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COLUMNS

- 10 GAME PLAN**
Henry DeLozier: Budgeting 2019
- 24 OUTSIDE THE ROPES**
Tim Moraghan: Volunteer U
- 30 IRRIGATION ISSUES**
Brian Vinchesi: Get out your checkbook
- 36 DESIGN CONCEPTS**
Jeff Brauer: Cart paths that end abruptly never end well ...
- 50 PARTING SHOTS**
Pat Jones: Who are you?

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 TEEING OFF:** Golf from above
- 6 EDITORS NOTEBOOK:** Worthy of the name
- 48 TRAVELS WITH TERRY:** Equipment ideas
- 49 CLASSIFIEDS**
- 49 AD INDEX**



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FEATURES

*Cover Story***12 ATTITUDE OF ALTITUDE**

Maintaining quality golf conditions on elevated sites presents unique pressures for a pair of California courses.

*Value of volunteering***18 AN EAST LAKE THING**

The final event of the PGA Tour schedule attracted a diverse group of turf managers to a historic venue within a bustling city.

26

*Career***26 THE ABC'S OF GOAL SETTING**

SMART, GREEN and LINKED are more than acronyms. They could be the keys to taking your career to a higher level.

*Operations***32 SAFETY CHECK**

Remember this formula. 45 minutes a month: 30 days at half-a-minute and one 30-minute meeting will pay big dividends for your crew's safety.

*Construction***38 NEW EVENT, NEW SUPERINTENDENT**

Big changes afoot at TPC Twin Cities as the debut of PGA Tour's 3M Open approaches.

44

*Spotlight.***44 EVERYTHING IS BIGGER AT REYNOLDS**

Turf and golf without end. One of the world's biggest agronomic operations resides within the Georgia pines..

GOLF FROM ABOVE

Here's some free flying advice: Given the option, always take the window seat. You're isolated from aisle distractions – Couldn't the jittery dude in Row 12 limit coffee consumption before boarding a three-hour flight? – and get to stare at the land below, which includes thousands of golf courses.

On a connecting flight from Las Vegas to Denver, I hit the jackpot, scoring a window seat despite receiving a C boarding position. Frequent travelers will tell you this is akin to breaking 80 without bringing a solid game to the course. It rarely happens.

It was the only jackpot I hit in Las Vegas. We were simply using Sin City for its airport following an outdoorsy whirlwind through Arizona and southern Utah. I'm not fretting about the lack of Las Vegas time. The

GCSAA realized Las Vegas possesses more winter weather predictably and attendance-boosting elements than San Antonio, so we're all headed west in 2021. Viva listening to your members!

The flight into Denver included wonderful views of geological formations too complex for a magazine editor to comprehend and mountains in the preliminary stages of becoming snow-capped for the season. The good stuff materialized on the descent: glimpses of golf courses.

The courses provided visible green amongst miles of parched earth. Denver received less than 8 inches of precipitation through October. If you had fallen asleep in Las Vegas and suddenly opened your eyes, you would have thought the flight had traveled at an automobile speed. A peek at a few Denver courses illustrated water woes extend beyond the Southwest. Anybody working in the golf business can empathize with the region's superintendents from a window seat.

The courses I spotted in Denver weaved through modern neighborhoods, thus demonstrating the correlation between golf and a booming city. The link between golf and real

estate makes more sense from above, because vast stretches of homes and turf can be observed in the same frame. The neighborhoods with courses, especially during a drought, are the most attractive communities from above.

In addition to telling operational and business stories, window seats are excellent for golf architecture junkies. Fairway routing, green and tee positioning, and bunker and hazard placement can be studied and photographed. Even on a vacation, higher golf learning never stops.



Guy Cipriano
Senior Editor

Window seats aren't the only elevated spots to examine golf courses. The trip started in Phoenix, where we hiked Camelback Mountain via the Cholla Trailhead. The ascent offered broad views of The Phoenician Golf Club. The resort is undergoing a massive overhaul, with its golf course being reduced from 27 to 18 holes

by architect Phil Smith. The purpose of the reductions become clear from the trail: less turf to maintain, more acreage for real estate in a desirable desert neighborhood and a fresh look for regular guests of the 30-year-old resort. Had the course been completed by this damp mid-October day, I would have regretted leaving the clubs at home.

Camelback Mountain tips out at 2,707 feet, which is flat compared to the courses featured in this month's cover story by Judd Spicer. Never one to avoid reporting on a golf adventure, Spicer profiles the operational challenges at Sierra Star and Bear Mountain, a pair of courses resting at 8,050 and 7,000 feet, respectively. An abundance of snow means condensed playing – and agronomic – seasons at both facilities.

Enduring the challenges are worthwhile. Visitors who enjoy hitting golf shots between staring at mountains mean continual revenue for operators and year-round work for employees who contribute to ski experiences in the winter.

Judging by the photos accompanying the story, I'm sure both courses look splendid from a window seat. **GCI**

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WORTHY OF THE NAME

Atlanta's Bobby Jones Golf Course receives a multi-directional reboot. Will it be a grand slam model for public golf?

By Guy Cipriano



Superintendent Kyle Macdonald and architect Bobby Cupp discuss the changes at Bobby Jones GC in Atlanta.

PHOTO: GUY CIPRIANO

Clutching a set of sketches and routing plans on a sweltering late-September afternoon, Bobby Cupp stops on a hillside overlooking the 6th green of the Azalea nine at Bobby Jones Golf Course. Cupp begins describing the green and the flow of the hole while general manager Brian Conley gazes at a hillside adjacent to the fairway.

After Cupp finishes speaking, Conley directs a visitor to the hillside, which offers a glance at Atlanta's gleaming, expansive and expanding skyline.

"That," Conley says, "is our 'Selfie Central.'"

Cupp rolls up the sketches. "I never thought of that," he says.

Those responsible for one of the nation's biggest urban golf transformations learn something each time they tour the 128-acre site, which recently debuted a reversible 9-hole course to residents accustomed to a dearth of selfie-worthy public golf courses.

The Atlanta metro area, hometown of Jones, winner of the 1930 grand slam, supported just one 18-hole public course per 64,754 residents in 2016, which ranked 314th out of 345 cities the National Golf Foundation examined for its 2017 "Golf Facilities in the U.S." report. The option of hopping in a car, bus or train, traveling 15 minutes and playing a two-hour nine or blasting a bucket of balls doesn't exist for thousands living near Atlanta's urban core.

Once a stagnant city-owned, 18-hole facility opened in 1932 and operated by a management company, the Bobby Jones GC marks the first urban reversible layout opened in the United States during the current construction wave. High-end resorts in remote parts of Michigan and Oregon have also introduced reversible courses.

A reversible course stretching from 3,164 to 7,313 yards utilizing the versatile Longleaf Tee System when played as 18 holes represents only part of the Bobby Jones GC transformation. Changes also include the addition of a practice range and 6-hole Cupp Links with holes ranging from 50 to 70 yards. The short course is named after Bobby's father, Bob Cupp, a legendary architect who died in August 2016.

The older Cupp started studying the site as early as 2003, devoting countless hours to finding solutions for the course despite the frustra-

tion associated with bureaucratic layers. "The studies said the same thing," says Marty Elgison, president of Bobby Jones Golf Course Foundation, Inc., which formed in 2016 to create an accessible facility worthy of Bobby Jones's name. "If the city would put money into its courses, they would be nicer and more people will play them. The city never did that."

The conglomeration of influential Atlantans, including Robert Tyre Jones IV, the grandson of Bobby Jones, comprising the Foundation raised more than \$23 million for the project. Each hole has a naming sponsor who contributed \$150,000 to the effort. A breakthrough occurred in November 2016 when the state completed a swap of underground parking lots it owned for the golf course. The state then granted the Foundation permission to lease the course. Plans include the construction of the 23,000-square foot Murray Golf House, which will serve as the headquarters for the Georgia State Golf Association, Georgia Section of the PGA of America and Georgia Golf Hall of Fame. The Murray Golf House is scheduled to be completed in 2019, the same year superintendent Kyle Macdonald and team are expected to receive a new maintenance facility. The course will also serve as the home of the Georgia State University men's and women's golf teams.

Cupp, coincidentally, was the first architect to be enshrined into the Georgia Golf Hall of Fame. Asked what the completion of the project means to his family, Bobby becomes emotional. "I don't think I can put that into words," he says. "It's been a ride. I talk to him every day. I can tell you that."

A mutual friend, former USGA executive committee member Gene McClure, introduced Elgison to the elder Cupp in 2012. Elgison, the Jones family attorney, made resuscitating the Bobby Jones GC a personal endeavor following his retirement in 2011. Cupp and Elgison developed an instant connection, with

▼ Legendary architect Bob Cupp started working on a plan to improve Bobby Jones GC in 2013. Cupp died in 2016.

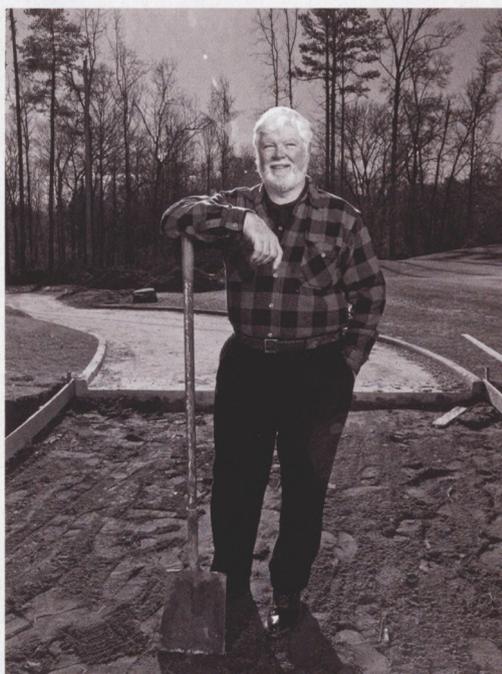




IMAGE: BOBBY JONES GC

▲ The Murray Golf House being constructed on the Bobby Jones GC grounds will be home to the state's golf hall of fame and multiple organizations.

Cupp offering his services for free.

A landlocked site – Atlanta's trendy Buckhead neighborhoods border the property on all four sides – prevented Cupp from designing a course approaching 6,000 yards. Elgison says an 18-hole course lacking significant yardage without a practice range would fail to attract significant donor support.

After completing an 18-hole, 5,400-yard routing without a range, Cupp started working on a 9-hole plan with a range. The plan changed in 2013 when Cupp started pondering the Old Course at St. Andrews, which has a reversible history. Six months later, Cupp presented Elgison with a reversible plan for Bobby Jones GC. Bobby says his father spoke numerous times with fellow architect Tom Doak, whose reversible layout, "The Loop," opened at Michigan's Forest Dunes Resort in 2016.

"(Cupp) called me one morning and said, 'I got it. I figured it out,'" Elgison says. "What he sent to me is 98 percent of what you see today. A few things have changed because of site conditions. But the basic routing is 98 percent of what we ended up with."

Construction commenced in November 2017, with Wadsworth Golf Construction, one of the project's founding sponsors, turning the reversible plans

into a physical reality. The course will utilize just two heights of cut for its TifEagle greens and TifTuf hitting surfaces, Macdonald says. The Bobby Jones GC is an early adopter of TifTuf, a bermudagrass variety developed and tested by the University of Georgia's Dr. Wayne Hanna and Dr. Brian Schwartz.

The Foundation selected Mosaic to manage the course. Mosaic hired Conley and Macdonald earlier this year to lead key departments. "You're learning something new every day here," says Macdonald, who previously worked at St. Ives Country Club in Atlanta's private golf-rich north suburbs. "The thing that excited me most about this project was being able to give the public a private-level golf experience. Atlanta doesn't have anything like this."

Rates have yet to be finalized, but officials and employees envision a diverse customer base enjoying the course, range and Cupp Links. Selfies will come at no extra cost.

"When we finally started to get things built and you could see some of the greens, we were above the 6th green and Bobby Jones IV said, 'My grandfather would be proud to have his name associated with this,'" Elgison says. "That says it all. If we do that, we'll be successful." **GCI**

Tartan Talks No. 28



Not all master plans are created the same. And not all master plans require the

same amount of time to implement.

Chris Wilczynski completed a master plan at Wanaquah (N.Y.) Country Club earlier this year. The plan, which represented his first project upon forming C.W. Golf Architecture in 2010, took nine years to complete.

Wilczynski describes the dynamics of master planning in a "Tartan Talks" episode, comparing the beginning of the process to establishing a personal relationship. "It's like dating," he says. "When you're dating somebody, you really want to get to know them and make sure it's a good fit – and that's me when I'm analyzing a golf course."

Having a father who served as a superintendent before launching a successful career as an irrigation salesman, introduced Wilczynski to the patience associated with golf project management. He learned the nuances of the business working for architect Arthur Hills. Wilczynski offers stories from his lifetime around the business in the podcast.

Enter <https://goo.gl/o8iazG> into your web browser to hear the episode.





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BUDGETING 2019



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 currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of Audubon International.

Budgeting for 2019 requires a broader-than-usual alertness to changing times and impacts on golf-oriented businesses. Newfound elasticity on revenue sources, such as dues and fees, will allow many to plan for revenue increases. That's the good news. More sobering is the fact that most courses and clubs will strain to cover the rapidly accelerating costs of operations.

While it's helpful to know that costs are rising, budget planners benefit even more from understanding the factors driving cost increases. Here are five cost areas where knowledge of underlying trends and timing will lead to accurate projections.

