

SEPTEMBER 2016 | golfcourseindustry.com

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## EYE CANDY

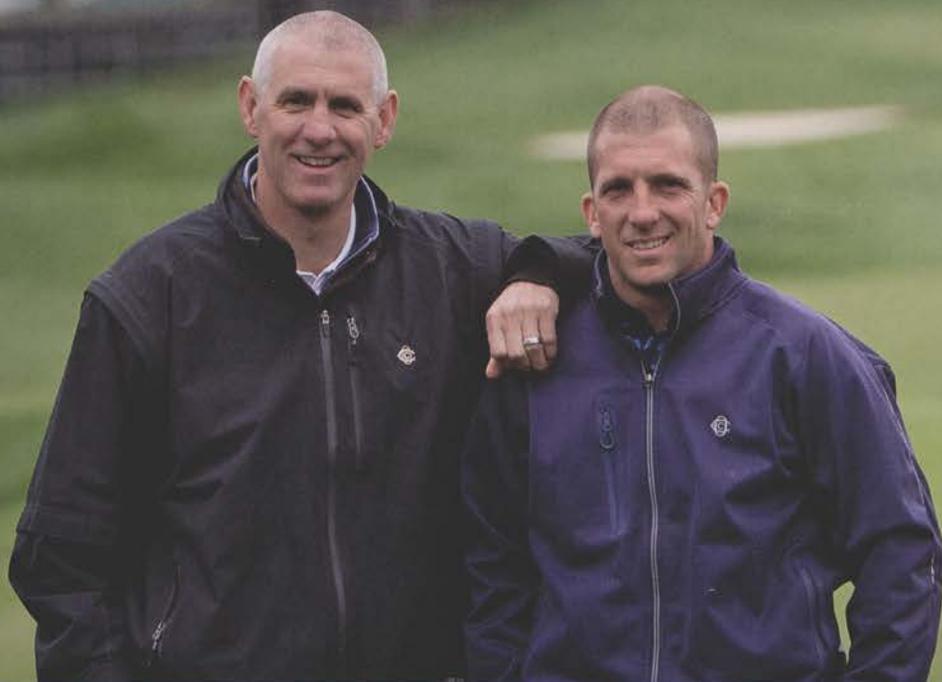
From expansive U.S. Open-caliber native areas to everyday wildflowers, how to make the periphery of your playing areas dazzle.

**GOING NATIVE** P26

**WILD THINGS** P32



# For its ninth U.S. Open, Oakmont trusted **Lexicon**<sup>®</sup> **Intrinsic**<sup>®</sup> brand fungicide



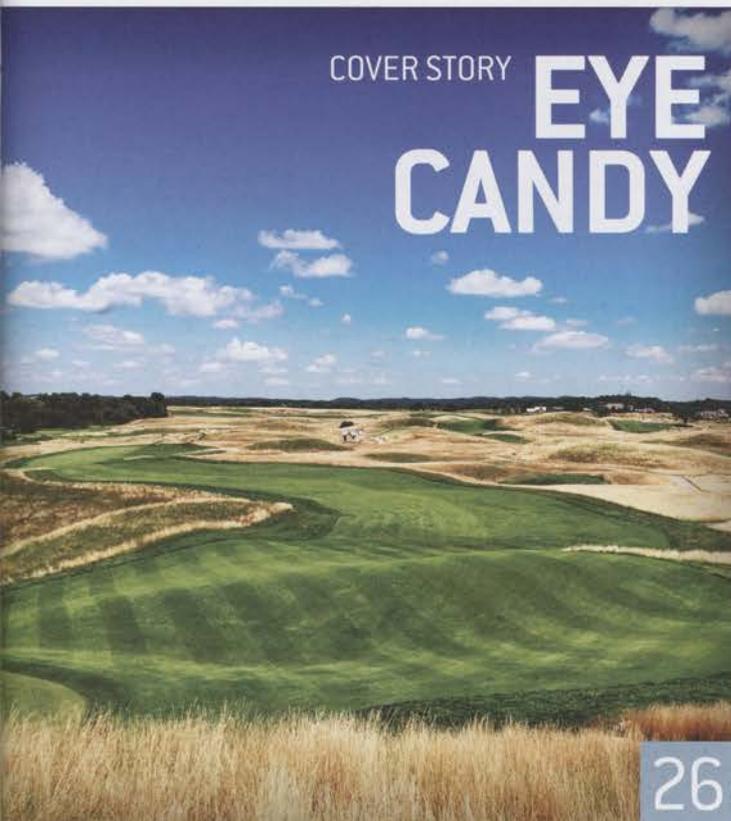
*John Zimmers,  
Superintendent,  
and David Delsandro,  
Director of U.S. Open  
Operations and Projects,  
Oakmont Country Club*

The pressure was on. As David Delsandro prepared for Oakmont's ninth U.S. Open, he turned to **Lexicon Intrinsic** brand fungicide. This foundational product for greens provides control of 27 diseases for up to 28 days, plus plant health benefits. John Zimmers said, "In my 17 years here, we produced some of the best roots, which helped deliver exceptional turf."

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COVER STORY

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CANDY

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## TEERING OFF

# LABOR GOES MANY WAYS

Anybody driving Interstate 80 through Pennsylvania realizes thousands of desolate acres cover the northern part of the state and a stop somewhere in the middle makes the journey more tolerable.

On the return trip from Jersey City, N.J., to Cleveland following last month's GCBA Summer Meeting, I decided to stop in State College, Pa. College football fans – and numerous turfs – recognize State College as the home of Penn State University. State College is a place I called home for seven years. And, no, I wasn't a class-skipper who needed 14 semesters to earn a degree from my native state's flagship university. For the record, I attended a Big Ten school whose name, initials and colors I never mention during football season. Hint: it doesn't have a turf program and basketball is athletic priority 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D.

The stop in State College served a work and personal purpose. I wanted to see the Penn State Golf Courses, a 36-hole facility where I spent almost two years working a "hobby job" around a demanding full-time sports writing gig. More specifically, I wanted to visit and thank superintendent Ric k Pagett, assistant superintendent Scott Martell and anybody else on the crew who might have remembered my feeble attempts at mowing lasers and raking bunkers.



**Guy Cipriano**  
Associate Editor



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Rick, Scott and retired assistant superintendent Don Chester are big reasons why I hold an incredible job serving an amazing industry. I came to the trio in August 2010 looking to satisfy a passion for working on golf courses despite already spending more than 50 enjoyable hours a week chasing sports stories and career goals. I would have understood had they turned the Buffalo Turbine in my direction and whisked me back to a saner place. But they invited me into the shop, and I convinced them I could handle leaving one job at 1 a.m. and arriving at another one at 5:30 a.m.

The schedule they created involved five-hour shifts Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Given the demands of my full-time job, it was about the most extra work I could handle. Realizing I had a passion for golf stemming from caddying as a teenager, my sports editor Walt Moody offered no resistance when I told him I was working a "hobby" job. I

somehow squeezed in time to begin reading a certain magazine during this hectic period.

Rick, Scott and Don's flexibility – and Walt's support – entered my mind when editing Bruce Williams' analysis of non-traditional scheduling (page 20). As wonderful as having a crew filled with employees dedicating 40 hours per week to your course sounds, it doesn't match reality. Finding labor is tough, bordering on near impossible in some places. Even Rick and Scott, who manage a pair of golf courses across the street from a major university with a renowned turf program, struggle filling positions.

The days of having dozens of applicants willing to work from 5:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. five days per week, including at least one weekend shift, are over. Retiree and student networks help; H2B programs carry some facilities through peak seasons. We have heard stories of courses turning to local prisons for labor, and few industry images spark as much

curiosity as automated mowers and rakes.

In addition to non-traditional scheduling, we explore night maintenance (page 12). Restaurants and bars fill positions with employees who also hold full-time jobs. Could night maintenance provide golf courses with similar workers?

Your first inclination might be to shout "NO WAY" and slam this magazine. It's a natural reaction. We often spend more time convincing ourselves why something won't work instead of crafting a plan that might actually solve a problem.

By working 15 hours a week, I didn't solve a fraction of the Penn State Golf Courses' labor issues. I went away when my full-time job became too intense. But I gave a trio of managers struggling to fill positions a reliable body during a few busy stretches. They gave me a chance to work on a golf course again. Both sides received fulfillment. Isn't that the goal of successful labor arrangements? **GCI**





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# HAULING to the forefront

**A new line of utility vehicles reflects the modern tendencies of superintendents.**

By Guy Cipriano

A PURCHASING DECISION SUPERINTENDENTS are starting to consider again occupied Matt Zaremba's first work thought almost every morning the past two years.

Zaremba, director of golf product strategy for Textron Specialized Vehicles, was involved in a group responsible for enhancing Cushman's line of Hauler utility vehicles. Cushman offered the industry media an opportu-

nity to preview the line last month at its production facility in Augusta, Ga., before officially unveiling the Hauler 1200, Hauler 1200X, Hauler PRO and Hauler PRO-X Aug. 16.

Early feedback has been positive, according to national utility vehicle manager Kevin Blanton. Zaremba and Blanton worked closely together to create a line they hope will thrust utility vehicles into the forefront when

superintendents mull equipment purchasing.

"I watch market trends," Zaremba says. "This is definitely a good time. Unfortunately, utility vehicles are some of the last things that get replaced on a course. A lot of people go after their mowers and some of their higher maintenance equipment, and these are the last things that get updated. I really think that a lot of the purchases of these utility vehicles and Haulers is kind of pent-up demand from the down economy many years in the back."

Superintendents often spend more time in their UVs than offices, and the new line reflects their work habits. During one stop on Zaremba and Blanton's information gathering tour, a pair of superintendents brought everything they carry in their utility vehicles and placed it in a developmental Hauler. One superintendent was a sloucher; the other sat upright. Developing vehicles that fit contrasting posture preferences, work purposes, technological needs and budgets led to numerous surveys, focus groups and trials. "We didn't want to forget anybody," Zaremba says. "I like to say we have a solution

for every course."

The line also reflects a move toward the greening and wiring of the industry. The Hauler PRO models include a 72-volt AC powertrain with the ability to travel 50 miles per charge. They also feature on-board chargers. "That's what the superintendents are looking for," Blanton says. "Everybody is looking to be more green on golf courses, they want to be more quiet, and this has been a game-changer for them. It's a vehicle for the skeptics." Less noise doesn't equate to less power, either. The Hauler-PRO X has a tow and load capacity of 1,500 and 1,200 pounds.

USB ports are options on all four vehicles. Dashboards were designed so superintendents can store phones, tablets and radios. In short, the new line represents a move toward further blending office necessities with outdoor surroundings.

"USBs are a very important feature," Zaremba says. "They really empower the user to stay connected, whether it's a cell phone or iPad that runs their irrigation. It allows them the power they need to be out on the course all day and have equipment that is running."

