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# *Play Ball!*



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A revamped Texas facility partners with a Major League Baseball team to bring baseball themes to the course. Plus, turf maintenance and management tips from those responsible for making ballparks sparkle.



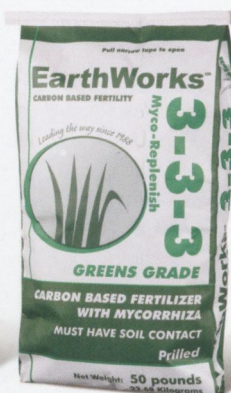
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# EarthWorks

A Deeper Respect



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# LET'S LEARN FROM 'OVER THERE'

*There's a lot of stuff in the golf industry that we're trying to, as a collective group in sports turf, adopt from over there. I'd like to quit saying 'over there' and for us to get on the same page in general.*

**M**att Parrott manages high-valued Transition Zone turf. He faces labor challenges. His windows to complete agronomic tasks are shrinking because of increased revenue demands. He needs help.

He needs all of you.

Parrott is the head groundskeeper of the Charlotte Knights, a Triple-A baseball team in the middle of a 140-game schedule with 70 home dates. The International League honored Parrott as its Sports Turf Manager of the Year in 2017 and 2018, signifying he's damn good at what he does. And damn good people look at other damn good people for technical and professional guidance.

Managing editor Matt LaWell interviewed Parrott for our "Play ball!" cover feature, which bundles a profile of a spirited renovation that produced Texas Rangers Golf Club with tips from baseball groundskeepers. LaWell interviewed a trio of successful groundskeepers and his conversations proved those responsible for ballpark brilliance aren't much different than superintendents.

Parrott and his colleagues work long hours to produce a visually dynamic and safe playing surface. A baseball field, like a golf course, helps a participant or spectator escape the rigors of daily life. Sometimes the people creating an escape for others can't escape the workplace.

The time between the season and offseason continues to shrink in all sports – if you even get an offseason. Concerts, soccer matches and football games stretch the people responsible for managing ballpark turf. Albuquerque Isotopes head groundskeeper Clint Belau's team regularly flips a baseball field into a soccer pitch, allowing the New Mexico city to support Triple-A baseball and United Soccer League franchises.

Superintendents can relate to the year-round multitasking. Outings, weddings, winter play in the North, summer play in parts of the South and Southwest test turf and the fortitude of people responsible for maintaining it. Owners, operators, municipalities and members are seeking more ways than ever to utilize sports fields and golf courses. Does anybody see this trend slowing?

Superintendents and sports turf managers rarely share stories of trials and triumphs with the agronomy expert "over there." The separation Parrott alludes to in his comments to LaWell unfortunately exists. In most cases, superintendents and sports turf managers have separate local and national associations representing their interests. The associations conduct separate events, yet, coincidentally, ask the same suppliers and vendors to financially support their shows, conferences and meetings.

When the golf and sports turf programming converge at state and regional levels, the scene often resembles a junior high dance. Superintendents stay in the golf room; groundskeepers stay in the sports turf room. Never mind that a person maintaining Fenway Park or Winged Foot Golf Club might be sharing his or her practices in the other room.

Networking and continuing education opportunities are among the many endearing qualities of the turf business. But confining your network to people who only manage greens, fairways, tees and rough – or infields and outfields – limits your professional bandwidth.

The experiences of a professional who aerates, fertilizes, sprays and mows turf for sluggers with gap power can enlighten somebody trying to expedite the recovery of turf battered by gap wedges. The profession, after all, isn't getting any easier. **GCI**



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Glen Abbey Golf Club faces a precarious future as Toronto expands.

## UP NORTH, GLEN ABBEY FACES EXTINCTION

**A visit to Ontario takes Guy Cipriano to a storied course with a precarious future.**

**I**'m staring forward on a crisp, Canadian afternoon in early June. I see the corner of a healthy pond protected by a wetland buffer, a pair of tee boxes, multiple tree varieties, a bunker shaped like a reverse tripod and stripes of *Poa annua*/bentgrass turf.

The sky is blue; the late Sunday afternoon game with strangers from another country is on. The setting makes a Sunday away from family and friends worthwhile.