LABOR

The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment Cost Index notes that wages and salaries for U.S. businesses increased 2.9 percent for the 12-month period ending in June 2018, following a 2.4 percent increase in June 2017. The cost of benefits rose 2.8 percent for the 12-month period ending in June 2018, after increasing 2.2 percent in June 2017. Employer costs for health benefits increased 1.6 percent for the same 12-month period.

INSURANCE

The costs associated with insuring golf facilities are increasing. Willis Towers Watson's insurance industry

semi-annual report (2018 Insurance Marketplace Realities) projects increases in insured categories more vulnerable to natural catastrophe impacts.

- **Property:** Previous-loss history more than doubles premiums in most markets. Clubs located in markets exposed to catastrophic claims will increase as much as three times those of non-exposed clubs, while those clubs with catastrophic experience with losses may see increases from 15 to 20 percent.
- **Casualty:** WTW projections indicate that rates for casualty insurance will increase less than 4 percent.
- **Auto Liability:** For clubs with automobile insurance premiums, rates are expected to rise from 5 to 9 percent. Ongoing market challenges exist in this space, and two years of steady price increases have not kept pace with loss trends and adverse developments. Rates are expected to rise more steeply.
- **Cyber:** Golf clubs are vulnerable to cyber-risk. The WTW study notes a 15-fold increase in two years with claims near \$5 billion. Organizations without claims can forecast increase of 5 percent or less.

HEALTHCARE

"Over the past nine years, employee out-of-pocket spending for a family of four increased 69 percent in the form of higher co-pays and higher deductibles, along with 105 percent employ-

ee premium contribution growth," Keith Lemer, CEO of WellNet Health-care, said in an interview with CNBC earlier this year, noting that over the same period a year earlier employer premium contributions increased 62 percent." Lemer added, "In 2008 more than 8 percent of a family's income was spent on health care. In 2015 (last available data) it rose to 12 percent. This means people are making less money today as a direct result of the cost of health care."

FOOD

The costs of food consumed at home diverged a few years ago from the costs of food served away from home – in restaurants and clubs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture predicted grocery store price increases from 1 to 2 percent. Food consumed away from home is expected to increase from 2 to 3 percent. For menu planning purposes, be aware that beef and veal are projected to rise 2 to 3 percent, egg prices will increase 4 to 5 percent, while cereal and bakery prices will go up 3 to 4 percent. The USDA expects prices for fats, fruits and vegetables to drop.

FUEL

Large consumers of fuel and oil by-products, including golf courses, will see some relief in fuel-related costs in 2019, according to an August 2018 J.P. Morgan forecast. "While geopolitical tensions and lingering risks of large supply disruptions remain an upside risk, we think that prices will be corrected downwards towards end of the year and remain capped in 2019," J.P. Morgan analyst Abhishek Deshpande wrote in the note reported by CNBC. This is important for golf where oil prices and those of oil by-products, including fertilizer, have direct budgetary impacts. For budgeting purposes, managers should watch oil futures. One can expect higher gas prices about six weeks after an increase in oil futures. **GCI**



“Overall, not having to apply fertilizer every month saves us time and money.”

CHRIS HEDBERG
THE RIDGE AT CASTLE PINES

Chris Hedberg Creates a High-End Course Experience with UMAXX® Stabilized Nitrogen Fertilizer

“We have around 10 crew members. Whether it’s spraying fairways, applying fertilizer or simply making sure our day-to-day operations are running smoothly, each of us needs to pitch in.”

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“When three guys can spend a day applying UMAXX and you can get two to three months of performance out of it, that’s a huge timesaver, rather than having to go out once a month or every six weeks.”

Chris Hedberg is superintendent of The Ridge at Castle Pines, just outside of Denver, CO. He has to get a lot done with a small crew while being as efficient as possible. For six years, Chris has used UMAXX to keep fairways and roughs green throughout his course’s busy season — all with just three applications a year.



Find out how else Chris uses UMAXX to improve the health and playability of his course at KochTurf.com/GolfAdvantages.



ATTITUDE OF

ALTITUDE



By **Judd Spicer**

At two of the country's most HIGH-ALTITUDE golf courses, the pressures of operating at elevation aren't just limited to the thin air.

Best known as popular California ski destinations, Sierra Star Golf Course (8,050 feet above sea level) in Mammoth Lakes, Calif., and nine-hole Bear Mountain Golf Course (7,000 feet) in Big Bear both trade the poles and snow for wedges and turf come the eventual late spring thaw.

Not that the transition isn't without elevated pressures.

Respectively working with approximately 150-day golf seasons doesn't yield a leisurely prep window, and while golfers are itching to get seasons underway, course managers and superintendents at both locales are battling the attitude of altitude.

MAINTAINING QUALITY GOLF CONDITIONS ON ELEVATED SITES PRESENTS UNIQUE PRESSURES FOR A PAIR OF CALIFORNIA COURSES.

COVER STORY

Whatever tally a seasonal snowfall brings (or doesn't) directly results into crucial choices for getting courses open fast, and in the best condition possible.

"The toughest thing for us is winter, and what the winter brings," Sierra Star superintendent Patrick Lewis says. "We're not just high elevation, we're extreme amounts of snow. Last season was a light winter, and that was 260 inches of snow. The year before (2016), we set the record for inches of water, and that was over 600 inches of snow. So, come spring time, when your course is buried under 8 or 9 feet of snow, that presents some interesting challenges."

Of course, winter moisture isn't merely about inches when it comes to golf season – it's also about the timing of those inches.

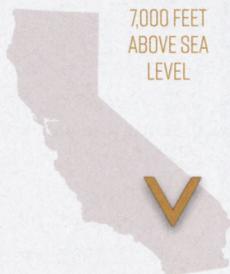
"This past winter (2017-18), even though we had a good snowfall, it really didn't start until March," Lewis says. "So, we ended up with some really dry areas; not our putting surfaces, thankfully, but what did happen was a lot of ice build-up, which really did a number on some places across the course. The challenge chasing that, being at such high elevation, is that we'll get snow until June. We're trying to open for Memorial Day, and it's freezing at night, which doesn't result in a lot of germination when you're trying to re-grow at that time of year. It can be a struggle to get things in really good shape early on."

Taking advantage of a compact golf season requires heightened creativity and flexibility.

"We have a pretty short window to make hay when the sun is shining," says Dave Schacht, director of golf and head golf professional at Sierra Star. "I don't even refer to 'rounds' anymore. I call them 'starts.' We average about 100 starts over 150 days and do around 15,000 rounds. It could be a three-hole loop of play and lunch, or a super twilight round at 4 p.m., a five-hole round at 5, or a nine-hole round as we work to court the millennials."

At historic Bear Mountain, the enhanced ball flight of elevated play has been testing club selection since 1948. "Probably the most challenging aspect is that we've got about 90 days of growth; good growth, where we've got the soil temps where they need to be, and it's not too cold," Bear Mountain director of golf Bjorn Bruce said. "Beyond that, it's about a lot of preparation prior to the grow season, and then a lot of preparation putting the course to bed at the tail end of it and getting ready for winter."

For course operators, fluid futures can bring tough lessons. After a previous year's snowfall of 90 inches, Big Bear saw a mere 26 total inches in the winter of 2017-18, 4 of which flaked down in April. The average snowfall in Big Bear is about 62 inches.



BEAR MOUNTAIN GOLF COURSE

BIG BEAR, CALIF.



SIERRA STAR GOLF COURSE

MAMMOTH LAKES, CALIF.

With the root base basically dead on certain portions of the course and soil temps only in the high 40s into May, last winter proved a dramatic inverse from seasons' past.

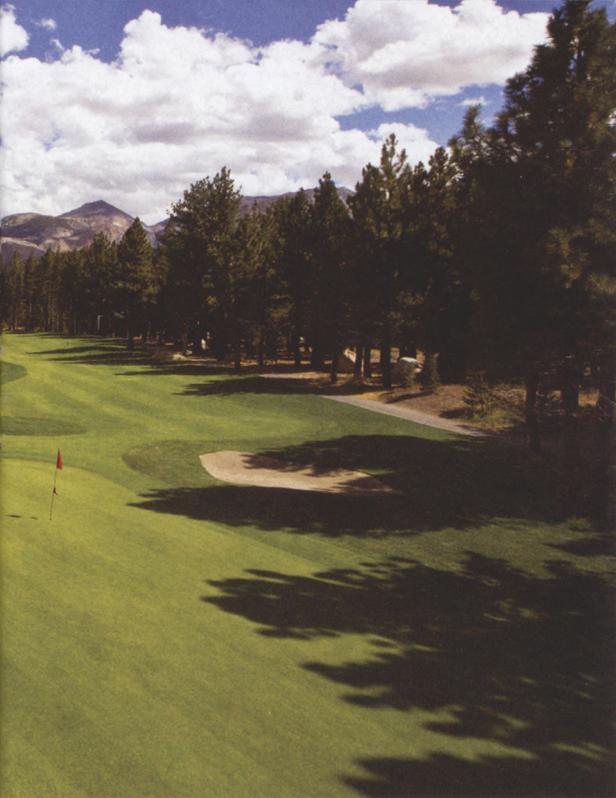
"We've had our challenges this year," says Bear Mountain superintendent Dave Flaxbeard, who also has worked at courses in Los Angeles and the Coachella Valley. "Last year and the year before, I got back here April 1, and mowed the greens the same morning. By the time we hit mid-January this season, most of the damage was already done. And when I got back, the weather didn't allow me to do much culturally. I tried verticutting, but nothing."

With a lack of snowfall and/or spring rain, options to irrigate can be limited. "Our irrigation system is off during winter. It's frozen," Bruce adds. "You can't turn it on or it will explode. So, we need to drain the irrigation, pump out the lines with an air compressor. And then, this past winter – it doesn't snow. So, it's like, 'How do you get water out there? How do you water your greens?' We have a 500-gallon tank we have access to, yet it's 20 degrees outside. But the greens are dry and need water, but then if we water, it's going to turn to ice. It's all pretty wild."

While both Sierra Star and Bear Mountain use a combo of ryegrass and bluegrass fairways and *Poa annua* and bentgrass mixture on the greens for sustainability and heartiness, the high altitude locales need ample prep for the expectation of snowfall – whether it arrives or not.

"We run into trouble when we get a really cold fall,

▲ Sierra Star receives around 15,000 "starts" per year, according to director of golf Dave Schacht.



and then don't get snow until January. That's when we really start to fight with the sustainability of the turf," Schacht says. "We've had some tough openers, but Pat has really learned from past experiences. We throw a ton of sand down on the greens, but Mother Nature is really in charge. We just rent the place."

Schacht keeps close contact with other elevated locations in California on successful maintenance practices, though the option of covering greens hasn't been employed at his track.

"We just use sand. We've found that's the best," Schacht says. "California is sorta' hard in what the state will let you put down for chemicals, so that can be tricky. So, we just go with sand. We haven't used any covers."

At Bear Mountain, covering greens with burlap sacks has been sam-

pled with a modicum of success. "Sometimes I do cover in (early spring), though that's very labor intensive with the turf spikes, and it takes forever," Flaxbeard says.

Lewis has considered borrowing a straw cover technique often seen at courses in the frigid Upper Midwest. "But I don't know if we could do that here, because it's so darned windy," he adds. "Of course, then we'd need to figure out how to get straw, because one of our other biggest challenges being at this elevation is that we're also in the middle of nowhere."

In Big Bear, Flaxbeard treats greens with snow mold prevention and uses a wetting agent to keep moisture on top of the turf. The highest elevated course in California, Sierra Star also must brace annually for snow mold issues. "We do

WHEN TO OPEN? WHEN TO AERATE?

Balancing calendars finds equal measure when assessing the pressure of an opening date, and superintendents working at extreme California altitude collectively acknowledge that an open course now is better than a perfect course later.

"It's a big responsibility to just be open," Sierra Star superintendent Patrick Lewis says. "And even though every year is different, I really do feel that you've just got to get the darned place open. There are a lot of people who work here who depend on that paycheck. I just think it's important that, even though I wish the course could be perfect right away, people understand the challenges we face, and I think it's just important to let the players have at it."

Sierra Star director of golf and head golf professional Dave Schacht says preparing the course to immediately meet customer expectations is a stern test. "If we plug our greens twice a year, we're screwed," he says. "People from Southern California expect greens to stimp at 11, and Patrick is able to get it done. I'm in constant awe of what he's able to accomplish."

For that pure putting, timing proves paramount.

"We try and do it in spring before we're open, and we're usually able to pull that off," Lewis says of aeration at Sierra Star. "The challenge there is that my staff can be pretty low early on in season. Fortunately, for us, we have guys who work the ski area in the winter, and then come down here in the summer and make a living."

And yet, hustle doesn't omit crucial attention to quality.

"I core in spring and fall. Come fall, we just try and do nine holes at a time, and I think we do a really good job in getting things open and playable quickly," Lewis adds. "It's just taking time to fill the holes with topdressing and making sure we have exactly the right amount of sand, where it's not too much that the greens feel like a sand trap, but not too little where the green is crazy bumpy."

Bear Mountain superintendent Dave Flaxbeard would seem to empathize when unveiling his grounds under less than ideal conditions.

"We weren't ready to open this year, but I thought that nothing is going to happen real fast, so we might as well open," he says. "Because I couldn't tell when conditions would be acceptable to me, and what's acceptable to me still isn't here. But we couldn't afford to lose those rounds. I tend to be critical of myself, but I don't know any superintendent that doesn't go out on his golf course and find something wrong. And if he doesn't, he's not looking hard enough."