## Tartan Talks No. 2

The second installment of GCI's "Tartan Talks" podcast series features a discussion with ASGCA President Greg Martin. We caught up with Martin, who formed Martin Design Partnership in 1991, during the GCBA Summer Meeting in Jersey City, N.J. The podcast provides Martin with the opportunity to reveal his penchant for match play. Enter [bit.ly/2bSMBVT](http://bit.ly/2bSMBVT) into your browser to hear the conversation.



# 98

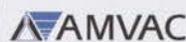
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# DITCH THE BUDGETING ANGST



**Henry DeLozier** is a principal in the Global Golf Advisors consultancy. DeLozier joined Global Golf Advisors in 2008 after nine years as the vice president of golf for Pulte Homes. He is a past president of the National Golf Course Owners Association's board of directors and serves on the PGA of America's Employers Advisory Council.

**W**ith the same certainty that football season arrives this time each year, so does something most of us view with far less excitement: budgeting. Autumn's approach is the signal for managers and owners to begin their budgeting cycle.

Since most clubs and golf courses live in a world of doing more with less, developing a budget that responsibly anticipates the coming year's resources and needs, not to mention one that will be approved, is one of the most important tasks with which any manager is charged. Your budget sets the financial mileposts that guide your business. It is the document that shows in cold, raw numbers the priorities on which management has agreed.

The following suggestions are intended to help make your budgeting process less daunting and more successful.

**ALWAYS BE BUDGETING.** Rusty Wilson, golf course superintendent at Tranquilo Golf Club at The Four Seasons Resort in Orlando, says his team is in a constant budgeting mode, continually tracking costs to inform the overall agronomic program.

"We have an agronomic plan for major cultural practices such as aerifications, verticutting, venting, pre-emergent apps, Curfew apps and so forth," he says. "We are entering

Year 3 with this detailed zero-based budget that we have created, and you can easily look into the month-by-month detail and see where these major cultural practices occur."

**KNOW WHERE TO FIND DATA.** The best data is your own. Resources like Club Benchmarking have developed club-specific financial analysis and record-keeping capabilities to ensure that every facility has ready access to its own performance data. Reliable macro-data is available through professional associations such as CMAA, GCSAA, NCA, NGF and PGA. RSM (formerly RSM McGladrey) is another trustworthy data resource. Macro-data supports the direct-application of self-sourced details that drive the dependability of your budget.

**USE A ZERO-BASED BUDGETING APPROACH.** Stephen Tucker, the equipment manager at Tranquilo and Wilson's budgeting ally, says, "I like zero-based because it breaks everything down into smaller numbers. We can see where all of our money is going in a particular line item, which helps us negotiate pricing with a dealer. It also highlights something we might not have done enough of, and helps us defend what the dollars in that particular line item are for."

This approach prevents the carry-over of mistakes from one year to the next. It also empowers managers to

innovate better solutions. As Tucker notes, "It takes a commitment of sitting down one day a month and entering in everything that you purchased that month, but it has been successful 100 percent of the time so far."

**USE AN AGRONOMIC PLAN TO EXPLAIN AND SUPPORT YOUR BUDGET.** Detailed plans that describe and calculate activity costs related to labor, cultural practices, arboreal, fertility and irrigation plans, pesticide usage, fuel consumption, and all non-controllable costs provide the level of support and backup that owners, club committees, and managers require in allocating budget dollars.

"Without a thorough agronomic plan, you're only whistling through the graveyard, hoping to avoid the bogeyman," says Jim Wyffels, director of operations at Spirit Hollow Golf Club in Burlington, Iowa. Wyffels has used an agronomic plan for more than a decade. "Our agronomic plan shows the details in written and photographic form to enable our owner to fully understand what goes into our budget and how it will be used," he adds.

**EDUCATE UP YOUR ORGANIZATION.** We often hear the advice to "manage up," which is another way of saying we need to go beyond our own job description to enhance your manager's work. Successful budgeters – those who consistently create budgets that accurately reflect the priorities of the facility and how those priorities will be implemented – know how to "educate up." They do that by making sure those up the organizational ladder understand what you need to maximize your effectiveness. They realize teaching is a never-ending opportunity, but one that requires staying ahead of industry trends and insights. Equally important, they know that getting what you need requires consistency, practice and redundancy. Top-tier managers are constantly educating up and down the organization. **GCI**



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\*Lower salt index has higher level of safety.

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<sup>2</sup>"Turf + K," Compass Minerals, Web, <http://www.protassiumplus.com/turf>

# Shot in the DARK

Switching to a night maintenance schedule could be a smart option for management hoping to expand tee times and give golfers more space.

By **Patrick Williams**



Coeur d'Alene Resort (Idaho) Golf Course has supported regular night maintenance shifts since it opened in 1991.

If you work a night schedule at a course like Stone Mountain Golf Club by Marriott in Stone Mountain, Ga., you have to get used to the coyotes around you. That's advice from Anthony L. Williams, the retired superintendent who oversaw maintenance of the course from 2005-15. You also have to watch out for deer and other wildlife — like owls. “The first time you get a good fly-by from a big owl, you're thinking, ‘I may have a stroke and a heart attack all at the same time,’” he says.

Given the right circumstances, heading a crew in the dark is worth it. Prepare the course

for early golfers and stay out of their way. Plus, the stigma attached with following the path of the night waterman of lore, who Williams says “perpetuated all the stories that the golf course was haunted” and “didn't run with the rest of the crew,” dissipates into the atmosphere like evapotranspiration as crews routinely come out in groups. However, night operations can be problematic due to safety concerns, potential hiring and scheduling conflicts, weather factors, and just plain darkness.

A superintendent of Marriott courses for 30 years, Williams began experimenting with night maintenance about

12 years ago at the now-closed Renaissance PineIsle Resort and Golf Club at Lake Lanier Islands, Ga. Then, he implemented it at Stone Mountain. Over the years, Williams and the Stone Mountain crew switched back and forth between night and day schedules at the club's two 18-hole courses, Stonemont and Lakemont. “Even though we had 36 holes and we could do maintenance gaps and we could close nine or we could flip and start in different rotations, there was an awful lot of times where our business model was, especially in the summertime, everybody wanted those (tee times) from sunrise to 9 a.m.,” he says.

“Man, that was our time. And we realized we could get three or four extra times if we were starting earlier, and that was kind of the push.”

Williams and crew performed more night maintenance on Stonemont than Lakemont to avoid crashing equipment into Lakemont's lakes, but Stonemont has some steep turns and cart paths they had to watch out for. The immediate safety question was how to find the best lighting. At the time, some companies produced mowers with lights; other mowers the crew had to retrofit. With lighting, as with anything else, there are budget questions. Lighting large areas helps with

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safety, but it also costs more to light large areas than it costs to light smaller areas.

The process of trying to mow a straight line at night versus during the day, Williams says, is met by fewer distractions in one sense, but in another, it involves a different mindset and approach. It takes more time to ensure safety and accuracy while mowing greens, collars, tees and fairways. "So you've got to kind of know where you're at as far as can you get two or three holes ahead and that's what you can do before the sun comes up, or can you actually do all or most of your maintenance at night?" he says.

Weather affects night main-

tenance in a number of ways. Rain at night presents a whole slew of problems, including diminished quality of cut and complications mowing slopes. Region also largely influences conditions from course to course. Crews at flat, South Florida or desert courses regularly work full nights to avoid the persistent heat, Williams says. But crews at northern courses with bentgrass greens that are susceptible to frost in the spring and fall, more often limit night schedules to summers. Year-round night maintenance might not work in the Transition Zone, either, where superintendents cover Bermudagrass greens in the winter.

After a while, the crew at Stone Mountain – tending to bentgrass greens – adjusted to the schedule like clockwork. Williams would post a shift for, say, 3 a.m. and they would be there. For some 7:30 a.m. shotgun starts, he would schedule them for a time as early as midnight and they would work all night. "It kind of depends because there are some things you can do kind of a little bit ahead of it," he says. "You might not be mowing rough at night. But then again it's an expectation, too. If it's a high-end client, like a big charity tournament or a member/guest or something, you may be trying to double-cut greens."

Superintendents at other

courses oversee two separate shifts to accomplish goals at night. At the 18-hole Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Course in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, Kevin Hicks manages two different crews – one that usually works from 5 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and another that usually works from about 2 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. The course has had some form of night maintenance since it opened in 1991, 12 years before Hicks joined as superintendent.

As daylight changes throughout the golf season – April to the end of October – so does the second crew's shift, sometimes beginning as early as noon. "We try to play off of that light a little bit," Hicks says. The light

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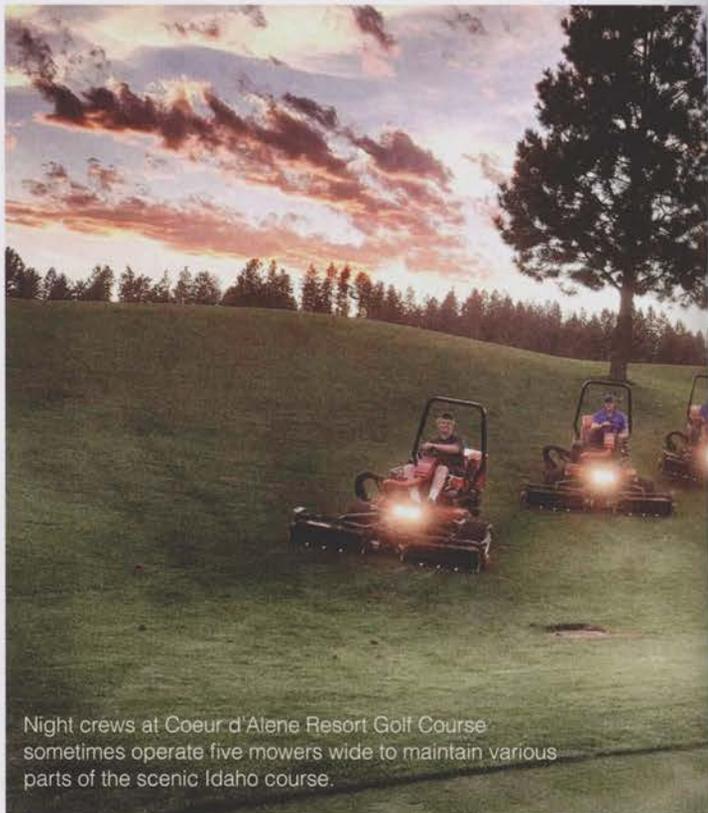


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OPERATIONS



Night crews at Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Course sometimes operate five mowers wide to maintain various parts of the scenic Idaho course.

varies significantly throughout the year, too. Located in the Idaho Panhandle, Coeur d'Alene is approximately 90 miles south of the Canadian border and 40 minutes west of the Mountain Time Zone. It isn't usually until the tail end of the season, though, that the first tee times move to later and the morning shift switches to a 6 a.m. start time.

The Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Course does things differently than other golf courses. For instance, its 14th green floats on water. Clutter on the course is kept to a minimum, Hicks says, which means no benches on tees, and restrooms are sunk into the ground. The maintenance crew's first priority is to stay out of the golfers' vision, with the occasional exception of hand-watering and other nonintrusive maintenance.

“My saying with my staff is, ‘We’ve got plenty of time with two crews. If you can see the whites of the golfers’ eyes, you’re way too close,’” Hicks says.

Golfers’ demands to not see maintenance crew on courses, Williams says, has been around as long as the game itself. “Not only do you need great agronomics and the rest of the design features and everything, but you do have that expectation that guys just really want it to be perfect, and they really don’t want to see you making it perfect while their group is playing,” he says.

The morning crew at Coeur d'Alene mows greens, tees and fairways and prepares bunkers (“traditional stuff,” Hicks says), and the evening crew performs trim work and mows roughs. While slightly reducing the quality of cut,

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	Dismiss® South Herbicide	1 pint	2	\$27.00		\$20.00			
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		1 lb	2	\$12.00		\$8.00			
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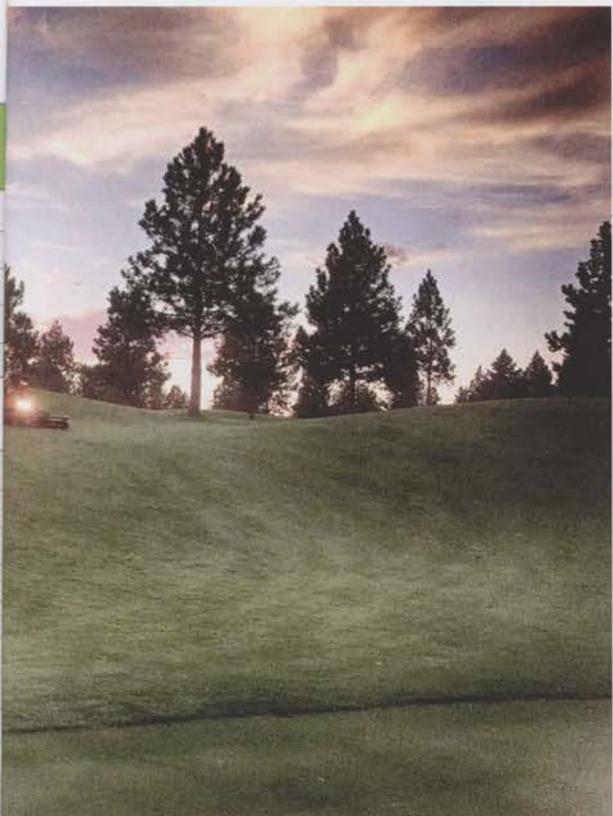
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the morning maintenance helps eliminate wet feet on the fairways and aids in the total guest experience.

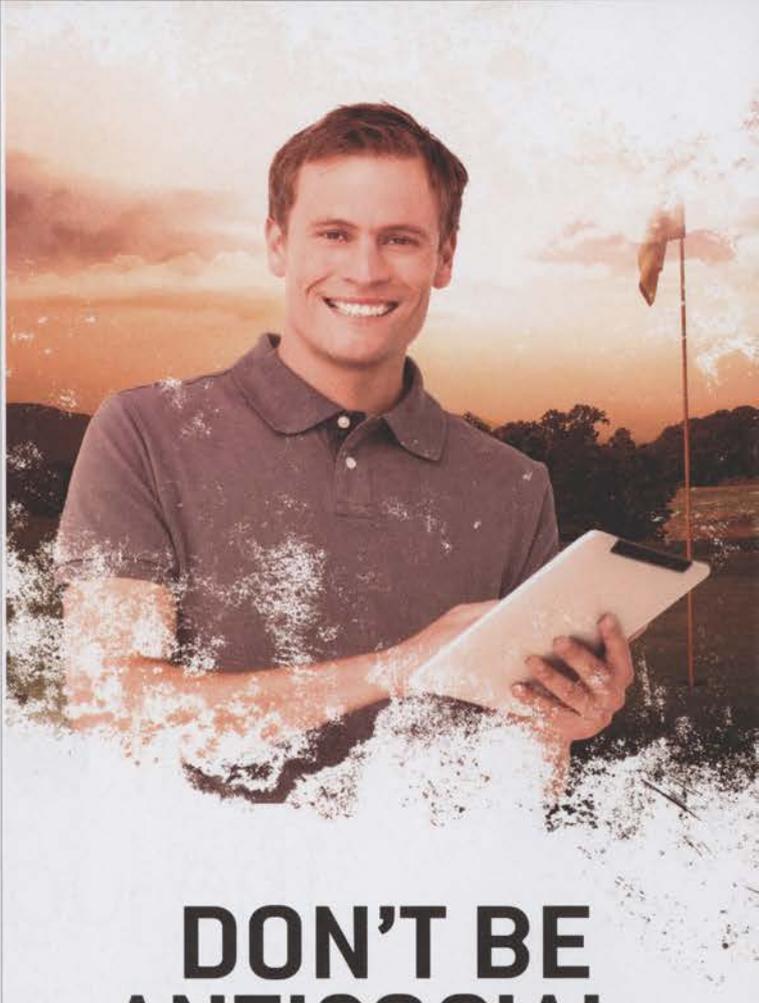
The success of a night maintenance schedule largely hinges on hiring, Hicks says. "The makeup of that staff member that can work into the dark is really different than the early risers," he adds. "They're just wired differently. And they don't cross-train well. You hire with the specific notion that, 'Yeah, I'm not really a morning person.' That's your guy for the night crew."

Issues sometimes arise at Coeur d'Alene when two crews are on the course at the same time and they have to fight over equipment, Hicks says. Later at night, crew mow five or six mowers wide and sometimes accidentally knock out irrigation heads when they randomly pop up.

Part of the challenge with managing two crews, Hicks says, is just letting things fall into place. "It's difficult because you want to be here the whole time, but you have to have people that you trust, and I do, and it's just a matter of me letting go and letting them do what they're good at," he says.

In golf course maintenance, the key is to work with a group that is willing to experiment, Williams says. "It's that willingness, that curiosity, that drive, to say, 'Well, let's go see. Then we'll find out for sure. And if it's an absolute train wreck, then we won't do that again. And if it works out and it allows us to be more competitive, then great for us.'" **GCI**

*Patrick Williams is a GCI contributing editor.*



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# Is it **worth** the juggling?

GCI's **Bruce Williams**  
assesses the pros and cons of  
non-traditional scheduling.

**M**uch has been written about the downturn in both the U.S. economy and also in the business of golf.

Little has been written about remedies to solve the challenges that face golf now and in the future. In previous articles, I have mentioned creating efficiencies through the use of non-traditional scheduling for golf course operations. More specifically, I have referred to the "Ted Horton" method of scheduling, which allows for a core group of golf course workers at the opening hours that is dramatically reduced by 10 a.m. each day. Several core employees work from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and then an evening crew comes in after the last tee times to fulfill maintenance such as the mowing of rough and fairways. The "Ted Horton" method was



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used widely by ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance and recommended by me to a variety of golf courses over the years.

Non-traditional scheduling can take on a variety of time differentials. Some people are starting at 4 a.m. to stay ahead of play. Others are starting at 2:30 p.m. and working into the moonlight of night. No matter which alternative method is chosen, it will require change. It will be change for the golfers, neighbors, staff and management. Change does not come easy, but it should strongly be considered for golf facilities to prosper in the current economic environment.

#### POSITIVE POINTS

**1.** One of the most significant reasons to consider alternative scheduling is to produce the required work in the most efficient manner possible. At most golf courses, the maintenance and setup operate at a high level of efficiency as long as it stays ahead of play. Depending on staff starting times, efficiency can be significantly reduced as early as 8 a.m. but surely by 10 a.m. There is greater efficiency in the time frame that follows the last tee times of the day. Operating at peak efficiency times makes great sense.

**2.** When there is lesser interference with golfers, it provides greater customer satisfaction. It also can provide for a better pace of play when golfer/worker waiting time is eliminated. We all know how much time is wasted, in the middle of the day, with workers avoiding golfers in their normal routing and also doing routine maintenance practices such as

mowing fairways and rough.

**3.** The number of acres mowed during peak play is less than during a similar time frame in non-peak play periods. It is logical that there is more wear and tear on machinery and greater fuel consumption. How many times must a starter be used to turn machinery on and off during peak play periods?

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“Change does not come easy, but it should strongly be considered for golf facilities to prosper in the current economic environment.”

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**4.** There are a variety of reasons for the use of part-time and seasonal workers in golf course operations. With the use of non-traditional scheduling, it will allow for the use of a core team, but also a variety of part-time positions. Some golf courses currently employ part-timers to do specific jobs such as fairway mowing, ball mark repair and spraying. All of this and more can be done in non-peak hours by part-time employees who would not require a full set of benefits which has hampered payroll costs for many operations.

**5.** By using workers in non-peak hours, it will logically reduce the number of man-hours required to do the work outlined in the maintenance standards of the golf facility. This will be huge as the minimum wage is set to rise in the years ahead.

#### CHALLENGES

**1.** The primary challenge to non-traditional scheduling is getting people to think outside of the box. Most superintendents have always worked a typical 6 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. schedule because that is what they learned as interns. Change is difficult. Rather than making a dramatic change, it may be best to start off with small steps in a transition.

**2.** For anyone to say it has never been done before is not a fair statement. Superintendents are an ingenious group and tend to find solutions to the challenges in front of them.

**3.** Not every labor market will be easy to find staff who can work in non-traditional hours. But I think people will be surprised at the number of people looking for part-time work to supplement another part-time job or even work to supplement their 40-hour work weeks.

**4.** When implementing different schedules, I have found that often the superintendent opposes the concept thinking he or she would have to work from 6 a.m. until 7 p.m. To the contrary, management is a team effort. Shifts can be split by the superintendent and assistant or even with a

foreman. Take a look around the golf facility and you will see other departments that are open from dawn through dark using multiple shifts with multiple supervisors.

**5.** One of the most difficult positions to fill on a golf course is equipment technician. Major repairs can be done by this skilled individual during normal hours. Any other repairs will need to be done in the field and may require some cross training. Some of the older generation may remember adjusting gang mowers in the field by the operators.

**6.** Superintendents will need to evaluate the efficiency of standard equipment inventory but may actually find a need for more equipment to counterbalance the highest level of efficiency.