I'm also staring at a rhino. I'm standing on the first tee of Glen Abbey Golf Club in Oakville, Ontario. Oakville is one of Toronto's southern suburbs. Toronto is the fastest growing metropolitan area in North America.

Yes, like animals and plants, golf courses can become endangered species. Glen Abbey is one of them. ClubLink, the largest owner and operator of golf clubs in links-loving Canada, wants to redevelop the site. A company known for operating golf facilities believes residential and commercial buildings are a better use of the Ontario land than a golf course.

Glen Abbey isn't a normal golf club. The course has hosted the Canadian Open a

record 30 times since opening in 1976, including the 2018 event won by limber golf heavyweight Dustin Johnson. Nearly every big-name player in the last four decades has played a competitive round at Glen Abbey. Jack Nicklaus, who parlayed playing excellence into abundant golf course architecture work, considers Glen Abbey his first solo design. Nicklaus, coincidentally, never won a Canadian Open.

Thousands of Canadians and visitors play Glen Abbey each year. The course allows public play, thus my decision to book a Sunday afternoon tee time while driving to Ontario for a project commencing on a Monday morning. I'm paired with a junior who smacks 300-yard drives and two millennials



experiencing a tournament-caliber course for the first time.

We're overjoyed to be standing on the first tee. We're unsure if others will be standing on the same tee one, two, five or 10 years from now. My playing partners, who live in the Greater Toronto Area,

assure me their family members, friends and neighborhoods want Glen Abbey to remain a golf course.

The legal fight to save Glen Abbey will likely be long and expensive. Officials from the Town of Oakville oppose the development plan. A group called Save Glen Abbey – slogan: "Putters Not Pavement" – formed to protect the golf course. The pro-course crowd touts the site's role as a greenspace and its historical significance, although calling Glen Abbey "Canada's most famous golf course" is excessively subjective. Stanley Thompson, after all, executed the bulk of his work in the country.

Glen Abbey represents a high-profile example of the tussle involving golf and development throughout North America. Housing near mega-cities has become scarcer and more expensive. There are billions of financial reasons behind replacing *Poa annua* with pavement. Even if Glen Abbey, the current home of Canadian golf, avoids extinction, other courses face perilous futures. Redevelopment can happen anywhere, including the places we admire on television. Golf's environmen-



▲ Glen Abbey Golf Club has hosted the Canadian Open a record 30 times.

tal, social and fitness charms can become negated when dollar amounts and earning potential are attached to vast acreage. Golf will win some tussles. But redevelopment will continue to throw haymakers at venerable clubs.

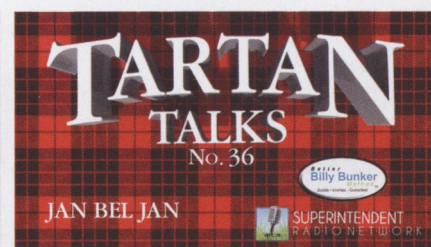
Perhaps that's why I feel obligated to experience Glen Abbey. The first 10 holes

sit on a relatively flat slice of suburban land bordered by modern homes and suburban roads. The course takes a dramatic turn on the 11th, a par-4 with an elevated tee shot featuring a 150-foot drop and views of distant high rises. Sixteen Mile Creek bisects the hole, creating strategic decisions on drives and approach shots. I stub a wedge into the creek as kayakers paddle past the course. I laugh, wave and snap a half-dozen pictures of the green.

Four other holes border the creek, yet my round ends on the par-3 12th. With a meeting approaching, the Sunday sun dropping and eight golfers occupying every back-nine hole, I quickly tour the closing stretch.

The crowd and conditions provided by superintendent Andrew Gyba's team despite a cold, wet April, May and early June suggest a vibrant golf course bracing for decades of special Sundays. Neither the scenery along the creek nor the uncertain future seem real.

I'm staring. I'm inspired by the suburban serenity. I'm concerned about the future of golf courses everywhere. A pleasant place somehow yields precarity.



## Tartan Talks No. 36

What's life like as American Society of Golf Course Architects President?

"It's busy!" Jan Bel Jan says. "It's busy!"