➤ **"THE TOUGHEST THING FOR US IS WINTER, AND WHAT THE WINTER BRINGS. WE'RE NOT JUST HIGH ELEVATION, WE'RE EXTREME AMOUNTS OF SNOW. LAST SEASON WAS A LIGHT WINTER, AND THAT WAS 260 INCHES OF SNOW."**

— PATRICK LEWIS, SIERRA STAR



“UP HERE, IT’S PRETTY MUCH SHUTTING DOWN A BUSINESS AND THEN STARTING IT AGAIN FROM SCRATCH TWICE A YEAR, EVERY YEAR.”

*—BJORN BRUCE,
BEAR MOUNTAIN*



our snow mold applications, and I try to time that accordingly, along with finding the right product and rotating the products,” Lewis says.

Between ample snowfall and a dry winter, both locales would surely seem to opt for the former option. Even when a massive snow dump results in plowing greens. “We use a 6½-foot PTO-driven snow blower on a tractor, and even go so far as to use a skid loader on the putting surfaces,” Lewis says. “You have to be very careful. If you miss, of course, you can really get rid of some turf.”

More winter flake fall results in welcome work for course staff. “Coming out of last winter, it was great – a lot of snow, a lot of moisture, especially in the spring,” Bruce says. “We couldn’t mow enough. It was too much grass and lush everywhere, and that’s a great problem to have.”

Despite remote locations, neither Sierra Star nor

▶ At 8,050 feet above sea level, Sierra Star is highest elevated golf course in California.



Bear Mountain feel affected by labor issues, as both enjoy split-staffing power shared between slope and course employees basically going from one job to another with the seasons. “We don’t have the biggest crew, but we have the right crew,” Bruce says.

Come a winter’s freeze and eventual thaw, Bear Mountain’s tight staff is tasked with “bringing in everything,” according to Bruce, with yardage markers, hole monuments, protective netting, benches and

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LEFT, COURTESY OF MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN
RIGHT, COURTESY OF BIG BEAR
MOUNTAIN RESORT

ball washers all hauled indoors before an inverse occurs in the spring.

“Courses down the hill, they don’t have to deal with any of that,” Bruce says. “Up here, it’s pretty much shutting down a business and then starting it again from scratch twice a year, every year.”

Such seasonality also directly impacts course brass. To wit: Schacht and Bruce work ski operations in their respective destinations come winter, and

Flaxbeard works the Bear seven months out of the year. “I have a calendar and better check it,” Bruce says. “When you’re in the middle of the winter operation, the last thing you’re thinking about is, ‘I wonder what the greens are looking like right now?’ You just can’t get caught with the pants down.” **GCI**

Judd Spicer is a golf writer based in Palm Desert, Calif., and is a frequent GCI contributor.

▲ Squeezing in an abundance of play in a short time frame is a challenge facing employees at Bear Mountain Golf Course.

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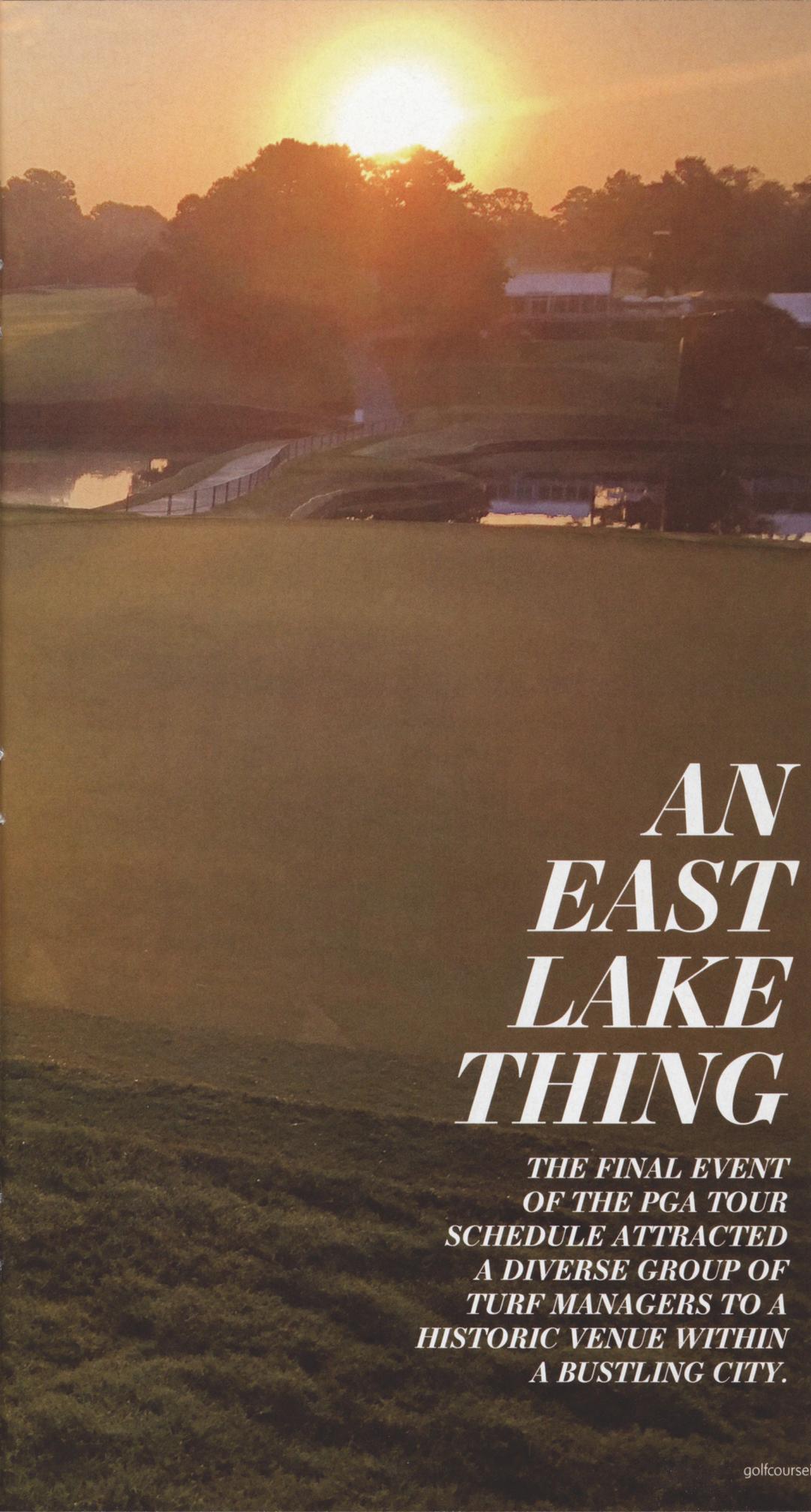


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OF THE PGA TOUR
SCHEDULE ATTRACTED
A DIVERSE GROUP OF
TURF MANAGERS TO A
HISTORIC VENUE WITHIN
A BUSTLING CITY.***

Atlanta boasts the world's busiest airport and serves as the headquarters for 28 Fortune 1000 companies, making it a hub for domestic and global commerce. For one week each year, the city's most historic golf facility, East Lake GC, resembles a terminal at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta Airport as a diverse contingent of competitors, workers and volunteers gather for the biggest golf event played within an urban neighborhood.

This year, The TOUR Championship, the final event of the PGA Tour's loaded calendar, brought 30 players competing for more than \$36 million in FedEx Cup bonus and tournament purse money to Atlanta. The limited field comprised players ages 22 to 48 representing seven countries.

On the eve of the tournament's opening round, Aaron Dobson and Eric Nordmeyer mowed the 18th green, a MiniVerde bermudagrass surface guarded by two bunkers tucked beneath the tudor clubhouse. Strangers three days earlier, Dobson and Nordmeyer glanced at the setting sun after completing their work, relishing a surreal and shared experience few industries provide.

Dobson hails from Perth, Australia. After his internship at Shoal Creek, a famed club in Birmingham, Ala., ends he will return to his home country to begin a full-time job at the Sandhurst Club in Melbourne. Nordmeyer is the assistant superintendent at Westwood CC in his native northeast Ohio.

Without a carefully constructed agronomic volunteer program to support a lucra-



▲ Horry-Georgetown Technical College professor and tournament volunteer veteran Charles Granger.

Advance or tournament week?

Hurricane Florence resulted in some Horry-Georgetown Technical College students arriving at East Lake GC early for their TOUR Championship volunteer duties. Their positive experiences working alongside the East Lake agronomy team has sparked conversations among professors and tournament volunteering veterans Charles Granger and Ashley Wilkinson about exploring advance week volunteering opportunities for students.

"We think we might be able to provide not only the club, but the student a better experience," says Granger, who worked alongside the Horry-Georgetown students at East Lake. "Let's face it, if you talk to most superintendents, they will tell you once they get to championship week, championship week is their easiest week. But as we advance into it, that's where the dirt and the grime and the hard part comes in. I'm not so sure we don't start seeing advance week might be where we can position the students at a spot that we haven't thought about before."

Penn State's Dr. John Kaminski, who also brought a group of students to East Lake, agrees advance week volunteers help host superintendents. But he says the tournament atmosphere represents a major draw for most volunteers, especially students.

"Part of this is for the student to feel what it's like during tournament week," Kaminski says. "They are volunteers. They aren't really laborers. They aren't getting paid for it. If you are going to bring somebody in for advance week and pay them, then I can understand that. But they want to see the golfers and the tournament, and work under that pressure. Yes, they are offering a service, helping out and being productive. But there's also downtime where you watch golf and interact with others. I think advance week it would just be 12-hour days working. It wouldn't be the same."

PGA Tour agronomist Bland Cooper says he prefers tournament week over advance week volunteers because of the morning deadlines crews face.

"You need those bodies during the tournament," he adds. "Advance week, especially at a course that's closed, the only timeline that you have is the sun going down. At most sites where we are playing full fields, we're going off at 7 a.m. and it's 45 minutes after sunrise on both nines. We have to be out of the way. You need a lot of bodies to do that. There's a lot to learn advance week, but when the rubber meets the road and getting the golf course prepared, we need people during tournament week."

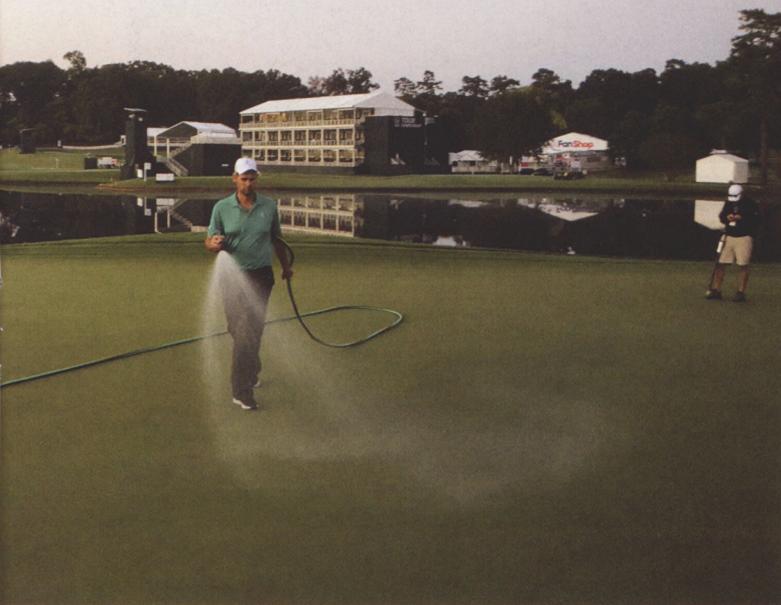


tive tournament in Atlanta, the Australian and Ohioan are strangers. Because of the program, they spent a week swapping turf and life stories while obtaining a glimpse of maintenance at the highest level. "You just have to relish that opportunity," Dobson says.

Dobson and Nordmeyer were two of the 70 volunteers who converged in Atlanta to assist director of agronomy Ralph Kepple and superintendent Charles Aubry's team with polishing East Lake for its annual appearance on the global stage. Volunteers hailed from 11 nations, ranging from golf-enthused spots such as England and Australia to places such as Peru and Brazil, where the game and business

rarely reach the masses. "It's humbling to believe that people from all those parts of the world would give us a hand," Aubry says.

Corey Finn devoted a week-in-a-half to volunteer at East Lake, making a transatlantic trek from Abu Dhabi, a thriving United Arab Emirates city where he works as a senior assistant superintendent at Saadiyat Beach Golf Club. Finn saw an announcement on a turf-themed Facebook page about East Lake's TOUR Championship volunteer program. He applied for a spot and forgot about it for a few months, figuring an overseas turf manager wouldn't receive serious consideration. But since its rebirth in the mid-1990s, inclusion has



Besides presenting opportunities to showcase turf skills, volunteering at events such as the TOUR Championship provide numerous networking opportunities.

ing volunteers critical components in producing PGA Tour-caliber putting surfaces.

Bland Cooper was among the seasoned agronomists watching Finn and other volunteers

hand water East Lake's greens. A PGA Tour competitions agronomist, Cooper works closely with Kepple and the East Lake team throughout the year to ensure a smooth competition. Wearing a button-down shirt and khakis, Cooper scurries from hole to hole in a cart during tournament maintenance shifts. His tools of choice include a small notebook, putter, sleeve of golf balls, soil moisture meter, communications radio and stimpmeter. Cooper, though, understands people are more important to meeting tournament expectations than tools

been an important element at East Lake and international volunteers developed into a staple of TOUR Championship week when Kepple pursued a robust volunteer program after one of his assistants returned the 2014 PLAYERS Championship at TPC Sawgrass.

Earlier this year, Finn received an unexpected email: there was a spot for him in Atlanta if he could make the trip. The choice proved easy, as Finn booked flights from Abu Dhabi, including a 13-hour leg to New York City, to Atlanta. Traveling to obtain experience is no big deal to Finn, who has



worked in Fiji, Qatar and his native New Zealand along with American resorts Kingsmill and Sea Island as part of an international internship through The Ohio State University. "I get my buzz off working tournaments," he says.