**7.** Noise ordinances are perhaps one of the biggest obstacles to using non-traditional scheduling. Municipalities have noise ordinances for many types of equipment. Be sure to check on the laws and regulations in your city. Some cities have a different regulation for blowers than for mowers. Some cities have both morning and evening noise regulations that might preclude golf courses from working too early or too late. Double check the regulations for weekends and holidays as they are often more restrictive than during the week. Obviously this presents a challenge as golf courses are busiest on those days.

*Bruce Williams is GCI's senior contributing editor.*



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# ARE TURFGRASS FIELD DAYS DESTINED FOR THE DUST BIN?



**Monroe Miller** retired after 36 years as superintendent at Blackhawk CC in Madison, Wis. He is a recipient of the 2004 USGA Green Section Award, the 2009 GCSAA Col. John Morley DSA Award, and is the only superintendent in the Wisconsin Golf Hall of Fame. Reach him at [groots@charter.net](mailto:groots@charter.net).

**O**ur Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Summer Field Day is one of my favorite days of the summer. Held in the last week of July, it has been an annual event for 35 years.

The first one was a small affair – only a few exhibitors and a handful of attendees. In subsequent years, the field day was held at several different golf courses until it found a permanent home at our O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility.

The move to our research facility about 25 years ago resulted in long-term experiments, more demo areas for exhibitors and close proximity to faculty, grad students and campus. The field day matured and even morphed into a two-day event with booming attendance.

The field day serves many purposes. The primary focus is research. Turf pros of all stripes can walk on the plots, see the results and question faculty. Equipment exhibitors can meet with many customers at this single stop. Fungicide, herbicide, PGR and insecticide manufacturers and formulators can, in one day, see scores of customers.

Field days have been hugely positive events in every corner – sod, lawn care, golf course, sports fields and others. The WTA even used the field day to generate funds for turfgrass research. From native areas

to instructions on how to paint Bucky Badger on a football field, the event was educational and fun. Another key to a satisfied crowd has been good food. Our food tent has been second to none.

A good part of the success of field days has been the social aspect of such an event. By late summer, superintendents, sod producers and most others were glad to see colleagues and learn what was news, what was working and how the season was going. Free hats, good friends and a colorful scene made it a really appealing day. We felt so good about it that we then developed a homeowner field day the day following the big field day. It was also well received.

Then something happened a while back. Attendance started to lag, we reverted back to a single-day event and the homeowner field day went by the wayside. During this time, we noticed that quite a number of people would stay through lunch and then leave almost immediately after to get back to the ranch and check on the turf. Our big equipment show became a tabletop show with no demonstrations.

A couple of weeks before this year's field day, a good friend of mine, a turf formulator from out of state, told me field days were destined to disappear. "Too expensive," he said.

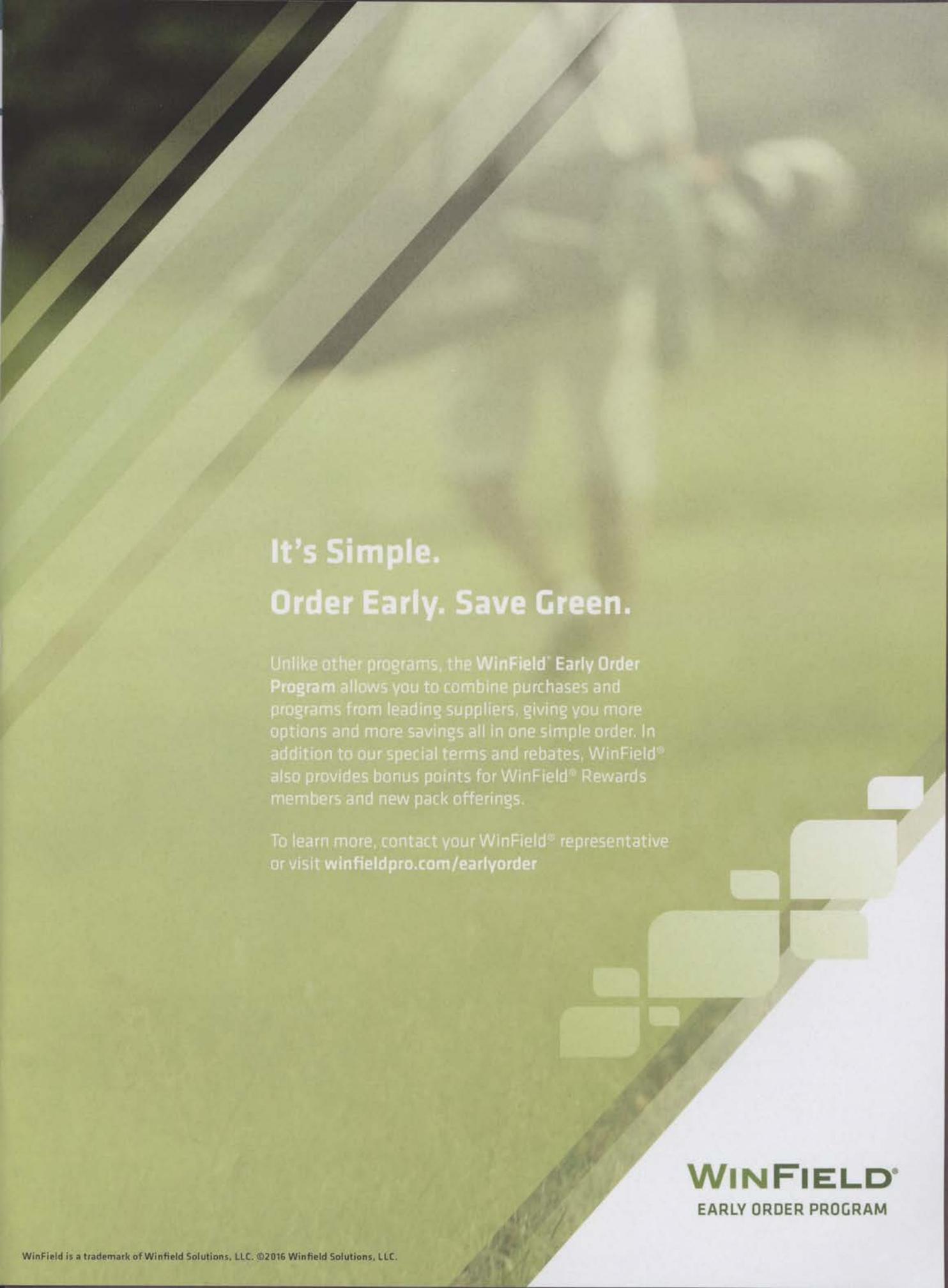
He has a point. For an equipment distributor to load a flatbed with grass machinery, take salesmen off the road

for a couple of days, food and house staff for two or three nights, there has to be a significant return despite the reduced attendance. And attendance has been reduced through company mergers in our industry.

Clearly, electronic devices have had an impact on communication among colleagues. Younger generations feel less of a need to experience eye-to-eye contacts, and field day attendance feels that. Bob Vavrek, a senior agronomist for the USGA Green Section, showed me a YouTube clip of a machine I had never heard of going through its paces on a golf course. It took five minutes under a shade tree – no travel and no expense to decide if I needed to see a live demo. Peculiar to Wisconsin is another limiting factor: the Department of Agriculture has no interest in extending any "point" system for attendance toward a pesticide certification or applicator license.

Despite significant changes, I think the good things about field days that have appealed to us for years still remain. The chance to walk on turf, to see friends and colleagues, to visit with faculty, to enjoy what is almost a picnic are still available and still draw people in. Maybe that is why we had a couple of hundred turfies at our field day this year. There will always be those who feel like I have felt for years – I have to go because I might miss something!

I don't think field days are "headed for the dust bin of turfgrass history." The professors involved in research may have to work even harder and with more creativity in terms of research and demo plots. The sponsoring organization may have to actually do some serious marketing. Maybe we need to have some flexibility to accommodate to some degree those traveling great distances. Potential might exist to attract professionals near the border areas of other states. Affordability must always be kept in sight. There are probably a dozen other major efforts that will have to be made. **GCI**



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Erin Hills, the site of the 2017 U.S. Open, has 150 acres of maintained fescue native acres. The Wisconsin course, which was designed by Dr. Michael Hurdzan, Dana Fry and Ron Whitten, opened in 2006, and superintendent Zach Reineking and his team have transformed the native areas into a memorable feature.

# NIGHTMARE to nicety

Erin Hills' native areas could produce a stunning frame during the 2017 U.S. Open picture. Reaching a pleasing point wasn't easy.

By **Guy Cipriano**

It's the Heartland's version of an ocean. Hues change depending on the season. Listening to it flutter offers therapeutic value. Roam it once and you want to experience it again. Those fortunate enough to work amongst it crave it when it temporarily goes away.

It's so serene. So natural. Some might say it's so Midwest. It holds the potential to enthrall millions next June.

And learning how to maintain it is consuming.

Pebble Beach and Torrey Pines have water views. Pinehurst and Oakmont have storied histories. Erin Hills has expansive native areas. These aren't just let-them-go-wayward spots on any other course opened in the mid-2000s. Superintendent Zach Reineking and his team are managing the frame to the first picture to host a U.S. Open in Wisconsin.

The frame, though, might be what the world remembers about Erin Hills. How many courses have 150 total acres, let alone 150 of maintained fescue native areas? The thought makes you want to grab a baler or two.

Speaking of balers, Erin Hills owns two. But before we get to the folksy part of this story, let's reveal the reality associated with pleasing native areas. "You really need to emphasize to a membership or ownership that it's a two- or three-year process," Reineking says.

Or sometimes longer.

Reineking and assistant superintendent Alex Beson-Crone, a pair of Wisconsin natives and University of Wisconsin graduates, arrived at Erin Hills in 2005 and started growing in a Dr. Michael Hurdzan, Dana Fry and Ron Whitten design attracting curiosity before its 2006 opening. Imagine being in turf school one year and heading the agronomics of a new course with U.S. Open aspirations a year later. Now imagine being greeted by fine fescue fairways in a Heartland growing environment and rugged native areas on the periphery.

Some might say the job required a machete. Others might say patience trumps any piece of equipment.

#### SCRAGGLY START

Hurdzan and Fry, partners at the time,

and Whitten, the longtime *Golf Digest* architecture editor, designed a minimalistic golf course for then-owner Bob Lang on a grand scale consisting of 652 rolling acres. Part of the philosophy behind Erin Hills involved framing the course with areas that required almost no maintenance. "When you are talking about a true native area, it was a true native area because nothing was done to those," Fry says. "And when it opened, it was so difficult that the stuff in places was two, three, four feet tall. It was just whatever grew naturally. You could lose a human being in the stuff, let alone a golf ball."

