Wis.**



Pat says his list has changed over the years. At one point his focus was to have the dream job at a Top 100 golf course with hosting the US Open as his ultimate desire. But those thoughts pass over time when you have a home like Milwaukee CC. Pat is in the middle of pursuing his dream of starting a business and developing a product. From what I have seen, I believe he has something with his new Green Sweep Technologies. Without a doubt Pat is a strong family man and knows that the example his father set for him will hopefully be carried on to his children. He wants to leave a legacy for his kids that hard work, perseverance and dedication pay off in the long run. And yes if his new products are highly successful he might just want to climb Mt. Everest one day and he is in the right shape to do just that.



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### RODNEY CROUSE

Assistant Superintendent  
Tam O' Shanter Golf Course  
Lansing, Mich.



Rodney is an enterprising young man in our industry who I met at Michigan State University. Rodney's list wasn't long, but it was meaningful. When he said he wanted to play the entire outer edge of Ireland's golf courses it didn't surprise me. His academic and scientific side hopes to find a cultivar of turfgrass that is disease resistant. He also wants to create something that will make superintendents lives easier. With that final item, he'll join the ranks of many others whose creativity has spawned a half century of improvements for golf course superintendents.

### RUSS MYERS

CGCS  
The Los Angeles Country Club



Russ Myers has a great sense of humor. He told me he only had one goal before he retired and that was to stop retraining the same employee on how to properly rake a bunker! Training, training and more training is what makes for perfection and LACC exudes that.

### JIM PRUSA

Director, golf courses and lab  
SKY72 Resort  
Incheon, Korea



Jim Prusa is a journeyman who's travelled the globe and also had a career that has spanned several different disciplines. Yet he had a nice list to share that was quite imaginative.

- Write a book
- Become a Certified Club Manager
- Shoot his age
- Dive the Kwajalein Reef
- Build a resort in North Korea
- Start a new association that is purely professional
- Swim with whale sharks
- Drive the length of Hwy 1 in Viet Nam
- Fly solo from Manila to San Francisco
- Climb Mt. Whitney again

Wow, I am tired just reading that list. Jim has plenty of info to write several books and his ventures in Asia make him one of the most knowledgeable guys over there. Some of us just want to see places like Mt. Whitney but Jim wants to climb it -- *again!* Something tells me Jim will accomplish most, if not all, of the items on his list.



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## BOB MAIBUSCH

CGCS, MG

Project/Facility manager  
Hinsdale Golf Club  
Clarendon Hills, Ill.



Bob Maibusch from Hinsdale GC has already checked off a number of items on his bucket list including playing golf at Augusta National, Cypress Point and Pine Valley. He has been to all four majors in a calendar year, owned his own golf course and rebuilt Hinsdale GC. At one point Bob had dreams of hosting a major, but in retrospect his 28 years at Hinsdale GC were just the right thing for him and his family.

So what will the future hold for Bob? His bucket list includes:

- Visit Germany and explore his ancestry
- Visit South Georgia Island where Ernest Shackleton (one of his personal heroes) is buried
- Play Pebble Beach/St. Andrews with his children and brother
- Visit Antarctica
- Visit Alaska
- Climb El Capitan
- Design/build his own home with his own hands
- Fly a plane
- Receive total consciousness!!!!  
(Thanks, Carl Spackler)

With Bob's drive and energy I he will accomplish all that is on his list and more.

## MARC DAVISON

Superintendent

Green Bay Country Club



Marc Davison is a fortunate guy to be the superintendent at Green Bay Country Club in "Tittletown USA". What could be better than watching the local Packers win the National Football Conference and more than a handful of Super Bowls along the way? Raised in a family of golfers and golf course owners, it makes sense that Marc's list would involve golf and golf course operations. Marc has a short list but one that any of us would like to pursue.

He wants to play golf in Scotland and Ireland, play the top 25 golf courses in the USA and just mow rough as his retirement job. Something tells me that will be the best looking rough in the country when Marc takes that job on at Green Bay CC.

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**JON MADDERN****Superintendent****Nicklaus Private/Weiskopf at PGA West  
La Quinta, Calif.**

Jon Maddern's travels and career have taken him to many parts of the country. However, he still hopes to see some sites and travel more in the years ahead. Jon wants to play St. Andrews, Muirfield and all the great courses in Scotland. When time permits he would love to drive to see all 48 states and then fly over and visit Hawaii. Like so many other hard working superintendents, Jon hopes to be able to eventually retire and then his primary focus will be to spoil his grand kids.

**STEVE COOK****CGCS, MG****Director of agronomy  
Oakland Hills Country Club**

Steve Cook at Oakland Hills CC has a broad list. For a guy that has seen it and done it all (well almost) it is obvious that he keeps his list current and has a ball checking things off as he completes them. Steve's bucket list includes:

- Seeing Tibet and the Himalayas
- Buying an F250 and an Airstream... and driving to each

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**"I AM NOT SURPRISED THAT MANY OF US WHO LOVE THIS GAME DEARLY WOULD WANT TO PLAY SOME OF THE GREATEST GOLF COURSES IN THE WORLD."**

- national park
- See a ball game at every MLB park
- Climb Ama Dablam
- Learn to fly fish
- Learn French
- Learn to type
- Build a vegetable garden
- Live in Paris for one year
- Stay in touch with former assistants and superintendents
- Mentor/coach future turf professionals
- Host a US Open
- See the Cubs play in a World Series game

As a lifelong Cubs fan I am on board with Steve's final item on the list, but I'm not sure either of us will live to see that.

What a broad array of wishes, dreams, hopes and desires from people within our industry.

I am not surprised that many of us who love this game dearly would want to play some of the greatest golf courses around the world.

Similarly travel, recreation and leisure seems to hit many lists when the guys that work 70 hour work weeks finally have time

away for themselves and for their families.

Some of the more exotic adventures, like climbing mountains, flying airplanes and scuba diving with whale sharks and off of the great reefs are enviable pursuits and I hope you take pictures along the way to share with the rest of us.

Time with family, friends and loved ones was a recurring theme.

In our industry it is all about the people we meet along the way, as well as the family, friends and peers that supported us in

what is a very difficult and trying career path.

Almost everyone told me that if they had it to do over again they would have chosen the same career, as golf has been very good to all of us. I hope this inspires you to dream your dreams and fulfill your life's pursuits. Almost anything is attainable if we plan ahead and set our goals. **GCI**

*Bruce Williams, CGCS, is principal for both Bruce Williams Golf Consulting and Executive Golf Search. He's GCI's senior contributing editor.*

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