Having a volunteer from Abu Dhabi, which receives less than 3 inches of annual rainfall, aided an intense TOUR Championship water management effort. After a soggy spring, Atlanta turned dry before and during the tournament, mak-



“The volunteer component of these tournaments cannot be overstated. The PGA Tour model does not exist without volunteers, not just on the maintenance side, but the entire tournament itself. From the agronomic side of it, you are trying to cram two-and-a-half, three weeks of maintenance into a week and then you’re trying to cram it even further into a real small, tight time window in the early morning and late afternoon/early evening. Simple math tells you that you have to have two-and-a-half, three times as many people out there as you normally do for normal maintenance.”

— Bland Cooper

or equipment.

“The volunteer component of these tournaments cannot be overstated,” says Cooper, who spends the year traversing PGA Tour sites. “The PGA Tour model does not exist without volunteers, not just on the maintenance side, but the entire tournament itself. From the agronomic side of it, you are trying to cram two-and-a-half, three weeks of maintenance into a week and then you’re trying to cram it even further into a real small, tight time window in the early morning and late afternoon/early evening. Simple math tells you that you have to have two-and-a-half, three times as many people out there as you normally do for normal maintenance.”

For a rookie volunteer, tournament maintenance scenes are initially overwhelming. On the 180-mile drive from Abraham Baldwin Agriculture College’s Tifton, Georgia, campus to East Lake, students Brady



▲ Aaron Dobson and Eric Nordmeyer

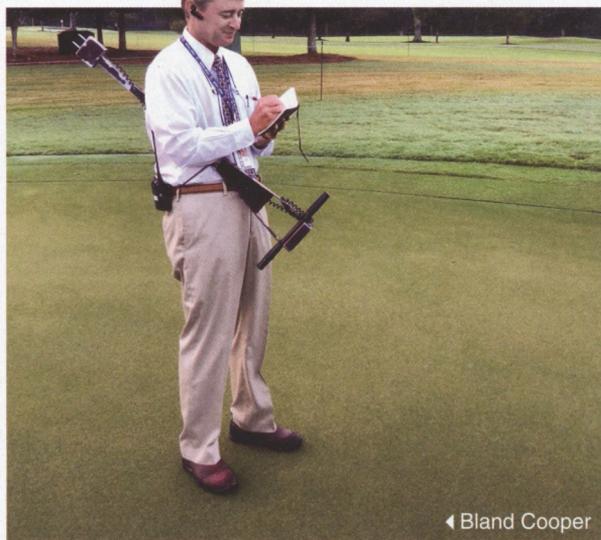
Hester and Hunter Hodges listened to a pre-tournament podcast with Kepple and Aubry. Midway through the podcast, Hester turned to Hodges and said, “Oh my goodness. What have we gotten ourselves into? This is going to be massive.”

Sounds became images

when the pair noticed close to 100 East Lake crew members and volunteers gathered for the week’s first morning meeting. Their classmate, Logan Rush, had previous PGA Tour volunteer experience. But even Rush experienced early week jitters. The ABAC trio spent the week



▲ Members of the East Lake agronomy team before the third round of the TOUR Championship, the final event on the 2017-18 PGA Tour schedule.



◀ Bland Cooper

Build your own

PGA Tour agronomist Bland Cooper recommends superintendents cultivate unyielding staff commitment when attempting to construct a tournament volunteer program.

"In order to have, in my opinion, a successful volunteer program you have to have a staff that buys into it," Cooper says. "That's why (East Lake's) volunteer program – one of the reasons at least – is so successful and people want to come back to it. That's where I would start. You're going to have a Tour agronomist do a visit at your golf course and they are going to go through a scheduling. You are going to get to the bottom and have a number and you're going to be going, 'Oh my god. That's a lot of people.' Before you focus on that number, you need to develop a mentality within your senior staff and let it infiltrate through the rest of your staff, 'How are we going to treat these people once we get them?' Make sure you have a program in place or at least a concept of how you are going to treat them when they get there. If you do that the right way, then they will come back. It's easier said than done."

helping rake, groom and tidy East Lake's 74 bunkers.

"It really hit you when Charles was talking about the money," Rush says. "If we don't do our job, there's over \$30 million on the line. That bad lie in the bunker could be the difference."

Bunker crews featured a collegiate flavor, with the ABAC trio working alongside students from Penn State and Horry-Georgetown Technical College. Not many majors allow students to abandon campus for a week to participate and

observe the aspirational level of a chosen field.

Penn State student Alex Panzenhagen worked at Erin Hills in 2017 when the fescue-lined course became the first venue in his native Wisconsin to host a U.S. Open. His exposure to televised golf continued this past summer when he served as an intern at Edgewood Tahoe, site of the American Century Championship. Spending a summer in Reno, Nevada, also allowed him to volunteer at the PGA Tour's Barracuda Champi-

onship. Volunteering at East Lake, regular site of the TOUR Championship since 2004, further expanded his zest for tournament golf.

"Ever since I worked at Erin Hills I have had a real passion for tournaments," Panzenhagen says. "This week is another stepping stone that reminds me that I want to end up a course that hosts tournaments."

Five classmates served as TOUR Championship volunteers alongside Panzenhagen. Their respective backgrounds epitomized the diversity at East Lake. Pennsylvania native Tim Kline operated a lawncare business before landing a job at Lehigh CC and embracing agronomy; Raul Iurk hails from Brazil; Aaron Cabanaw, whose father worked for The Toro Company, resorted to turf after taking business classes; Marcus Lounello served in the military, moved to Colorado to fight wildfires and then decided he wanted a career related to his golf passion; Nathan Wattier left his hometown in the French Alps to pursue a turf career.

"It's really interesting to hear everybody's story here: how they got into the industry, where they are going to school, what courses they have been at," Lounello says. "You can learn a lot from other people and their experiences."

The Penn State students are scheduled to graduate from the university's two-year turf program next year. Their immediate career paths could resemble what Richard Brown has recently experienced. Brown, the senior assistant superintendent at Orangeburg CC, volunteered at the TOUR Championship to "broaden" his turf horizons. A supportive boss, Alex Tolbert, allowed Brown to leave the cen-

tral South Carolina club during the busy September season to volunteer his first tournament since 2013.

Between mowing collars and approaches in mornings and filling divots in evenings, Brown enthusiastically exchanged ideas and business cards with East Lake team members and fellow volunteers. The quality of East Lake's surfaces, including its 23 acres of zoysiagrass fairways, dazzled Brown. East Lake's history – Bobby Jones learned the game on the course – further enthralled Brown.

"Being a golf fan, having seen East Lake on TV for so many years, hearing the stories, it was unreal being here for the first time," he says. "It was a lot to take in and a bit overwhelming when you think about who's been on the grounds. As turf majors, we all got into it for different reasons. I didn't start out as a huge golfer. I got into this business because of grass. Some people have a love for golf. I love grass. That's always been my thing. That's what got me into this industry. To see what these guys have done here and to hear all the stories ..."

Brown turned the key in his cart and started driving to the par-3 2nd hole to collect and fill divots. Brown passed Albin Persson, a Swedish superintendent, hand watering a green. He then passed the Brazilian Iurk hand watering a fairway as Roger Tenorio, an assistant superintendent at one of Peru's 12 golf courses searches for fairway divots. Just another a tournament Thursday evening in Atlanta.

"We are a big compilation of people who have a big passion and love for producing the best conditions we can," he says. **GCI**

VOLUNTEER U



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

Most of us are used to managing our crews, the eight to 30 people we've hired and trained and who know the course like the backs of their hands. But host a big tournament — like a major championship or tour event — and suddenly we're overseeing an army of 150 to 200, or more, volunteers charged with getting and keeping the course at its best. Trust me, you're going to need a new playbook.

The organization running the event will likely have much to say about coordinating your new-found army of volunteers. But there's more to it than assigning mower-routes and handing out shovels, rakes and keys to carts. This is your chance to be the Chancellor of Volunteer U, making it as good for them as you want them to be to your course.

When volunteers give up their time and money to help out, it's important that you put extra thought and effort into making it a rewarding, educational and safe experience. I know, I've been there, on both sides, many times. Here's how to run the show successfully, beginning with some overall suggestions followed by more specific ideas.

First, be sure to coordinate with the host organization so you know the expectations for the golf course. Then make sure all your volunteers

know them, as well. No one should be working in a manner contrary to the agreed-upon specifications.

Second, well before the event begins, select section or crew leaders to serve as your top lieutenants. Make sure all of the volunteers know who they are, then be sure each volunteer knows who they are reporting to and what is expected of them.

Third, on the weekend before the event begins, hold a mandatory, all-hands-on-deck meeting. Go over schedules, expectations and every other aspect of the volunteer experience. Communication is key, but it has to be a two-way street. Get everything out in the open in advance to avoid problems when it's too late.

CREATURE COMFORTS

Housing for volunteers should be comfortable and commensurate to the jobs they are doing: They have to be able to get a good night's sleep. Use the "buddy system," matching each person with someone they know or will be comfortable with, both as a roommate (if rooms are being shared) and to help managing logistics in a foreign destination.

- Consider a local hotel (not a "no-tell motel") that you can book in advance with the help of the host organization.
- Ask a local college if its dorms are available. But be sure there are de-

cent beds, showers, and necessary amenities like air conditioning and heating.

- Provide transportation for volunteers to and from the airport.
- Arrange a shuttle system to and from the course for morning and afternoon shifts. If daily security checks are required, attempt to get a checkpoint just for your workers.
- If some volunteers are serving as drivers, carefully check driving records and insurance requirements in advance. Paying professional drivers/companies could prove money well spent.

SAFETY

Provide information and directions to local hospitals and emergency rooms in case something happens after the volunteer's shift is done or if a medical concern arises.

- Make sure they know where on-course EMS personnel are located to deal with mower injuries, sprained ankles, bee allergies, food poisoning, pulled muscles, etc.
- Map out a pre-arranged ambulance route to and from your maintenance area.
- Provide ample opportunities for rest, hydration and food. Long hours and hard work can leave volunteers tired and more prone to injury.
- Provide maps, phone numbers, and locations of emergency treatment areas on the golf course.
- For those working in the dark, provide reflective gear, headlamps, and adequate lighting to return to the compound.

EDUCATION

They're giving something to you, so give them something in return, such as educational and instructional opportunities during quiet portions of their stay. Think of it as a turfgrass field day and use experienced volunteers to network, teach and mentor younger superintendents.

- Bring in your consultants and trusted advisors to share their knowledge and experience on topics ranging from herbicide resistance and disease prevention to career building.
- Involve your vendors. Topics could include equipment maintenance, reel sharpening and new technologies.

SLEEP ROOM

Long hours, bodily effort and performance anxiety add up to physical and mental fatigue.

- Provide a quiet space and quiet time for everyone to recuperate. This should be a separate, dedicated on-site tent or facility, not just a lounge chair or cot.
- Along with a place to sleep, have a locker room with showers, which also will help volunteers get ready for their next shift.
- Consider that there may be both male and female volunteers.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

More than just an obligation, this is a reputation builder for your event. Good food — and plenty of it — is

appreciated by all.

- Bring in a chef or dietician to plan healthy menus high in water content. Forget the donuts and fried foods. You want to maximize energy levels and mental awareness.
- The right food will fuel the energy levels of those beginning and ending their day and those operating heavy, expensive equipment.
- Assign a smart, reliable person to run the dining and break areas while listening to the volunteers, especially if conditions change. Consider this a key assignment for a trusted vendor with good local knowledge.
- For your own good health, consider hiring a personal trainer, sleep therapist and nutritionist to help manage the rigors of planning and managing a major event. That's Not All...

BEFORE THE EVENT

Send a package to each volunteer including:

- Pre-event letter (thank you, directions, etc.)
- One-day gate pass to access course and pick-up physical credentials at maintenance area
- Packing list

- Waiver and forms
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Club and course history
- If you can, create a dedicated landing page on the club's web site for information specific to your volunteer corps

VOLUNTEER GOODIE BAG

Everyone appreciates swag. Consider:

- Hat
- Safety glasses
- Ear plugs
- Sunscreen
- Work gloves
- Water bottle
- Energy bars
- Uniforms/shirts (coordinate with vendors or the host organization)
- Rain gear (or include on packing list)

DON'T FORGET

- Free WiFi in the break room
- Televisions and broadcast feed
- Merchandise discounts or gift cards.

For A Truly Memorable Experience...

MASSEUSE

It's not a spa, but a couple of on-site masseuses can ease sore muscles and work out the kinks.

DERMATOLOGIST

Skin cancer screening on-site is a smart, healthy idea.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Pre-shift stretching gets the blood flowing and helps prevent injury.

MUSIC

Live music in the break or dining tent sets the tone at the end of a long day.

GROUP PHOTO

Assemble the whole team for a commemorative photo. If possible, include the trophy or stage the shot at a memorable location. **GCI**





The **ABC'S** of goal setting

SMART, GREEN AND LINKED ARE MORE THAN ACRONYMS. THEY COULD BE THE KEYS TO TAKING YOUR CAREER TO A HIGHER LEVEL.

By **Anthony L. Williams, CGCS**

There are many reasons why a professional golf course manager may need to develop a strategy of setting goals. These range from prioritizing daily work tasks (more effectively) to organizing complex projects for documentation to the epic goal or bucket list. To make the best decisions when it comes to goals and goal setting, there are several systems to help create powerful goals. They are known as SMART, GREEN and LINKED goals and they can make the difference between a good and great career. They are collectively known as the ABC's of goal setting and often as the situation or setting changes the actual definition of elements within the acronyms change so if you have seen various versions of these over the years, don't panic. Adjust your course and keep moving forward. Let's break down some of the secrets of the ABC's of goal setting.