Broomweed, Johnsongrass, Birdsfoot Trefoil. Whatever grew in Wisconsin pastures, emerged in Erin Hills. Reineking describes the original native areas as "very dense, very unmanageable," and crew used secondary mowers to try to keep heights at 5 inches. Complicating matters: the USGA was coming to town. The organization awarded Erin Hills the 2008 U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links Championship before the course opened. The prestigious U.S. Amateur was to follow three years later. And Lang, who started encountering financial difficulties, liked the aesthetics of patches containing goldenrods and Queen's Anne Lace. "There was just no way we could play the amateur with our natives being so unruly," Reineking says.

In the winter of 2008, through the use of Roundup and controlled burning, areas surrounding the patches were killed, thus beginning a conversion to fescue-dominant

native areas. The conversion continued throughout 2009 and 2010, with Erin Hills receiving a major boost in October 2009 when Wisconsin businessman and Milwaukee Country Club member Andy Ziegler purchased the course. Ziegler infused Erin Hills with needed capital and closed the course until July 31, 2010 for renovations. Erin Hills reopened as a walking-only facility, a move designed to protect the fine fescue fairways.

Fescue of a different kind started filling peripheral areas as the U.S. Amateur approached. And, again, it wasn't providing an ideal frame – yet. "It was super thick," Reineking says. "I mean it was unplayable thick. If you walked through some of the areas, you would trip and fall."

Another controlled burn in the winter of 2010 allowed Erin Hills to handle the U.S. Amateur, which served as a trial for a bigger tournament. The USGA had awarded Erin Hills the 2017 U.S. Open on June 15, 2010.

#### SPRAYING AND BALING

Quackgrass, a gnarly, cool-season perennial species, started becoming a significant problem during the conversion, and the increased presence of it was hurting Erin Hills' reputation. "I recall reading a blog on Golf Club Atlas where somebody posted: 'Just played Erin Hills. They have such a problem with quackgrass. They will never figure it,'" Reineking says.

Instead of taking the quackgrass discussion personally, Reineking dabbled with multiple herbicides, including

## FEEL THE BURN

Erin Hills superintendent Zach Reineking calls burning a "hit and miss" process, and the quality of the native areas varied throughout the course for the 2010 U.S. Amateur. Slow burns hurt fescue, Reineking says, because smoldering kills the plant. Fast burns are preferred, but nothing is predictable when burning 150 acres. Burning, the staff agreed, wasn't the only long-term solution to establishing U.S. Open-caliber native areas.

"With burning, the ultimate goal is to get the fire to just rush through and be done," assistant superintendent Adam Ayers says. "If you get weird wind pockets or whatever, it will sit there and smolder and get too hot. You have no idea where that's going to happen. You can take some damage in a few spots, but then all of the sudden you might have the entire right side of a fairway where you are reseeding it. The native takes at least three years from seeding to get healthy establishment and look like the rest of the golf course. It's not something that you can just kill off and get it to grow back in the very next year."



Fusilade, which is primarily used in ornamental settings in Wisconsin. Part of the experimenting involved spraying a Fusilade trial on a part of the course with intense quackgrass and Reed canarygrass establishment. Accompanied by a sales representative who introduced him to the herbicide, Reineking casually returned to the plot, placing half of his body in the treated area and the other half in an untreated area. The difference was striking.

"The Reed canarygrass was over my head. We got through this Reed canarygrass to this strip, which was no more than 20 feet wide, grass was this tall," Reineking says while pointing between his ankles and knees. "There's a picture of me standing in this area with the Reed canarygrass over my head and half of my body in the area where it's stunted that was maybe 6 or 8 inches tall."

Fusilade has since become a staple of Erin Hills' native area management program. The herbicide is typically applied twice in the spring and twice in the fall. Erin Hills purchases 50 cases per year, and Reineking says the herbicide has "basically eradicated all of the quackgrass off the golf course." He adds Fusilade controls "the vast majority of invasive grasses" that might mix with the fescue in the native areas. Reed canarygrass, Broom, Birdsfoot Trefoil, thistle and milkweed are among the other weeds that compete with the fescue. "If it's not fescue, we want it gone," assistant superintendent Adam Ayers says.

Knowledge from neighbors further helped rebuild the



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native areas. Erin Hills is in Hartford, Wis., a rural community 35 miles north of Milwaukee. Conversations with USGA Green Section agronomist Bob Vavrek about a pair of Minnesota courses using farming practices to thin native areas led to members of the Erin Hills team visiting a local farm to observe a hay baling operation. The farmer established a test program at Erin Hills. The success of the program convinced Reineking to expand the operation.

Mechanic Don Heesen found a retired farmer selling the necessary equipment – mowing conditioner, hay rake and baler – for \$3,000 on the Internet.

Erin Hills collected 3,480 bales of fescue in 2014. Purchasing a second baler allowed the crew to collect 5,000 40- to 50-pound bales in 2015. Baling begins when the course closes in October, and the process takes 2 ½ to 3 weeks. The mowing conditioner cuts the fescue. The plant then dries for 36 hours before being flipped with a hay rake. The dry material is baled.

“It has kind of thinned out these native areas,” Reineking says. “Our philosophy is you are not returning all the plant material, in essence, you are creating an anemic soil. If you were just to mow these areas down, that plant material would break down. That amount of N in the plant would go back into the soil and keep these areas kind of thick. By removing all that plant material, we are actually taking some of the N out of our soil.”

Baling is a zero-waste endeavor because Erin Hills exchanges its bales with a local



Erin Hills superintendent Zach Reineking flanked by assistant superintendents Alex Beson-Crone (left) and Adam Ayers. Reineking and Beson-Crone, a pair of University of Wisconsin graduates, started working at Erin Hills before the course opened for public play in 2006.

Amish community. In return for the fescue bales, Amish workers build wood benches and garbage cans and complete pressure washing tasks for the course. The Amish use the fescue for animal bedding.

#### THINNER AND THINNER

After nearly a decade of frustration, experimentation and transformation, Reineking and his team have developed a rhythm for maintaining fescue native areas. Stands, which include a mix of hard fescue, sheep fescue and creeping red fescue, are 3 ½ to 4 inches high when winter ends. They are mowed to 2 inches in anticipation for their annual greening. Seed-heads become noticeable in mid-May and by the first week of June they typically look purple. Later in the month, a wispy, brown fescue dots the course, although the presence of sheep fescue and creeping

red fescue create blue and red tinges, respectively, Beson-Crone says.

We visited Erin Hills in late July, and an overwhelmingly brown appearance proved stunning. As we walked the fifth fairway alongside Beson-Crone, we paused and listened as the fescue made noises resembling gentle waves hitting sand. “The way it blows in the wind ... It’s almost like hypnotic sometimes when you are looking at,” Beson-Crone says later in the day.

Beson-Crone has observed the fescue nearly every working day of his life for the past 11 years. The fescue’s appearance is weather-dependent, and it’s anybody guess how it will look June 15-18, 2017. The fescue had a brown appearance on the U.S. Open days this past summer, Beson-Crone says. But he adds, “this year was probably the earliest that we were brown.”

Pondering mid-June hues beats previous conversations involving Erin Hills’ native areas. Beneath the current beauty, rests memories of ball-losing, scrape-inducing six-hour rounds of golf. Fry has visited thousands of courses in more than 100 countries, and he hasn’t seen a course with a comparable acreage of maintained native areas. He says the combination of Reineking’s persistence and Ziegler’s financial commitment are creating an enduring feature.

“It’s just a surreal experience when you are out there this time of the year, and it’s all the brown grass and it’s waving in the wind,” Fry says. “How many places do you go and play golf and see that much of it?” **GCI**

*Guy Cipriano is GCI’s associate editor.*

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# Habitat for HUMANITY

Wildflower plantings are nothing new, but pollinators are creating a big buzz. Five simple steps to establish pollinator habitats on your golf course and polish up your environmental cred.

By **Helen M. Stone**

Planting wildflowers is a step golf courses can take to protect pollinators such as honey bees and butterflies.

**T**here's a buzz in the air about building, supporting and encouraging the addition of pollinator habitat in areas such as golf courses. This is partly due to a Presidential Memorandum directing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop a 92-page "Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators," which was released last year. The plan has three "overarching" goals:

- **Honey Bees:** Reduce honey bee colony losses during winter (overwintering mortality) to no more than 15 percent within 10 years.
- **Monarch Butterflies:** Increase the Eastern population of the monarch butterfly to 225 million butterflies occupying an area of approximately 15 acres in the overwintering grounds in Mexico, through domestic/international actions and public-private partnerships, by 2020.

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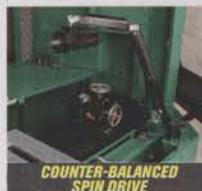
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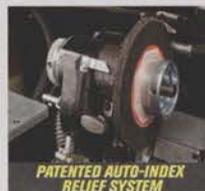
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- Pollinator Habitat Acreage: Restore or enhance 7 million acres of land for pollinators over the next five years through federal actions and public/private partnerships.

"As an entomologist, one of the primary problems I see is lack of nutritious forage for pollinators," says Dr. David Epstein, senior entomologist with the USDA Office of Pest Management Policy in Washington D.C. "With the President's plan calling for 7 million more acres of land planted for pollinators, golf courses can absolutely become part of the solution." Epstein explains that all federal lands will be evaluated for suitability for pollinator plantings, right down to landscapes surrounding urban office buildings.

Dr. Rufus Isaacs spearheads the Isaacs Lab at Michigan State University. The lab's focus is on berry crops and pollination ecology, and Isaacs leads the Integrated Crop Pollination project. He shared five steps to establish pollinator habitat that can be easily applied to golf courses anywhere.

#### 1. MAKE SURE YOU DO THOROUGH WEED CONTROL IN ADVANCE

There is nothing more discouraging than nurturing a patch of seedlings only to find that half of them turn out to be weeds. Or having Bermudagrass pop up in the middle of a stand of wildflowers that have just started blooming. Proper preparation is a must.

"Areas chosen to be converted to wildflowers, were sprayed with glyphosate, then, once dead, mowed down, raked, and debris removed," says

Patty Reedy, superintendent at Los Angeles Country Club. "The areas were then watered regularly, in order to induce weed germination and growth, and then sprayed again with glyphosate."

Some areas will require more treatment with herbicides than others, depending on what was in the area before conversion. "If we are just removing existing shrub material, a light chemical treatment to keep Bermudagrass out is usually all that we do," says Stu Rowland, superintendent at La Quinta Country Club in La Quinta, Calif.

Stepping back a bit in the process, determining areas for conversion is fairly simple. "We look for areas that will provide an aesthetic view yet do not impact the course of play," Rowland says.

"Areas were determined by choosing spots on the golf course that were out of play but received adequate sunlight to support appropriate germination, growth and retention of establishment," Reedy adds.

Some courses make the choice even easier. For example, Roger Stewart, CGCS, director of golf course management operations at TPC Twin Cities in Blaine, Minn., explains, "this course was built to host tournaments. We had areas that were meant to host galleries of spectators that we converted to native grass areas."