A

SMART GOALS

SMART goals are perhaps the most familiar to most people or professionals. SMART is an acronym for the steps you should take when evaluating general goals that take into consideration the following criteria.

- S** – Specific (simple, sensible, significant)
- M** – Measurable (meaningful, motivating)
- A** – Achievable (agreed, attainable)
- R** – Relevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based)
- T** – Time bound (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited)

The SMART goal approach is used with confidence by every level of goal setter from novice to expert. It establishes the core things that must exist for a goal to be noted, acted upon and completed within the scope established. The following is a general example of the SMART process at work.

The primary task involves fertilizing five acres of bermudagrass lawns at the property entrance. Now expanding the primary task using the SMART process will generate very detailed action steps leading to the highest level of execution for the task. First, you confirm that you have enough 16-4-8 fertilizer in stock to apply your chosen rate of one pound of nitrogen with half the rate applied in two directions using a rotary cone spreader verified and calibrated. It must be watered in for 15 minutes, according to historic and product label recommendations, so an inspection of the irrigation system will be performed prior to applying the fertilizer. Spreader will be washed and stored upon completion with a fertilizer application record files online and in the application record book. All tasks must be completed by noon Thursday. Sound familiar?

Let's look deeper. Notice that a goal can have many associated tasks and watch how the SMART method can simplify the process. Is it (S) specific? Yes, fertilize one pound of nitrogen on five acres of bermudagrass lawn with a 16-4-8 fertilizer and water in for 15 minutes. Is it (M) Measurable? Yes, you can quantify the size of the area the amount of fertilizer and water. Is it (A) attainable? Yes, your plan is a good one. Is it (R) resourced? Yes, you have verified all products, personnel and tools are available. Is it (T) time-based? Yes, you must have all tasks completed by noon Thursday.

The SMART method allowed the primary goal to be evaluated for effectiveness, thus improving the odds of reaching the goal on time. Imagine the number of things that could have made the goal difficult to achieve, including not having enough fertilizer, broken spreader or bad calibration and irrigation problems. Goal setting is a process and it allows you to preplan or even reverse engineer the needed steps to ensure the goal will be reached. It is more than making a list and checking a box.

B

GREEN GOALS

GREEN goals are also tools to evaluate the steps and become more effective in reaching complex goals. GREEN goals are perfect when setting environmental goals/tasks and include the following criteria.

- G** – Generational (connecting multiple generations)
- R** – Repeatable (can the process be repeated with the similar results)
- E** – Easy to Start (can you make progress now)
- E** – Environomic (fusion of positive environmental and financial impacts)
- N** – Networkable (can the results generate interest from others)

It should be noted that SMART goal theories still apply and that GREEN goals provide an extra level of reflection when dealing with complicated multi-level goals. Below is a general example of GREEN goal setting.

Your goal is to establish Best Management Practices for water conservation for your facility, using the GREEN goal strategy. It looks like this. **G** – Generational, the water BMP will be crafted into a shared and saved living document that will be used by many generations who work at the property. **R** – Repeatable, the project will utilize the GCSAA, chapter and personal templates capturing processes and data that is repeatable at other facilities. **E** – Easy to Start, the project will begin by capturing basic water infrastructure items filed within the operation, so it is easy to start. **E** – Environomic (the fusion of environmental and financial impacts), the project will save water and money, so it is environomic. **N** – Networkable, the project has an outreach component and by sharing with green media and local media the results the potential to generate green public relations is very high and could end up on the front page of the *New York Times* (this has actually happened). GREEN goal strategies add another level of evaluation, especially for golf facilities.



GOAL SETTING IS A PROCESS AND IT ALLOWS YOU TO PREPLAN OR EVEN REVERSE ENGINEER THE NEEDED STEPS TO ENSURE THE GOAL WILL BE REACHED.”



LINKED GOALS

Beyond the ordinary segments of other goal setting acronyms and their impact exists the synergy of LINKED goals. It is widely accepted that the individual should focus on only a few goals at a time. In fact, research shows that if you have one to three goals, you can attain two or three. If you have four to seven goals, you can attain one or two. And if you have more than seven goals, you are lucky to attain one goal but more likely to reach zero of your stated goals. I knew there had to be a better way, so I discovered the LINKED method. LINKED goals link similar goals together then by taking reverse engineering steps to craft powerful sub-goals that creatively connect where you aspire to be to where you are now. You can accomplish huge life/professional goals and navigate a sea of goals as long as you keep a steady heading by identifying those sub-goals and connections that are critical to the larger goal/success. Sometimes writing a time horizon can help with the clarity of this process. For example, if you want to eventually be a golf course superintendent (the big goal) and you are currently a turf student (early in the journey of reaching the big goal), your time horizon should start with you as a turf student (current) and have benchmarks (next logical events and sub-goals). Benchmarks include things like completing an internship at Augusta National, volunteering at a PGA tour event, graduating turf school, getting a job as a greenskeeper, landing a job as a second assistant/spray technician at a private club, moving into an assistant golf course superintendent position and ending at the linked goal of becoming the head golf course superintendent. Be detailed, be flexible, but, most importantly, stay committed to your goal and its processes on a daily basis. The more creative your benchmarks are, the more synergy you can expect from the process. Now that you have an overview review the LINKED acronym below:

- L** – Legendary (milestone personal/professional achievements)
- I** – Innovative (outside the box, NEO)
- N** – Navigable (many ways to reach the destination)
- K** – Kinetic (relating to or resulting from motion or activity)
- E** – Edifying (strengthens others)
- D** – Destined (divinely guided)

The LINKED process can lead to extraordinary results. Here is a personal example explaining the LINKED goal process in detail. My linked goal was to win the GCSAA Presidents Award for Environmental Stewardship. Following the acronym, it looks like this: **L** – Legendary, winning the PAES which is the GCSAA's highest environmental honor, is considered a career/life achievement award by many so it is certainly legendary. **I** – Innovative, my plan was to be innovative through case studies, certifications and outreach. My water and IPM case studies led to my first book deal "The Environmental Stewardship Toolkit," John Wiley and Sons 2012 (available

on Amazon.com). That's where GREEN and LINKED goals debuted, so again it was pretty innovative. **N** – Navigable, in the beginning, I thought the path was clear that I would be at my original property when eventually I reached the link goal, but because I had multiple strategies if needed, I made a bold move and took a tour of duty at a second multi-course property to complete the task and improve my skills, proving the goal was indeed navigable. **K** – Kinetic, the motion required was epic and connected me to many people and programs such as the Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association, Audubon International, E-Par, GEO and many GCSAA staff, including green expert Mark Johnson, so it was Kinetic and resulted in other awards and lessons along the way that were epic in their own right. **E** – Edifying, it is hard to say just how many people were impacted by this epic goal. I have taught thousands of amazing people in classes, plus many more through books and articles and dozens of my staff have gone on to be superintendents or manage their own green businesses. Humbly, we all made each other better, stronger. **D** – Destined, it seems an obvious conclusion to reaching any lofty goal that has progressed through the LINKED philosophy that it was destined to be. However, on my quest to win the PAES, there were at least 99 reasons or occasions to quit or give up, ranging from droughts to floods. The deep truth is that you must believe you are destined to reach the goal and be willing to keep moving forward no matter what occurs even against the negativity of those close to you. I won the PAES in 2010 on a Tuesday and because of the connections created by the LINKED process and an aggressive time horizon I also won the TurfNet Superintendent of the Year on Thursday. Not a bad week 10 years of LINKED perseverance in the making.

That was a lot of information and I know what you are thinking: All that stuff may work for some people, but not me. I ask a simple question: Why not you? The power of these methods and measures is that it makes you aware and connected to your goals, visions and action steps every day, multiple times a day. This is powerful because you begin to make progress and then others come to your aid. The synergy starts to build, and you see a clearer path to achievement. The bigger the achievements are, the bigger the confidence you have to chase even bigger goals and aspirations. I have dedicated most of my professional life to refining these strategies and have written extensively about my successes and my challenges. In the end, the ability to identify and achieve complex goals is a treasure map to fill your life with amazing things, but you must do the work. SMART, GREEN AND LINKED goals are keys to unlocking an amazing life. All it takes is a little effort each day. **GCI**

Anthony Williams, CGCS, is the director of golf course maintenance and landscaping at the Four Seasons Resort Club Dallas at Las Colinas in Irving, Texas. He's a frequent GCI contributor.

GET OUT YOUR CHECKBOOK



Brian Vinchesi, the 2015 Irrigation Association Industry Achievement Award winner, is President of Irrigation Consulting, Inc., a golf course irrigation design and consulting firm with offices in Pepperell, Massachusetts and Huntersville, North Carolina that designs golf course irrigation systems throughout the world. He can be reached at bvinchesi@irrigationconsulting.com or 978-433-8972 or followed on twitter @bvinchesi.

I have been designing golf course irrigation systems for over 35 years and I am amazed at how much installation work is currently out there. There are so many courses – private, public, country club, resort, mom and pop, 9-hole, 18-hole, multiple holes – looking at refurbishing or replacing their irrigations systems that it has outpaced the number of contractors available to do the work. As a result, prices have basically sky rocketed. What was an expensive undertaking before has now become a hugely expensive course improvement.

Why has this happened? First, as we all know, there were not a lot of golf courses installing new irrigation systems or doing much of anything renovation-wise between 2008 and 2016. That created a pent-up demand for improvements. Secondly, back in the early 1990s, golf courses were being built at a very accelerated rate, with hundreds of golf courses being built per year. Those courses are now reaching the age of 18 to 28 years old. Not coincidentally, the average life of an irrigation system is considered by most experts at 20 to 25 years. Anything installed from 1991-95 is under consideration for replacement. It also doesn't help that back then golf courses were being built so quickly the quality of the installation wasn't exactly top notch. It was a "finish the job as quickly as possible, so we can

move on to the next one" mentality. So, at their current age, those irrigation systems are showing a lot of wear.

All this work translates into one thing – higher costs. Higher costs for materials, yes, but luckily it is still a competitive market and the hard-good suppliers/manufacturers (Hunter, Rain Bird and Toro) beat up each other to win jobs. Don't forget they are after the 25-year replacement parts business. This does not, however, include other items such as pipe, fittings, valves and wire that have higher costs, especially pipe and wire, which is in great demand from other industries.

Labor is a far different story. There are not as many installers because some were lost to the commercial market or went out of business during the downturn. With all the work out there, it is hard to contract a quality installer. Let's face it, there are excellent installers, good installers, average installers and poor installers. You really want the excellent installer because that means you won't have to deal with irrigation issues for probably at least five years. With a poor installer, you will be dealing with irrigation issues the week after they finish. The excellent installers know they are excellent and are in great demand. Consequently, they get top dollar and, at this point in time, they pick and choose who they will work for. You

want them to pick your course.

How do you get an excellent installer at a worthwhile price? Well, you go early. That means getting your project out to bid and a contract signed as much as a year before construction is slated to start. Contractors have multiple crews and as a result they change pricing as they book more and more of their crews each year. So, the earlier you commit, the less expensive the cost. For example, committing in November might be 15 to 20 percent less expensive labor-wise than committing in May or June of the installation year for fall – if there are even any contractors left.

The other thing that happens in a market like this is companies that do not usually do golf irrigation such as residential and commercial irrigation contractors enter the market. They think that golf irrigation installation is more glamorous, sexy and profitable. However, golf irrigation installation is highly specialized – that's why most golf irrigation contractors travel throughout the country – and is very different than other types of irrigation installation. It requires specialized training, more personnel, larger and more diverse equipment, and a much higher cash flow. Beware of contractors that have not installed at least five 18 holes equivalents in the last three to five years. Otherwise you run the risk of having a contractor who dabbles in golf course irrigation contracting and is not dedicated to golf installation. Make sure you also check references.

If you are contemplating improvements to your irrigation system between now and 2020, you need to get your planning and financing done and line up a contractor as soon as possible. Those who wait will find themselves with having to either put off the project or settle for a mid-level contractor or, worse, and as a consequence, an irrigation system that requires more maintenance and has a shorter life. **GCI**

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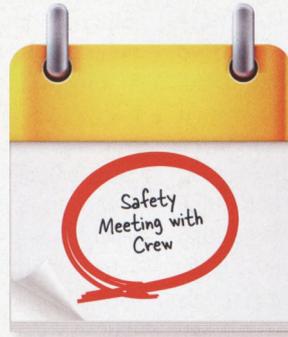
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SAFETY CHECK



REMEMBER THIS FORMULA.

45 MINUTES A MONTH:
30 DAYS AT HALF-A-MINUTE AND ONE 30-MINUTE MEETING WILL PAY BIG DIVIDENDS FOR YOUR CREW'S SAFETY.

By **Mickey McCord**

There are lots of hazards working on the golf course. Anyone who works outside – and with powered equipment – is exposed to environmental hazards and the risk of being injured by a powerful piece of equipment.

When you work in golf course maintenance, you add the hazard (and distraction) of working around golfers who are potentially launching golf balls in your direction at over 100 mph and chemicals that are safe when handled correctly, but ... must be handled correctly.

Over the past few years, I've written articles about several of these safety issues. I hope I've raised awareness of workplace safety issues and given you useful information for reducing the risk of accidents and injuries. Most of those articles have addressed a specific issue such as hearing loss, heat stress, equipment rollovers and chemical spills. Now I want to share with you the most important thing you can do to protect your crew from getting hurt at work, and it's much easier than you imagine.

Hold regular safety training meetings. And by regular, I mean on a schedule, at least once a month. I know what you're thinking, "Hey, you said it was easy. I don't have time to hold a safety meeting every month. I don't

even have time to do all of the important stuff during the growing season. I do my safety training during the winter." Maybe you didn't acknowledge that you do "the important stuff," but the truth is, the most important stuff gets done first. What does that make safety training if you only do it when it's raining or in the winter? I'll answer that later.

Fair warning. I'm going to be preaching from my soapbox, but first, I'll climb down and tell you that for most of my career as a golf course superintendent, I would have said the same thing: "I don't have time to hold a monthly safety training meeting this month. I'll do it when

things slow down." It's not that I didn't care. I was concerned about my crew, and I thought I was safety minded. I always cautioned my crew to work safely. I provided safety glasses and hearing protection and encouraged my crew to wear them. And a couple of times a year, I'd hold a safety meeting.

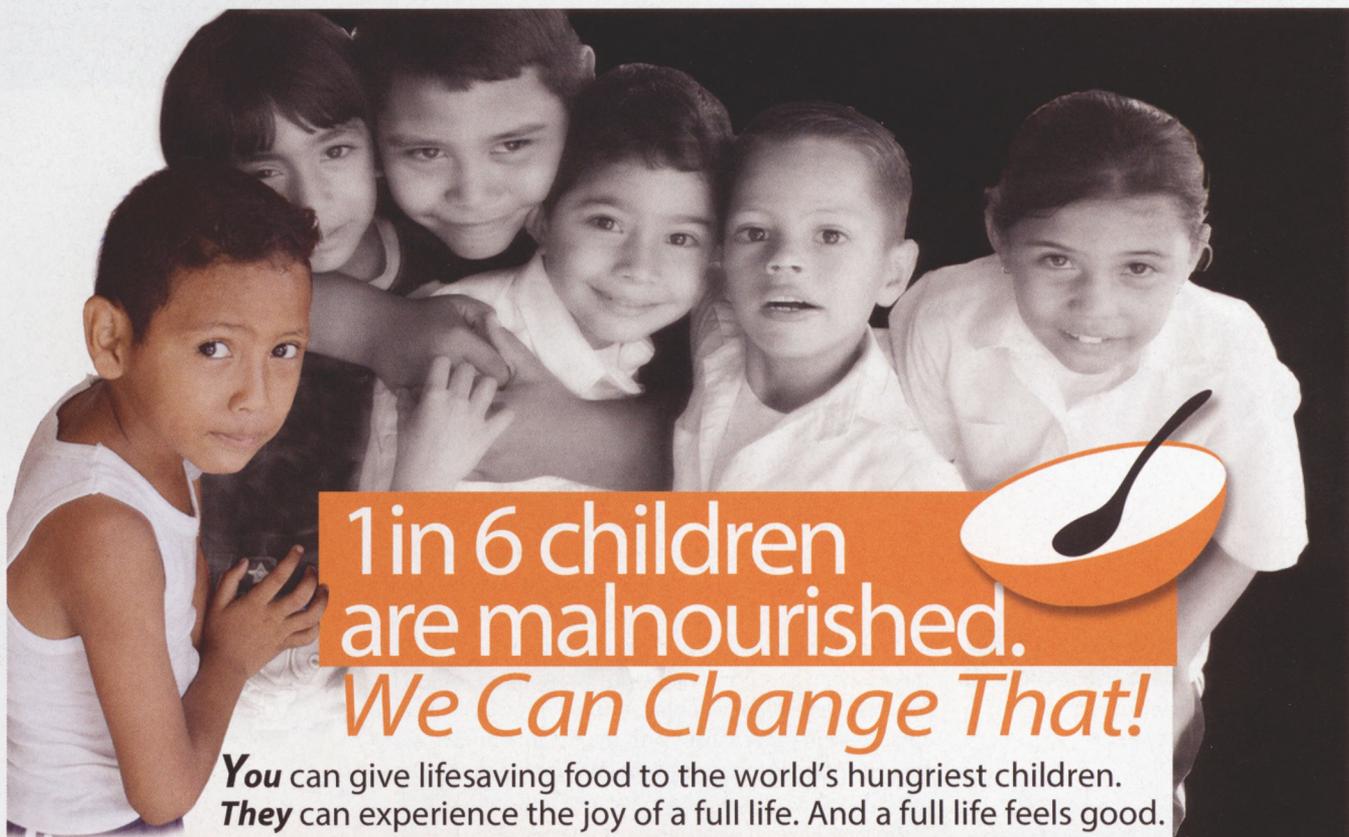
Now I'll climb back up on my soapbox and answer that question: What does it make safety training when you only do it in the winter, or when you can't do anything else? It makes it one of the lowest priorities on your to-do list. You're sending a subtle, but powerful message to your crew when the only time you conduct a safety

training session is when you can't do anything else. Like I said, we find the time to do the important things and the really important things are written on the calendar. Just for the record, as I mentioned above, I was guilty of this approach to safety training. I know many other superintendents who are, too.

Most, no, not most, all superintendents want to run a safe department and do not want to see a crew member get hurt at work. I've never asked a golf course superintendent about their safety program and had them respond, "I don't have a safety program and don't care about safety." The answer I usually get is, "safety

is a high priority for me." But when I follow up with, "Great! How often do you hold a safety meeting?" many say, "uh ... well ... uh ... we should do more ... sometimes we hold one on a rainy day or maybe in the winter when we can't do anything else." Safety training is like exercising, eating right and flossing your teeth; you know you should do them, but it's hard to stay on a regimen, and a few times a year isn't effective.

Here's another thing I often hear from superintendents when they tell me about an accident at their course, "they just weren't thinking, it was a stupid mistake." Just not thinking, stupid mistakes and taking



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a chance because, “I didn’t think it would happen” are unquestionably the greatest causes of all workplace accidents. Changing your crew’s attitude, the way they think – or don’t think – about safety is the best way to reduce accidents. And the best way to change their attitude is by holding a monthly safety meeting.

Every individual safety topic and training session is important, but what’s really important is the cumulative effect of taking the time to talk about safety on a regular basis. When you take the time during a busy week to hold a safety meeting, they will quickly understand you are taking this seriously.

You will begin to develop what I call a “Culture of Safety.” That’s what happens when they understand safety is important to you, not as an obligation, but because you care about them and want them to be safe. It becomes more important to do a job safely than just get it done. Crew members will remind each other to wear safety glasses and hearing protection. They become invested in the process and point out unsafe practices and encourage each other to not take unnecessary risks. As one superintendent told me, “it is a total game-changer.”

If you’re still thinking you don’t have time, STOP. That’s ridiculous. It only takes about

30 minutes a month. I know you care enough to find 30 minutes a month to hold a safety meeting. But how do you do it? PUT IT ON YOUR CALENDAR. See, I told you it was easy. Pick a day that works for you, say the second Tuesday of the month and mark it down in bright red each month for the rest of the year for everyone to see. Have the crew stay after lunch and talk about a safety issue or hazard. Don’t worry too much about the topic or what you say. Saying anything is better than not talking about safety at all. You may have a weekly staff meeting on your calendar, a monthly green committee meeting, and

maybe a men’s and women’s golf committee meeting. If it’s important and you don’t want to miss it, you put it on your calendar. It will work for your safety meeting, too.

If you really want to ramp it up and make an impression, try what I call the 30/30 plan. Take 30 seconds each day to mention safety. Ask your crew if they have any safety issues they want to discuss and remind them to make good decisions and work safely today. And once a month hold that 30-minute safety meeting. **GCI**

Mickey McCord is the founder of McCord Golf Services and Safety. He is a frequent GCI contributor.

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CART PATHS THAT END ABRUPTLY NEVER END WELL.....



Jeffrey D. Brauer is a veteran golf course architect responsible for more than 50 new courses and more than 100 renovations. A member and past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, he is president of Jeffrey D. Brauer/GolfScapes in Arlington, Texas. Reach him at jeff@jeffreybrauer.com.

I thought the idea above had made it in to the “Book of Common Wisdom in Golf Course Design” long ago. However, now that I am renovating more older courses, I find not everyone has read that book. Specifically, I am amazed at how many courses with partial paths only at tees and greens have problems that could be avoided with proper design, so I dedicate this column to explaining the concept again.

As shown in the first image, paths that end just after the forward tee experience very concentrated wear. Extending a few feet with gravel or adding a “helicopter pad” after turf has worn bare only extends the problem to another location.

One of my earliest lessons in golf architecture was that walkers and carts predictably take the straightest line possible to their next destination. If there are any vertical obstructions or blockage, they will take the shortest, most level route. If the next tee is on the right of their green, they will drive right (barring substantial curbs), regardless of where your path is. Off the tee, they will stay on the path until they can take a straight line to their landing spot. The second image shows a better – but still not perfect –

example of this principle in action. The arc allows carts to scatter naturally to their tee shot locations, reducing wear and compaction at a single point. It would be an even more effective design if it:

- Extended well past the forward tee.
- Had a longer arc and gentler radius. In this case, the tire tracks show almost exactly how much longer it would need to be to

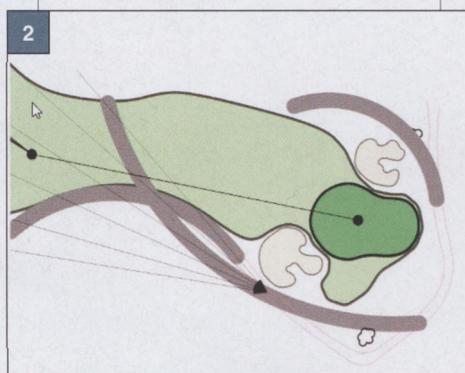
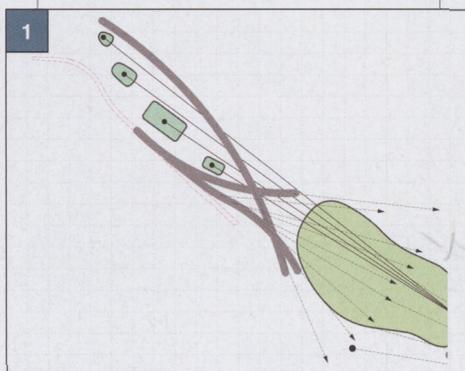
spread traffic better. It has a consistent radius. Note the long grass on left is enough of a vertical obstruction to force carts further up.

- Had a maximum angle less than 45 degrees to the line of play. Check the angle of the last cart track on the right - voila, it's 45 degrees. No one willingly drives more sideways than forward to reach their ball.
- Extends/angles at least 15 degrees left of center line and 22.5 degrees right, mirroring the typical tee shot landing zones.
- Has a constant arc – even short straight areas, one sharp turn, or slight kink in the alignment creates a tempting location to leave the path.

The best wear distribution occurs when the path crosses in front of the tee. Some object to the aesthetics, but it's often possible to hide the path from view by sloping it away from the tee, building small ridge, etc. This often requires some drainage work as well.

Owing to the “straight line rule,” an even greater problem arises at greens. There, every cart is heading for the exact same place – the end of the path. Partial cart paths here wear even faster than those leading away from the tee.

For this path, which is actually a bit better than most, it's still a case of “too little, too late” to adequately spread traffic. Constant movement of stakes and rope is required. Again, the trick is to arc the path to intersect traffic patterns over as much length as possible. This requires a long arc, reaching back to nearly the fairway landing zone. We find that once carts are on the path, a slight deviation from their straight line is accepted. If not, a curb on the green side (BRAUER continues on page 47)



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NEW EVENT, NEW SUPERINTENDENT



Big changes afoot at TPC Twin Cities as the debut of PGA Tour's 3M Open approaches.

By **Judd Spicer**



THE TPC TWIN CITIES in Blaine, Minn., is prepping for some serious fireworks.

Literally.

In July in 2018, it was announced that the course – longtime host of the PGA Tour Champions’ 3M



▲ Michalski

Championship – would graduate from being home to the senior set into a new stop on the PGA Tour schedule.

The new event, the 3M Open, will break its maiden during Fourth of July week in the summer of 2019. Along with returning to the rabid Twin Cities’ golf market, its first annual PGA Tour stop since the late 1960s, the segue from PGA Tour Champions site to hosting the PGA Tour marks the first-ever instance for such a competitive course transition.

After a 26-year regional run hosting the PGA Tour Champions (the first eight of which were held at Bunker Hills Golf Course in Coon Rapids, Minn.), the TPC Twin Cities had served as the 3M’s home since 2001, two years after the Arnold Palmer-designed grounds debuted. The new partnership for the 3M Open is an introductory, seven-year deal.

“This idea really started years and years ago, even when we started building the golf course with Arnold,” says Hollis Cavner, executive director of Pro Links Sports, which will manage the event. “That’s why we have all this extra room built in, for bleachers and skyboxes and hospitality. We always knew that, somewhere

▲ Enhancements to TPC Twin Cities will help the venue transition from hosting a PGA Tour Champions event to becoming a regular PGA Tour stop.

© CHAS ANDERSON PHOTOGRAPHY

down the road, we wanted to be on the PGA Tour.”

Along with serving as long-time manager for the former 3M Championship, Pro Links also runs six other PGA Tour and PGA Tour Champions events, including the Wells Fargo Championship, Valspar Championship, WGC-Mexico Championship and Insperity Invitational.

“We’ve literally been planning, been training for this, for about eight years since I first put the letter in to the PGA Tour,” Cavner says. “This wasn’t an overnight deal; it took a lot of planning. And we turned down multiple events over the years, just because we didn’t like the dates, we didn’t like where it was going to put us on Tour because it would’ve been the wrong time of season for us or for 3M. So, we held out.”