Stepping forward, weed control is a never-ending task. "Although we use no insecticides on those areas, we do spot spray for noxious weeds such as Canadian thistle," Stewart says.

"For us, our biggest (maintenance) concern is keeping the weeds out," Reedy adds. "We have integrated hand pulling of weeds into our regular maintenance schedule in order to reduce and ultimately eliminate herbicide applications in these areas."

#### 2. SELECT FLOWERING PLANT SPECIES ADAPTED TO THE TYPE OF SOIL, SHADE AND LOCAL REGION

Don't think a generic bag of

wildflower seeds will achieve the results you want. Every region and microclimate should be understood and developed individually. As a matter of fact, planting the wrong seed could actually harm pollinators.

Take for example, *Asclepias curassavica*, tropical milkweed. It is the only species widely available as seed, and monarch butterflies love it. A bit too much, in fact. Since the plant doesn't die off in the winter in warmer states, monarchs who become accustomed to it cease their annual migration to Mexico all together. In essence, they are "trapping the butterflies," says Lincoln Brower, monarch biologist at Sweet Briar College in Virginia.

Although that might not be too alarming, the plant also hosts a debilitating parasite that results in a shorter life for the butterfly. The lesson here? Plant only native milkweed (see [www.xerces.org/milkweed-seed-finder](http://www.xerces.org/milkweed-seed-finder) for more information).

"We go to school for turf," says Matt Ceplo, CGCS, su-



Superintendent Matt Ceplo started encouraging native areas at Rockland (N.Y.) Country Club to save money. The efforts have expanded and improved the aesthetics of the course.



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COVER STORY

perintendent at Rockland Country Club in Sparkill, N.Y. The club's rural, idyllic setting about an hour from New York City make it a perfect getaway for harried Manhattanites looking for a quick getaway. "It's hard to know where to start, but the Audubon program is a great way to go," Ceplo adds.

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for golf courses has been a means for many courses to address environmental issues. Courses can become certified sanctuaries and Audubon International offers a comprehensive support program (see [www.auduboninternational.org](http://www.auduboninternational.org) for more information).

Another good source of information is your local seed supplier. For example, Stover Seed, based in Los Angeles, has offered custom wildflower blends for golf courses and other large areas for several years.

"Google has become my best friend when it comes to plants," Ceplo says. "When we started about 15 years ago, Audubon International was about the only place to get information. Now it's at our fingertips."

Ceplo started encouraging native areas on his course for only one reason: to save money. "Everyone mowed everything," he says. "We started with the wooded areas and just left them alone. They were really well received, and were honestly quite beautiful."

Within a couple years, native milkweed moved in and colonized the areas. Ceplo found a few caterpillars and put them in the ladies' locker room. "I figured if the ladies liked the caterpillars, everyone would like them." And like them they did. "It

opened my eyes tremendously," he adds.

**3. BE PATIENT.**

Perennial plantings can take three years before they start to look great. "Adding some annuals to give color in years one and two is a good idea," Isaacs says.

The first year, germination was sparse and wildflower stands were not that strong, Reedy says. "As years progressed, we became more knowledgeable about timing of seed, seeding rates, watering needs and weed management. Plus, over the years, the seedbed began to build and germination increased, as did diversity of species."

While not strictly native plants, Rowland's choice of African daisies resulted in almost immediate great results. "The first year and every year they are beautiful," he says. "Our members absolutely love the spring season when they are all flowering."



Proper plantings can lead to a surge in butterfly populations on golf courses.

**4. MANAGE EXPECTATIONS**

"Engage your clientele," Isaacs says. "A sign saying 'Bee Habitat Under Construction' can go a long way to build awareness and interest while the plantings get going."

With all the new awareness about the importance of pollinators in the news, even the most conservative clubs will have a few members who might want to take up the environmental challenge.

"Our members have definitely become more aware of environmental issues and impacts such as water use, especially due to the drought and watering restrictions," Reedy says. "This program of naturalizing areas on the golf course provides a unique way to open up conversation about the golf course that has nothing to do with golf

# LEAVING A PATH OF DESTRUCTION

## ANNUAL BLUEGRASS WEEVIL ON THE MOVE

The annual bluegrass weevil (*Listronotus maculicollis*), or ABW, is on the move. What was once a pest specific to the Northeast now has superintendents as far south as North Carolina and west into Ohio anxious that their course could be next.

This turf-destroying insect feeds primarily on *Poa annua* (annual bluegrass), a variety common to golf courses in this part of the country. ABW adults overwinter in protected areas around the course, including tree litter, brush and roughs. In spring, they emerge and migrate to shorter turf (fairways, collars, greens and tees),

where they lay eggs between the sheath and stem; the larvae develop and then feed.

The first to third instars are stem borers, moving between turf blades to feed and complete their development. The fourth and fifth instars are more damaging, as they move outside of the plant and forage on the turf crown, killing the plant in the process.

Scott Wunder, golf course superintendent and general manager at Piney Branch Golf Club in Upperco, Maryland, has been battling ABW since 2005, and this year is no exception. The unseasonably warm spring and summer, mixed with excessive humidity, created an ideal breeding ground for ABW.

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— Scott Wunder,  
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fifth instar larvae and stops ABW feeding immediately.

"We typically make up to six ABW applications each year," Wunder says. "This year I'm hoping to cut out at least one application after seeing the results with MatchPoint."

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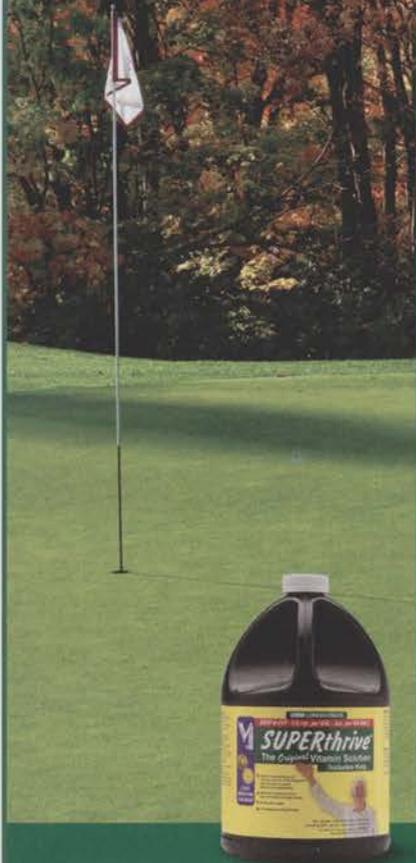
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## COVER STORY



La Quinta (Calif.) Country Club superintendent Stu Rowland looks for areas that provide aesthetic views yet do not impact play when establishing native areas.

and is more geared toward environmental stewardship."

"Environmental issues are not high on their list when they come to the club," Stewart says. "But they realize that we manage things in a responsible way — because we tell them about it. But I think if we weren't concerned about the environment, we would be conspicuous in their eyes for not doing anything. It's not discussed openly, but comments I hear let me know they are very appreciative of our stewardship efforts."

"I like talking butterflies much more so than bees," Ceplo adds. "Bees are better pollinators by far, but talking butterflies has a much more calming effect. People want a garden for butterflies. If you talk about a garden for bees, all they can think of is getting stung."

### 5. WORK WITH LOCAL CONSERVATION GROUPS

You can find advocates in local organizations who know how to establish this type of planting, Isaacs says. "They can help with what species to use and other local issues and can be good advocates for your program once it's established," he adds.

"Honestly, I feel we got so lucky," Ceplo says. "When we got involved with

Audubon International, it led to a group called North American Birdwatch, which brought some of the best birders in the region here. One of them found the first purple martins found in our county in 70 years. You start thinking, 'This stuff is working.'"

Stewart estimates that about 70 to 80 of TPC Twin Cities' 290 acres is native areas. If golf courses across the nation could convert a similar percentage of space to pollinator plantings, the impact would be substantial.

With beekeepers losing 40 percent of honey bee colonies last season and 90 percent of the monarchs' habitat lost in Mexico, it's no surprise that pollinators are in trouble. The good news is that golf courses throughout the nation can contribute to keeping our system in balance.

"We have the land, expertise and the money to back us up," Ceplo says. "Create a wildlife inventory; go to your members and ask them for help. Find your watershed and the organizations that help protect it. There's more support than you think." **GCI**

*Helen M. Stone is a West Coast freelance writer specializing in commercial turf and landscape, and a frequent GCI contributor.*



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# IT'S A MINNESOTA THING



**Tim Moraghan**, principal, ASPIRE Golf [tmoraghan@aspire-golf.com]. Follow Tim's blog, Golf Course Confidential at [www.aspire-golf.com/buzz.html](http://www.aspire-golf.com/buzz.html) or on Twitter @TimMoraghan

**T**his past summer, I had the opportunity to return to one of my favorite cities and one of my favorite courses, Hazeltine National Golf Club. I spent a day working with golf course superintendent Chris Tritabaugh as he and his team prepared for the Ryder Cup.

As many of you know, I'm a big hockey guy and often use that sport as the benchmark against which to measure all others. So here goes: Other than the Stanley Cup, the Ryder Cup is the greatest team championship in sports. Yes, it's that big, that important and that good. And Chris will have the course just as good when the first tee shot is struck Sept. 30.

Minneapolis is a great city for many reasons, not least of which is its love of spectator sports – Twins, Wild, Vikings, Timberwolves, Gophers – and the active participation in all sorts of games year-round.

Golf is central to the life of many Minnesotans, both as players and keen spectators. Championship golf has come to "The Land of 10,000 Lakes" before, including the Walker Cup, Curtis Cup, Women's Amateur, Girls Junior and many other events. Hazeltine is the best of the best, having hosted both the 91st U.S. Open (1991, won by Payne Stewart) and 91st PGA Championship (2009, when Y.E. Yang upset Tiger Woods).

Hazeltine's first big event occurred

just a few years after it opened, when it hosted the 1970 U.S. Open won by Tony Jacklin. That tournament might have been best known for Dave Hill's comment that all the course was lacking was "80 acres of corn and a few cows." Hazeltine has come a very long way since its early days: Rees Jones has fine-tuned his father's masterpiece and Chris's team will bring it to perfection.

A native Minnesotan, Chris was born in St. Paul, educated at the U (University of Minnesota), and furthered his career by staying in state. He started at Albany Golf Club then moved to Town & Country Club (St. Paul), where his first job was to walk mow the nursery green. After two years, he moved to St. Cloud, then back to Town & Country Club, under the legendary Bill Larson. Northland Country Club (Duluth) offered his first head superintendent position, and in 2013 – with a Duluth-raised wife and two kids – he accepted the position of a lifetime at Hazeltine.

Like all natives, he loves his home state and is proud to show it off. "We take pride in hosting events," he says. "It's really cool that the focus of the golf world will be on our state, and our club, hosting the Ryder Cup."