While the backdrop of plans and paperwork may have been long in the works, changes to the course in readying for the world’s best began taking shape in a rapid time frame.

Being referred to as “competitive enhancements,” the alterations to the TPC Twin Cities began just two days after the 3M Championship was



▲ Crews working at TPC Twin Cities had a construction window of 45 days to complete the “competitive enhancements” required for the PGA Tour’s 2019 arrival.

held for the final time in early August of 2018.

And while Cavner, the PGA Tour and Palmer’s original design consultant, Minnesota golf legend Tom Lehman, all have hands on the changes, the dude in the daily dirt would be the young, yet ever-capable Minnesota-native Mark Michalski.

The superintendent at TPC Twin Cities since July of 2017, Michalski had some massive spikes to fill when graduating from his assistant superintendent duties, taking over for legendary Roger Stewart, a man undoubtedly, and deservedly, counted among the modern forefathers of environmental course stewardship.

“I interned for Roger here back in 2009, and then came back as an assistant for him in 2012,” Michalski says. “The

thing I respected most about Roger goes all the way back to my first day as an intern. I was 21, I’d already worked on a golf course for seven years, and the first thing he said to me was, ‘I appreciate your willingness to learn from me, but I can learn just as much from you.’ And that hit me that, no matter how far you get in your career, you never wanna’ stop learning, and you can learn from anybody – even though they may be younger or have far less experience than you.”

Stewart’s seemingly Socratic method proved a key part in passing the superintendent’s baton.

“Even though he already knew where he wanted to get to, he passed along to me the importance of letting your staff think for themselves.

And Roger would ask me pointed questions to help me get to that point,” Michalski continues, referencing budgetary line-item meetings and the course’s fertility program. “I think I had opportunities that a lot of assistants maybe haven’t had, and that’s because Roger invested in me as a person. And

he wanted to make sure that, when he left, there was an obvious choice to replace him.”

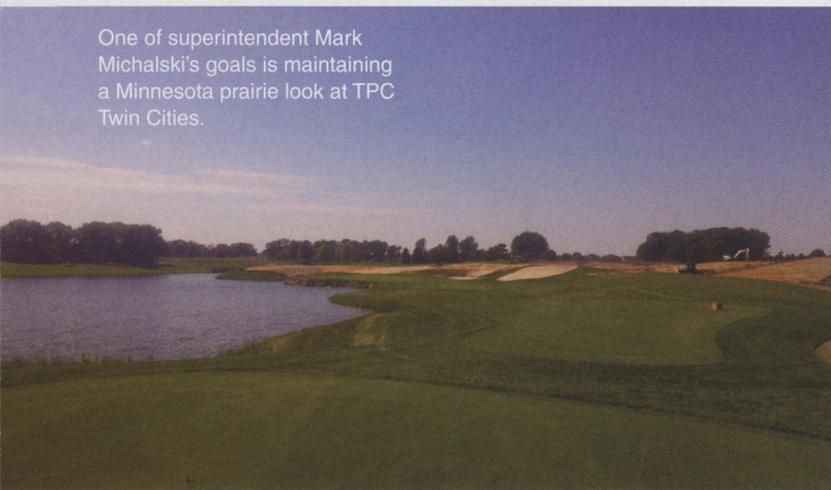
Michalski intends to keep TPC Twin Cities’ environmental practices much the same, with an aggressive fairway topdressing program and leaving pollinator habitat around the course circumference.

“It doesn’t all need to be a sterile environment. This is a big property, and some areas can be more natural,” Michalski says. “Usually, we only mow the natives once in the spring, we spray ‘em, and then we’re good, we just let it go. But we had such a muggy, rainy season, that we mowed the natives four times this year. So, there will be timing considerations like this (come July of ‘19). We’ll still want that healthy fescue, and not have it looked all mowed out there. We want that three-dimensional look, and to show off what this course is – it’s supposed to look like a Minnesota prairie.”

For Michalski, pride usurps pressure as the PGA Tour readies to come to town.

“Honestly, I haven’t felt crazy pressure in replacing him,” he says. “The way he set it up, Roger paved an easy transition for me to take over as superintendent. Yeah, my job title changed, but the things he allowed me to do as his assistant all empowered me.”

One of superintendent Mark Michalski’s goals is maintaining a Minnesota prairie look at TPC Twin Cities.



Despite losing a legend, event brass by no means sees Michalski as a Scotch Tape successor.

“Roger had a great system in place, and he had been grooming Mark for several years,” Cavner says. “The last year-plus, Mark really had been running things, and that’s the way a good transition should work. Roger gave Mark the wherewithal to go out and work, to make mistakes and to learn from that. Part of being a good leader like Roger is ensuring that you have a good succession plan in place.”

An industry vet of high-end plays, Cavner sees in Michalski a budding star.

“I think he’s one of the best young course superintendents I’ve met in years and years, and I’ve worked with a lot of superintendents while running tournaments over the last 30 years,” Cavner says. “Mark is an old soul. He knows what he’s doing, he’s anxious to have the course be the best. And I love that attitude. And you can tell by the way his crew works, by the way they respect him, that he’s way advanced beyond his years.”

The competitive enhancements at TPC Twin Cities were provided a construction timeline of 45 days. That’s not 45 weeks – that’s days.

“We really felt this was the

timeline, and we had to get all this in because we need to re-grass,” Cavner says. “I mean, we re-sodded almost everything and that work, refilling those seams, all needs to get done before winter.”

Lauding the work of Steve Wenzloff, vice president of design services, player liaison for the PGA Tour, Michalski does find amazement in the alacrity of the project. “It was kinda’ crazy,” Michalski says. “We were in advance week of the last 3M Championship, and starting to basically finalize plans for the changes.”

In prepping to host PGA Tour play, Michalski didn’t hesitate to seek out advice

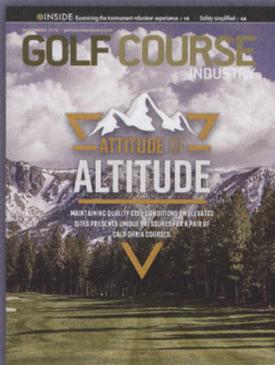
from the TPC network of superintendents, including Alex Stuedemann at TPC Deere Run, Tom Brodeur at TPC Boston, Stephen Britton from TPC Potomac at Avenel Farmers and Jeff Plotts at TPC Sawgrass.

“The conversations with these guys are generally about the magnitude of the buildout,” Michalski says. “There are so many more things to think about, stuff like the TV camera perspectives.”

As for the enhancements, viewers and attendees should focus on the course’s finishing tests.

“Lehman and Wenzloff have done a tremendous job, and, all told the changes are pretty

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dramatic,” Cavern says. “I used to think that 15 and 16 were two of the weaker holes on the course, and now it’s like, man, they’ve really got some new teeth. And then, on 17, we’ll have the new high-end hospitality area we built. And I really can’t thank Lehman enough. I mean, he donated his time to us. Just tremendous. He said, ‘I’m here to help, and this will be good for Minnesota.’ Very classy.”

Changes on the 16th include replacing rough

with bentgrass areas around the green, moving a bunker from the front to 30 yards farther into the approach and shifting bunkers on the left side of the fairway, thus narrowing the hole. While the slight changes to the par-3 17th will present

new tee boxes, the most dramatic enhancement will be seen via the deep fairway pond guarding the green on the par-5 home hole. In late August,

yeoman’s work was being conducted in earnest to expand the hazard, thereby reducing the space to layup.

For Michalski, seeing the massive project in progress on 18 provides a sense of the gravity soon to come.

“The whole tee complex isn’t even in the same location. It all went way to the right, and the back tee is almost an entirely flipped hill from where the forward tees were on the 17th,” he says. “And then the lake before the green is going to be expanded quite a bit with a more narrow landing area. It will definitely be a harder finishing hole. For the PGA Tour guys, it still won’t be a really

hard par 5, but it’s definitely more risk-reward when taking on the water.”

From a turf perspective, Michalski doesn’t envision much, if any conditional changes when readying for the Tour pros in lieu of the Champions players. Yet, as the Minnesota winter swings back toward spring, the young super will no doubt have the event’s enhanced optics in mind.

“I’m still going to try and present the best conditions possible,” Michalski says. “I’m sure once the tournament grows closer, yeah, there will be some, ‘Oh boy, here it comes.’ But, right now, I’m very much a take-it-one-step-at-a-time guy.” **GCI**



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GCI is THE independent voice for superintendents in print, on the web and on social media.

Everything is bigger at Reynolds

TURF AND GOLF WITHOUT END. ONE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST AGRONOMIC OPERATIONS RESIDES WITHIN THE GEORGIA PINES.

By Judd Spicer

While the word “nestled” may not necessarily apply to a golf and lifestyle spread of over 10,000 acres, the sprawling adult playground and family retreat of Reynolds Lake Oconee in Greensboro, Georgia, does indeed present a wooded intimacy playing through the provincial pines.

Situated 70 miles west of Augusta and about 90 miles east of Atlanta, Reynolds’ rural lake country terrain hasn’t simply rested on better than a century’s worth of respites; rather, the golf, real estate and membership-driven resort continues to augment an active population which basically constitutes a city within itself.

With an array of water activities across nearly 400 miles of Lake Oconee shoreline, a bustling social scene, tennis, fitness and a new, state-of-the-art Sporting Grounds complete with 20-station clay shooting course – one may think that the Gentleman’s Game could get lost in the calendar. But with six-and-a-half courses, 117 total holes,

1,000 acres of golf green space and an all-star cast of course designers, including Jack Nicklaus, Tom Fazio and Rees Jones, golf remains at Reynolds’ forefront for care, cost, staffing and maintenance. Of the approximately 625 employees at Reynolds, 150 staff members work in horticulture and golf course maintenance. Another 100 are in golf operations.

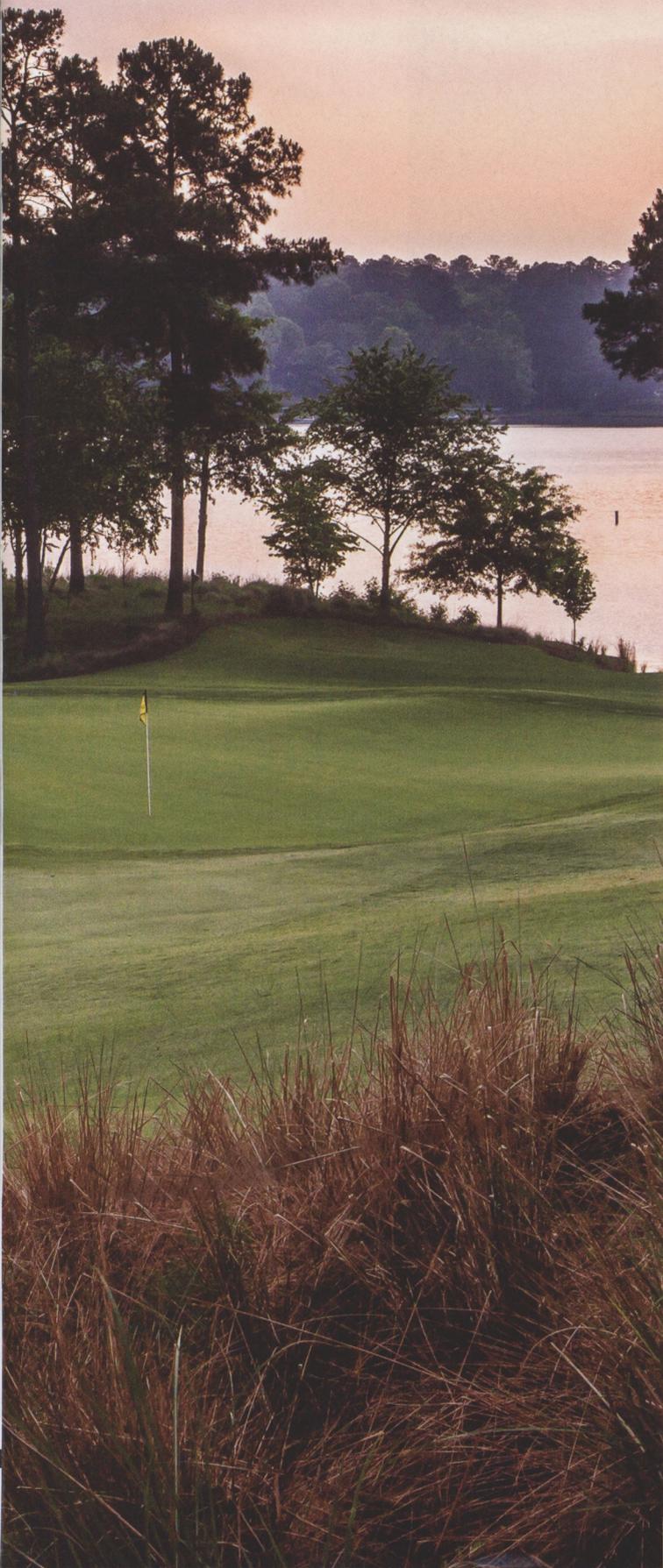
“It’s a big undertaking, and a process,” says general manager Lon Grundy, whose purview ranges from golf, agronomy, food and beverage, marinas, fitness and housekeeping. “But the department that has the richest tenue comes from our golf and golf course maintenance team, which is great, because that’s lighter lifting for me.”

Provided the vastness of the blueprint – with each course sporting its own respective clubhouse, golf



Greensboro, GA

PHOTO COURTESY OF REYNOLDS LAKE OCONEE



and grounds staff – Grundy and his team work with a philosophy of both mobility and malleability when it comes to working Reynolds’ golf operations. “We’ve tried to develop a model where we don’t sit in an office and just have those people come to us, because we need an opportunity to see those different grounds,” Grundy says.