It wasn't without sacrifice. Already limited to a short season, Hazeltine's members had to give up their golf course for the last month of summer. "Plus, they've been hitting off mats, cart traffic has been limited,

they've been playing to alternative hole locations so we can protect those identified by Kerry Haigh of the PGA of America and captain Davis Love," Chris explains.

Just one walk around the course proved to me that he and his team are on target to produce optimal conditions that will test the teams and bring TV viewers into the middle of the drama that is the Ryder Cup. So how did Chris prepare for this challenge? First and foremost, he lauded his staff.

"I've never asked them for a thing; never told a soul when to stay or when to go home," he says. "They've just done what they've needed to do at the level required, all the time. I once heard a jockey interviewed after his horse won easily: 'I never had to ask my horse for a thing, he just knew it was time to race,' was what the jockey said. My staff knows when it's time to race."

He also observed how other clubs prepared for big events. At the U.S. Open at Oakmont this past June, Chris noticed the focus of the entire staff was on tackling the task at hand. He also noticed how well superintendent John Zimmers knew his golf course. Taking a page from Zimmers, Chris re-learned his golf course and acquired a new focus for himself and his crew. "I became more emotionally involved, and in doing so, my pride and passion increased," he says. "The very idea of hosting the Ryder Cup brought me to tears."

Chris also gave thanks to his corps of consultants, all of whom shared the mutual goal of making the course better each week, in sync with the requirements of Haigh and Love. "It's kind of like your wedding," is how Chris imaginatively puts it. "Friends, family and everybody in one room gets to know one another and have a good time."

Of course, this home boy wants Team USA to win, but even if it doesn't, "I will know that our crew gave it our very best shot," he says. **GCI**

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# STRETCHING it out

Santee Cooper Resort superintendent Gene Scarborough is always tweaking programs to maximize his ability to manage 36 holes.

By **Guy Cipriano**

A couple of drone, three moisture meters, two iPads and iPhones, and innumerable files in Evernote about ultradwarf Bermudagrass greens management are Santee Cooper Resort superintendent Gene Scarborough's work staples. He is frequently called upon management and the company's IT person to deal with technology issues in the resort's two pro shops, villas and maintenance facility. Meanwhile, back at home, at 8 a.m. each morning a robotic vacuum tidies his lakefront residence.

"I'm always messing with technology," he says during a conversation inside the Lake Marion Golf Course pro shop on a sticky August morning. "It kind of flips people out. I'm almost 60 years old and people are like, 'How can you do that?' I say, 'I like learning stuff, I like trying new things, just like we are doing with our greens.'"

Scarborough is responsible for maintaining 36 regulation MiniVerde greens as the superintendent at Santee Cooper Resort. A late arriver to the golf industry, he graduated from

Horry-Georgetown Technical College in 1986, worked along the South Carolina coast and moved inland in October 1997 to oversee the agronomics of Lake Marion and Santee Cooper Country Club, a pair of courses owned by seven families. He's the fifth superintendent in the history of the oak and pine forested property along the shores of Lake Marion between Charleston and Columbia.

Santee blossomed as a golf tourism alternative to Myrtle Beach in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with visitors flocking from Canada, Ohio and Pennsylvania to satisfy March, April, October and November golf cravings. Santee, like most tourist-dependent golf regions, experienced dips in play during the economic downturn from 2008-13.

Enduring the

Santee Cooper Resort is a 36-hole facility in east central South Carolina along the shores of Lake Marion between Charleston and Columbia.

downturn took creativity by Scarborough. Lake Marion's greens were converted from Tifgreen 328 Bermudagrass to MiniVerde in 2004. A similar conversion occurred at Santee Cooper CC the following year. Play has settled to around 35,000 rounds per year at each course, and holding steady requires producing quality playing surfaces with pedestrian resources.

Scarborough's program for managing MiniVerde greens is evolving as he learns more about ultradwarf Bermudagrass. He's attended events hosted by longtime ultradwarf Bermudagrass savant Rodney Lingle and rising guru Jerad Nemitz. Scarborough says he's learned to use a finer topdressing sand, and to "tickle" instead of "ripping" grass on putting surfaces. The program doesn't fully mirror what he observes at private courses because of budgetary concerns. Scarborough only has the equivalent of 14 full-time maintenance employees for two courses. The resort doesn't own a walk mower, and when it's time to perform cultural practices, Scarborough must "knock stuff out and get it done" to limit disruptions to play. If there's a more efficient way to complete a task, Scarborough finds time to learn it. "Everything I do has to be done with productivity in mind," he adds, "but it's also a quality issue."

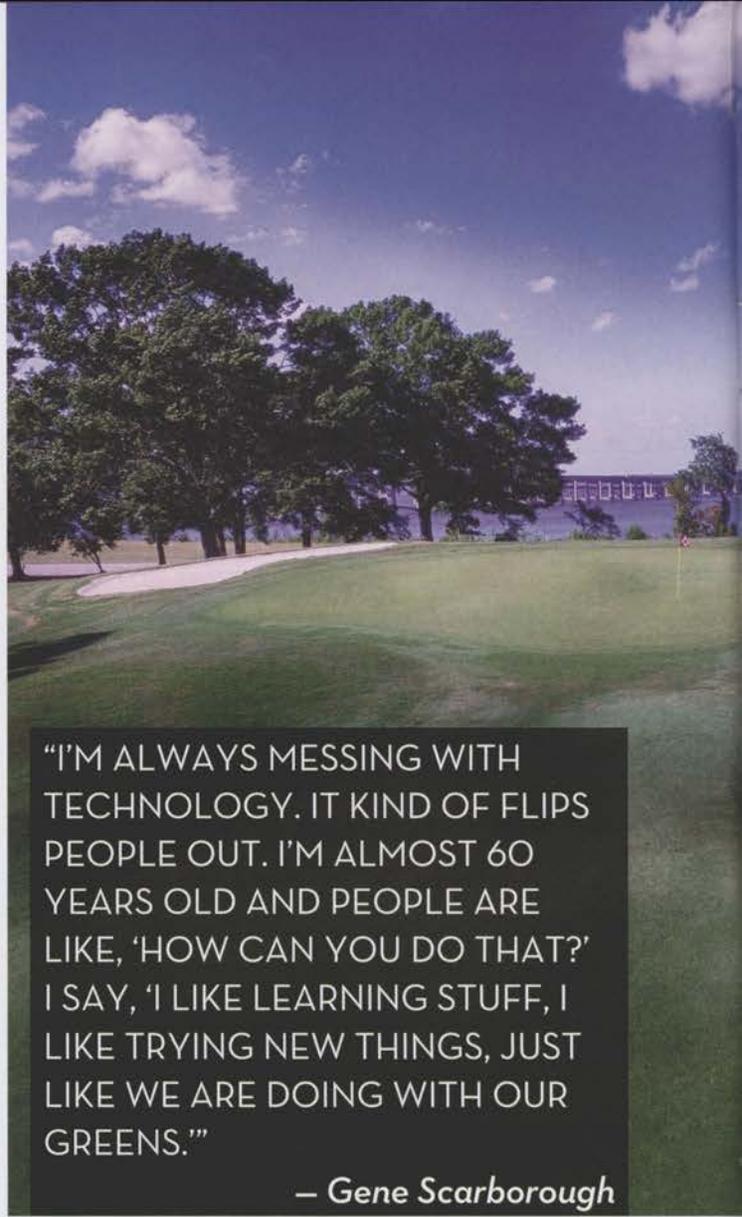
At the convergence of productivity, quality and implementing new technologies is the spray program. Scarborough forged a relationship with Syngenta territory manager Larry Feller more than 20 years ago, and the

pair works together to create a preventative approach that allows Scarborough to cover 36 holes without straining the maintenance budget.

A proponent of early order programs, Scarborough is already thinking about the products he will apply in 2017, and he expects to finalize purchasing decisions by mid-November's Carolinas GCSA Conference and Show. The value of purchasing proven products, especially when a discount is involved, is something ingrained in Scarborough by his father, a banker who retired at age 50.

Thinking ahead also has agronomic benefits, according to Syngenta senior technical representative Dr. Lane Tredway. "Advance planning is really important with Bermudagrass greens," he says. "What these guys do August through November has a huge impact on the quality of the greens in March and April, probably more so than what you do in March and April. Being on a program and making sure that you have all your bases covered going into the fall and winter is crucial."

Short days and limited sunlight make managing ultradwarf Bermudagrass greens tricky in the winter, spring and fall. Spring is Santee Cooper Resort's busiest season, and it's common for northerners to play 18 holes on a Friday, 36 more on Saturday and fit in another 18 before driving home Sunday. Scarborough keeps greens at moderate heights and speeds because numerous customers are playing their first rounds of the year when visiting Santee. "It's not how fast I can get



**"I'M ALWAYS MESSING WITH TECHNOLOGY. IT KIND OF FLIPS PEOPLE OUT. I'M ALMOST 60 YEARS OLD AND PEOPLE ARE LIKE, 'HOW CAN YOU DO THAT?' I SAY, 'I LIKE LEARNING STUFF, I LIKE TRYING NEW THINGS, JUST LIKE WE ARE DOING WITH OUR GREENS.'"**

— Gene Scarborough

them," he says. "It's how slow I can get them. We don't need six- and seven-hour rounds of golf. We need 4 ½-hour rounds of golf. Power golf."

Spring dead spot has become the No. 1 disease concern on Lake Marion and Santee Cooper CC's greens, according to Scarborough. Fairy ring and mini-ring are among the other disease concerns on putting surfaces. Untidy greens in March and April aren't an option because of the volume of play, so Scarborough treats for the disease in the fall. He's adding Velist, a broad spectrum fungicide released in 2015, to his program after observing successful results in research trials.

"There's certainly more attention being paid to spring dead spot because we now have some very effective and economic fungicidal treatments that superintendents can use to manage the disease," Tredway says. "Previously, it was just something that you dealt with and learned to live with during the spring and early summer, but now we have some very effective options like Velist. It's something that superintendents are paying more attention to and thinking about managing more effectively."

Scarborough's fungicide program features a variety of other products, including Daconil Action, Briskway and



Gene Scarborough has been Santee Cooper Resport's superintendent since 1997.

Headway. Weed pressure varies by season, and Scarborough sprays Barricade preventatively to control summer weeds such as goosegrass and crabgrass. Scarborough added Acelypryn to his preventative pest management program two years ago and the move has thwarted the presence of army worms and cutworms on greens, tees, fairways and rough. Provaunt is also a part of his insecticide rotation, Avid contributes to nematode suppression and Award is used for spot treatments of fire ants.

Perhaps no product has allowed Scarborough to maximize labor resources more than the plant growth regulator

Primo Maxx. Lake Marion and Santee Cooper CC each feature around 80 acres of maintained turf, including three acres of greens, three acres of tees and 26 acres of fairways. Every maintained acre receives regular applications of Primo Maxx from mid-May to mid-September.

"Here's what I tell people: It saves my behind when it rains," Scarborough says. "One of my cohorts told me he couldn't afford Primo. I said, so then, for instance, when we get a week of rain and you haven't been able to mow when we do get out there you have to mow; you have to blow. You have to mow; you have to blow. You have to

mow; you have to blow. That's all labor. I'm going out one time and mowing and blowing off a minimal amount of clippings. It's huge, and the quality of my turf is so much better."

Rain represented a theme at Santee Cooper last fall. The courses received 30 inches in October, including 18 during one weekend. In one of the most impressive feats in Scarborough's career, Santee Cooper CC and Lake Marion were only closed for four and five days, respectively. Preparing 36 holes presents challenges, but it also offers competitive advantages, especially when coping with weather events or disruptions caused by cultural practices. "If we let people know what we are doing and why we are doing it, they can accept it," Scarborough says.

Even as he approaches 60, Scarborough isn't slowing. Santee Cooper Country Club recently added forward tees and enhanced its bunkers. Lake Marion is undergoing similar work. Scarborough says

the changes are designed to attract younger players to the courses. And despite positive feedback about playing conditions, Scarborough intends to delve deeper into ultradwarf Bermudagrass greens management in search of additional ways to attract enthusiasts seeking to play "power golf."

"I'm 59½," he says. "People say, 'You don't look like whatever age it is.' The body is pretty well worn. But I'm still a high-energy person, and I love to learn. What are we here for? We are trying to learn, get better and help other people out."

Feller calls helping a superintendent in Scarborough's situation "very humbling." "You have a guy whose owner looks at every check that he sends out," Feller adds. "But he's using branded products as opposed to generics. He sees the value in Lane's expertise and Syngenta, and knowing we are there if he has an issue. It's worth it to him to stay branded as opposed to going to cheaper alternatives." **GCI**



## Travels with Terry

Globetrotting consulting agronomist Terry Buchen visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He shares helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits – as well as a few ideas of his own – with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.



**Terry Buchen**, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 41-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at 757-561-7777 or [terrybuchen@earthlink.net](mailto:terrybuchen@earthlink.net).

## IRRIGATING DRY HOT SPOTS

**W**atering those small, troubling dry hot spots mostly in bluegrass, ryegrass, fescue and *Poa annua* roughs can be done easily without dragging hoses, hand watering or running larger diameter sprinklers that overwater the surroundings. The gear train of the Toro 830S & 860S sprinkler heads are removed. A 1-inch Ed Bickel (Riverside, Calif.) Donut (\$15), with a 1-inch by 3/4-inch reducer and 3/4-inch nipple attached to a Hunter I-20 (\$15) sprinkler head, with a built-in manual pressure regulator, is installed. A blue 4.0 GPM nozzle, which throws 35 to 40 feet, is used or a LA 4.5 PGM low trajectory nozzle, which throws 30 to 35 feet for windy days and on hillsides. A flag key or multi-manual program is used to control the watering times. It takes about four minutes to modify and install. Brandon Carter, former superintendent at Colorado National Golf Club, and Kollin Vandersluis, former assistant, came up with this idea during the drought of 2012. Vandersluis is now superintendent at The Country Club at Woodmoor in Monument, Colo.



## DUAL BOOMLESS SPRAY NOZZLES

**S**uperintendents Chris Tritabaugh, Jeff Johnson and David Phipps inspired this concept. John T. Kelly, Jr., superintendent at The Kittansett Club (Mass.), modified the idea to fit his club's needs spraying 60-plus mounds and large rocks protruding in native areas. The 2002 Cushman sprayer holds 175 gallons and head mechanic Carl Rose added the 2-inch and 1 1/2-inch square tubing framework (\$250) and a Cox electric hose reel (\$550) with 100 feet of 5/8 inch, 200 PSI hose (\$250) when the sprayer was new. Two individually controllable Greenleaf Boomless #85TD Nozzles (\$300 each) mounted at a 42-inch height each with a 16-foot swath were added. The GPM flow can vary from 7.5 GPM at 30 PSI up to 10.4 GPM at 60 PSI. The original lower, middle spray boom, with three Greenleaf TDXL11010 calibrated at 1.5 GPM, is still used in primary rough and along cart paths. The modification took about three days on and off.



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**GOLF COURSE  
INDUSTRY**

Serving the Business of Golf Course Management

Vol. 28 No. 9

GIE Media, Inc.  
5811 Canal Road  
Valley View, Ohio 44125  
Phone: 800-456-0707 • Fax: 216-525-0515

## EDITORIAL

**Pat Jones**  
Publisher/Editorial Director  
[pjones@gie.net](mailto:pjones@gie.net)

**Mike Zawacki**  
Editor [mzawacki@gie.net](mailto:mzawacki@gie.net)

**Guy Cipriano**  
Associate Editor [gcipriano@gie.net](mailto:gcipriano@gie.net)

**Terry Buchen**  
Technical Editor at-large

**Bruce Williams**  
Senior Contributing Editor

**Patrick Williams**  
Editorial Intern

## GRAPHICS / PRODUCTION

**Jim Blayney**  
Art Director

**Helen Duerr**  
Production Director

ADVERTISING/PRODUCTION INQUIRIES  
**Jodi Shipley**  
[jshipley@gie.net](mailto:jshipley@gie.net), 216-393-0273

## SALES

**Russell Warner**  
National Account Manager  
[rwarner@gie.net](mailto:rwarner@gie.net) • 216-393-0293

**Craig Thorne**  
Account Manager  
[cthorne@gie.net](mailto:cthorne@gie.net) • 216-393-0232

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Classified Sales  
[bvelikonya@gie.net](mailto:bvelikonya@gie.net) • 216-393-0291

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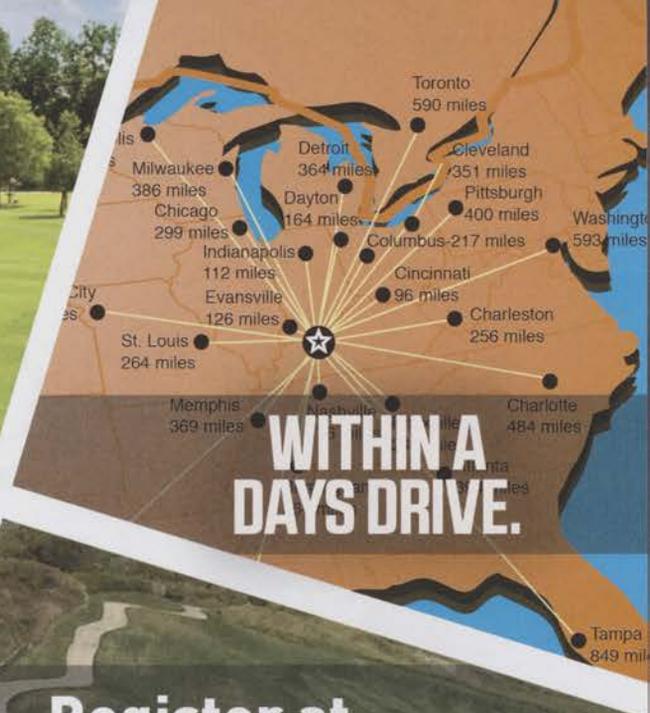
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# SYMBIOSIS



**Pat Jones** is editorial director and publisher of *Golf Course Industry*. He can be reached at [pjones@gie.net](mailto:pjones@gie.net) or 216-393-0253.

If you harken back to high school biology class, you will probably recall that “symbiosis” describes how two different organisms live in close proximity and rely on each other to survive. The classic example is the clownfish and the sea anemone. The fish provides food for the anemone and the anemone provides protection for the fish. One would not survive without the other.

I was reminded about the concept of symbiosis recently when another industry magazine decided to trot out the hackneyed term “the dark side” to describe turf sales reps. The story itself was fine – the usual “supers transitioning into sales” feature. Every media outlet, including GCI, has run that story six times. But, choosing to sex-up the story by using the ominous phrase “the dark side” as the basis for their cover design was cutesy, calculated crap designed solely to get attention.

And it did.

I broke my longstanding policy of ignoring what the other mags do and called bullsh\*t on social media ... and several hundred supers, salespeople and others responded. Our friend Dave Wilber even cranked out a passionate TurfNet blog post about it and kept the conversation going. And it's a very important conversation. Why?

Symbiosis: Salespeople cannot survive without supers and supers cannot

survive without salespeople.

There was, perhaps, a time when sales was considered a lesser role in the world of turf. There was a smug, underlying belief among some supers that those who couldn't grow grass became “peddlers.”

And perhaps there was a time when salespeople weren't as well-educated as they are today. I used to hear supers say, “I know more about their products than they do” or “that guy doesn't have a turf degree so he's clueless.”

Neither of those is really true today. The vast majority of good turf reps have successfully grown grass for a living and most of the ones I know these days have degrees and a decade or two of agronomy experience. Today, it's a demanding profession in which experience, scientific expertise and a deep understanding of the problems their customers face is mandatory for success. Sure, you still hear stories about “order-takers” and lousy reps who show up without appointments or act like fools. Guess what? They won't be around two or three years from now.

Another thing I hate about the term “the dark side” is that it implies dishonesty. It suggests that salespeople would do or say whatever it takes to move a case of product or a pallet of fertilizer. That's bloody nonsense. The good ones are in it for the long run. They value their relationships with supers so much they would NEVER recommend something they

don't truly believe is the right choice. Why on earth would a rep jeopardize both a friendship and a longstanding business relationship to make a quick buck?

Distributor reps and supplier technical experts are also rapidly replacing university and extension support as funding for those programs continues to dry up. Think about the brilliant PhDs who made their careers with universities but now work for manufacturers. Did they become dumb or evil the day they left public life? The ones I know are not only accessible and incredibly supportive of customers, they're also extraordinarily careful about overselling their company's products.

And passion? Good reps are just as passionate about your product as you are. Your failure is their failure. Your success ... well, it's still your success but I bet you'll always recognize that it was a team effort that included your supply partners. Because success is symbiotic.

And that brings me to my final point. We're at a critical juncture in this business. Superintendents are going to continue to be challenged by labor shortages, water restrictions, fertilizer regulations and a host of other barriers to success. There is no room for divisiveness or an “Us vs. Them” mentality.

Instead, I think one of the keys to success in the future is to adopt a team approach that makes the most of the expertise, experience and resources your sales and supply partners can bring to the table. Find solutions together. Create a better product together. Have fun and try new things together.

The clownfish won't last long without the anemone ... and vice versa. Let's stop with the dark side. In fact, let's stop having sides at all. We're all turfheads and we're all in this together. **GCI**



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