Sitting amid piles of spreadsheets does little to engage current golf memberships (at 3,600; some with two to a member) or enthruse prospective members.

“When you’re doing 140,000 rounds a year – and scaling up – the hardest challenge is balancing tradition with being progressive to be able to attract the newest golfer, with those still attracted to the game’s traditions,” director of golf Wes Forester says.

From the top down, visibility proves crucial to Reynolds’ success.

“Most of my time in the golf area is related to the members, going to member events, making sure I can have a relationship with 5,000 people,” Grundy says. “Knowing we’ve got a lot of runway in front of us as far as selling more real estate, the call to action is that somebody needs to walk in here and identify with our lifestyle. And that happens by connecting with our people.”

To ensure course quality and customer care, the Reynolds team has found success in a pyramidal style of responsibilities. While some courses have shared maintenance facilities, each of the six has its own clubhouse, own head golf professional and own head superintendent.

“It’s a big footprint,” says

Lane Singleton, vice president of agronomy at Reynolds. “There aren’t too many properties like this in the country, in the world.”

Balancing the welcome pressures and privilege of maintaining a world-class golf facility, Singleton tilts his head at the former. “I’d kinda’ lean toward pressure, but we create that internally,” he says. “We’ve worked extremely hard to get to where we’re at, and it’s always about sustaining that high level and those high expectations on a daily basis. And it’s not just about staying on that level through the seasons and weather and long periods of time – it’s also about raising that bar. We created the bar, so how do you work to raise it? Because member expectations don’t go down.”

And though the Reynolds’ vibe has long embraced the laid-back lake country lifestyle, such ease finds no purchase in ensuring continual quality oversight of the grounds.

“I’ll see each course at least every couple of days. The majority of time is spent in my ‘truck office’ getting to a lot of face time with my guys,” says Singleton, noting that courses can be 20 minutes apart by car. “But it’s a great structure. With this many courses, this many golf holes, you need a guy on the ground at each course to see 100 percent of everything and not split time. In the past, we’ve tried (splitting superintendents at properties) for financials, but for expectations, for this quality of company, it’s best to have a person on the grounds for each course.”

And Singleton’s truck tires aren’t the only things rotating across Reynolds. While course conditions – green speeds and

SPOTLIGHT

rough heights – remain consistent across daily play, Reynolds supports several different types of turfgrasses between the six golf properties.

“People appreciate the diversity in grasses,” Grundy says. “We have some bentgrass greens and some with bermuda greens. We oversee some courses in winter, and some we don’t. So, the courses don’t all have the same agronomy practices.”

Bermudagrass is predominant, but Reynolds also sports zoysiagrass fairways on one course, zoysiagrass tees across property (mixed in with Bermudagrass tees) and bentgrass greens on two courses.

“Our geographic location allows to us grow turfgrasses for both cool and warm seasons,” Singleton says. “We have such distinct seasonal changes, so two of our courses have bentgrass greens and the other four have bermudagrass. Over the past five years, we’ve switched the ratio, whereas we used to have four bentgrass courses and two bermuda. That lent itself to a number of operational efficiencies based on aerification schedules and times of year, as far as which courses are really good and which courses are struggling to get there based on the seasons.”

Seasonal spikes in play have a relationship to seasonal grasses, as Reynolds is home to cool winters and humid summers.

“We’re a big spring and fall business, and bentgrass tends to be at its best in those seasons,” Singleton says. “Bermudagrass is fairly good 12 months a year. We have our struggles a bit in the spring, though it’s almost perfect in the fall. Winter-



time can get pretty cold here, and we have to cover greens to protect Bermuda. But with the bentgrass, we don’t need to do that in winter. So, there’s your operational flexibility. And it’s the opposite in the summer, where the bent can struggle a bit with the thick humidity and we’re trying to keep it at elevated heights at cut and just trying to keep it alive. It’s more of a defensive mode of operation.”

Overseeding to ryegrasses in winter proves a rotational strategy. “It’s a challenge for us because we’re so busy in the fall, and we have to oversee in the fall,” Singleton says. “So, you essentially take a couple of courses off-line in one of our peak seasons. But I think it’s important from a rotation basis, agronomically, because overseeding year-after-year is just too detrimental

to the turf.”

As for manning the massive spread, the team admits to empathy with industry challenges to both continually find and retain staffers. Given its bucolic bounty, the leadership at Reynolds relies on creativity and local loyalty to recruit and retain team members.

“The team here is phenomenal, but labor in golf is a huge problem right now,” Singleton says. “And throw in our rural location, it can magnify itself. It’s constantly challenging, and not just here, but in our industry worldwide.”

The training regimen for golf staff simply can’t be a guy standing before a whiteboard.

“There’s a lot of developing people so they can develop their people,” Forester adds. “And, hey, sometimes training can be dry, so it’s important to keep it fun and exciting with, say, videos or golf quizzes.”

Opportunities for advancement proves crucial for keeping employees on staff.

“The pool of resources can be a challenge, not being in a big city,” Grundy says. “But there are a lot of folks out here who are loyal to the region, and they develop a lot of careers out here at Reynolds – we’ve got every conceivable department one can think of for work experience. And I say this with a humble spirit, but when you’ve got a strong brand and a property this size, you do get a little better draw (of the work pool) than some of the other folks trying to hire in the community.” **GCI**

Judd Spicer is a golf writer based in Palm Desert, Calif., and is a frequent GCI contributor.

(BRAUER continued from page 47)

fixes the problem!

Each hole is different and deserves individual study. Arc length and location can be very site specific

to hole length and other factors. In general, shorter holes need tighter arcs closer to the green and longer holes need longer arcs. However, a few things are constant:

- The longer a curved path extends back to the fairway landing zone, the more it spreads traffic.
- As at tees, curved paths crossing the fairway provide more lineal feet of “natural” entry points and spread wear better. I know, I measured!
- “Same side” paths must usually be very close the fairway, which will likely come into view from the landing zone.
- Adding a second partial path on the other path on the other side of the green can divert some traffic from the far side of the fairway, reducing traffic on the main path, which at least slows down the rate of wear on the main side.

The first disadvantage to these paths is aesthetics. However, on some holes, it will be fairly easy to hide the path as you play the hole with a low ridge. Even without that special effort, often, paths more or less perpendicular to play are less

“ On the other hand, if the additional path adds \$10,000 of annual debt to the project, but saves the same amount in roping and staking, it is probably worth it.”

visible than one stretching its length. Long flowing paths are acceptably attractive, whereas many zig zags tend to draw – and

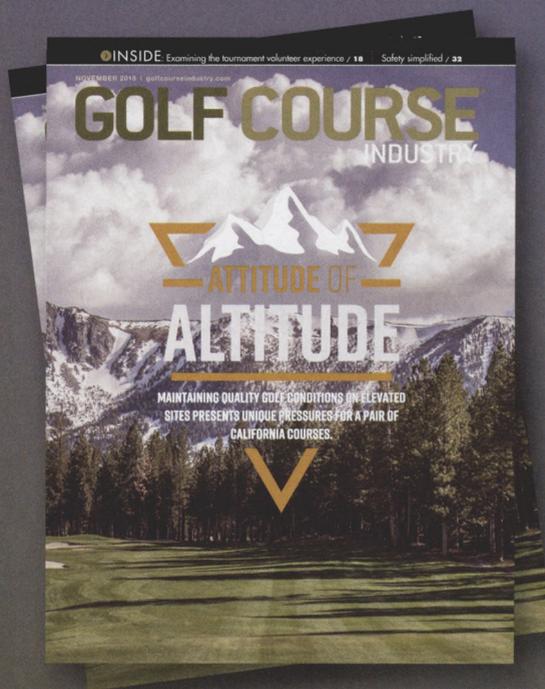
offend – the eye.

The second downside is cost. Crossing the fairway twice adds 60 to 90 yards more pavement length. Adding a second path also adds cost, but also benefits you in providing additional access points to your green, which also helps maintenance. If adding that much additional path, most will consider simply going all in, paving cart paths wall to wall, which is probably inevitable anyway. They should still follow these principles.

On the other hand, if the additional path adds \$10,000 of annual debt to the project, but saves the same amount in roping and staking, it is probably worth it.

The old design axiom is “Form follows function.” When laying out paths, it’s always a compromise between “hidden” and “handy.” Low-play courses can be expected to favor “hidden” paths, but higher play courses should probably favor “handy” to assist turf wear.

If the primary function of paths is to get golfers around the course and save turf, carefully considering that aspect of design will pay long term dividends. GCI



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Travels
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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.

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The Swanson MWOR61000 6-Inch Marking Whiskers Orange Colored 25 pack is available on Amazon Prime for \$5.99/each, which are also available in other fluorescent colors. This great idea is used as a supplement to a GPS as-built blueprint, metal detectors and field as-builts in a notebook by John Jeffreys, a superintendent at Pinehurst (N.C.) Resort. I saw them in good use at the Vestavia Country Club in Birmingham, Ala., where Owen Coulson, superintendent; Jeff Womack, 18-hole course assistant, and Drew Charcandy, 9-hole course assistant, are using them with great success.



EFFICIENT BUNKER SURROUNDS CREW

This Toro Workman GTX 2WD Gasoline Engine 4 Seat Turf Vehicle, with optional canopy, is towing a Broyhill Silhouette II Greens Mower Trailer. The staff mows the bunker surrounds with two Husqvarna Push-Type Rotary Mowers and edges the bunkers with two Echo String-Line Trimmers. Cleanup is done easily with a Husqvarna Backpack Blower. Leak-proof fuel cans are also carried in the bed. This four-person crew starts at hole No. 1 and stays well ahead of play and can finish the bunker work easily in one day. Brian Goleski is the superintendent at the Noyac Golf Club in Sag Harbor, Long Island, N.Y.



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WHO ARE YOU?



Pat Jones is editorial director of Golf Course Industry. He can be reached at pjones@gie.net or 216-393-0253.

Perhaps it's the fact that they are created from dead trees. Perhaps it's that it requires some thought to have them when you need them. Perhaps they are symbols of an archaic culture that's been surpassed by a new one.

Any way you look at it, the humble business card seems to be a problem for our younger generation.

I tested that hypothesis once again at the 2018 Green Start Academy, the Bayer/John Deere collaboration that has now identified, trained and helped to promote nearly 700 top assistants over 13 remarkable years.

Just to set the scene, there were 56 talented assistants from all over North America in Raleigh this year. I was heartened that the group included five women. There were also 12 attendees from Canada. And, overall, the group was a bit younger than last year's class which tended to be a bit long in the tooth. It was a fantastic group of people.

A year ago, I attended the Academy for the first time in too long and decided to have a little fun by challenging the aspiring superintendents to produce a business card. Maybe 20 percent were able to hand me one, so I did what I always do and hopped on social media to point out that this was unacceptable. Many actual superintendents agreed, but some also said, "Hey, they can just trade phone numbers or follow each other on Twitter to build a

productive relationship."

My problem with that is it doesn't work consistently. Here's what happens: "Oh, I meant to get your phone number, but I forgot." Or: "I tried to follow you on Twitter, but I had your handle wrong." And you fail to connect.

Also, it ignores the fundamental fact that connecting with other wannabes by technology may work fine but – guess what? – they aren't the ones doing the hiring! The employment world is generally conducted in a loop involving a bunch of old farts who know thousands of people and are likely (for a variety of reasons including early-onset Alzheimer's) to mis-remember your name without a damned business card!

So, I made a bit of a thing about cards back then and there was some kerfuffle about it on social media. Message received? Maybe.

Flash forward to Green Start Academy 2018 and the subject comes back up again. People remembered! And there were several social posts directed at attendees saying, "Hey, kids ... Jonesy is going to hassle you if you don't have a business card!" I went to Raleigh with high hopes that lessons had been learned and those wonderful, analog 2"x3.5" pieces of chipboard would be flying around the event.

Not so much, as it turned out. I wasn't able to abuse all 56 attendees, but I did ask about half of them and the following folks are now get-

ting their names printed in this here old-fashioned magazine because they had the forethought to do what should be automatic:

Jordan Roberts, Valhalla GC, Louisville; Chuck Szczurek, Deerwood CC, NJ; Tyler Szela, St. Thomas G&CC, Ontario; Conrad Pannkuk, Wynstone, Chicago; Sean May, Mad River GC, Ontario; Dane Olsen, Victoria National, GC, Indiana; Peter Lange, Atlanta Athletic Club; Ashley Davidovich, Royal Mayfair GC, Ontario; Chris Hurley, TPC Boston

So, good for them. They got their names in *GCI*. But, I will make a case that having a business card means more than impressing some crotchety old editor. It's one part of an overall effort to manage your career development as well as you'd try to manage a project on your course. Here's the advice I tried to give to each one of the assistants I spoke with at Green Start:

1. Identify your dream job based on whatever matters most to you: location, prestige, amazing boss, great culture, superb course, etc. Why would you do anything unless you'd set a big, hairy, audacious goal to go after?
2. Figure out what you need to do to get that job and, more importantly, who you need to know. Networking is a long, ongoing process. Make a list of the people who have an influence on that dream job and get to know them. Be transparent! Tell them that it's your goal in life to be at that course and ask them to give you advice. Let your enthusiasm shine through.
3. Find out everything you can about the course, the culture of the club, who's hiring and what they specifically want. Worry more about this than how pretty your "portfolio" is.
4. Reach out to key recruiters and share your goals and capabilities.
5. Start now!

And, finally, get some damned business cards because that's what grown-ups do. **GCI**

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