▲ Bel Jan

Juggling her business, Jan Bel Jan Golf Course Design, with her presidential duties shouldn't fluster Bel Jan. The daughter of a superintendent/pro, Bel Jan started improving golf courses as a child, working a variety of maintenance and pro shop jobs to assist her father. "It was a job," she says, "and it was my life."

A hectic life experienced a significant change when Bel Jan moved from her native Western Pennsylvania to South Florida to work for Tom Fazio. A registered landscape architect, Bel Jan quickly learned new plant palettes, helping enhance the aesthetics of dozens of courses designed by Fazio and his talented team.

Bel Jan, who formed her own design firm in 2009, discusses the role of plants on a golf course and numerous other topics, including implementing "scoring" tees and her work with the National Alliance for Accessible Golf, in the podcast, which can be accessed by entering [bit.ly/JanBelJan](http://bit.ly/JanBelJan) into your browser.





## The \$86,400 dilemma

A recent article in my chapter's publication touched some nerves. To be fair, I too didn't think the article portrayed our membership in a positive way. But I want to see if I can perhaps persuade some of you to think about the content of the article differently.

For starters, because not everyone receiving and reading *Golf Course Industry* sees *Carolinas Green*, the article "Younger Generation Part II: Things That Will Surprise You" appeared in the May/June issue. You can access a digital edition of the issue and the article via [www.carolinasgcsa.org](http://www.carolinasgcsa.org).

The article references a survey of golf course superintendents and this survey took place several years ago in advance of our annual winter chapter meeting that has education geared toward our assistants. The survey participants were only those superintendents registered to attend the meeting, and that meeting at Bulls Bay Golf Club in Charleston, S.C., was unfortunately cancelled due to inclement weather. I didn't participate in the survey.

Late last year, I was gifted two books from superintendent colleagues, "The Subtle Art of Not Giving A F\*ck" by Mark Manson and "The Path of No Resistance" by Garret Kramer. Now, the first book could be easily summarized as don't sweat the small stuff.

You may recall earlier this year I wrote about the presentation Lee Strutt and I gave about success at BTME and GIS. In the presentation, gave an example of you possessing \$86,400 and someone steals \$10. Would you spend the remaining \$86,390 trying to get your \$10 back or would you realize it isn't worth it? Well, there are 86,400 seconds in one day, so don't let someone's 10 seconds of negativity ruin your entire day.

But Kramer's book really intrigued me. He talks about how our thoughts and our feelings come from within. We need to own them, and no person or thing can make you feel a certain way. He claims the majority of the world's population have it backwards and think outside-in. People allow external influences to manipulate their thoughts and feelings.

But when you begin to learn how much better it works in reverse (inside-out), you are freed from the anxiety, anger and other emotions that stem from outside-in thinking. This got me to thinking: What if everyone upset with the content and tone of the article (outside-in) thought about it in a different way?

The final two pages contain the exact quotes of the responding superintendents when asked: What is the biggest surprise assistants are likely to encounter when they take on the role and responsibility of being the superintendent? I'm afraid in that context the answers do read like a bashing of the next generation and I can fully understand why young men and women busting their tails as assistants would take offense.

But what if the same quotes were answering: What is one thing you would tell your younger assistant self that would have helped when you transitioned to a superintendent?

Just by changing the context we change the narrative and now the same answers no

longer disparage the next generation but rather shed light on the difficulties and challenges many new superintendents face when they're calling the shots for the first time in their career.

We've all been there. When I was assistant superintendent for Rick Owens, CGCS at Augustine Golf Club in Virginia, there were times I wondered what the heck he was thinking. It's not too unlike growing up and going through that phase where you think your parents are idiots.

But then you grow up, have children of your own and you begin to realize how your parents weren't idiots but rather they loved you and were preparing you for adulthood. You become a superintendent, begin to call your own shots and suddenly some of those crazy things your former boss said and/or did now makes sense to you.

I follow a lot of assistants, second assistants and AITs on Twitter. From my perspective, they're intelligent, talented, hard-working and have a bright future. They're going to make great superintendents. If they ask me the biggest surprise they'll likely encounter when they take on the role and responsibility of being a superintendent, I'll tell them it's that one day you will realize your former boss was not as crazy as you once may have thought.

And no matter how difficult or challenging things may be at times, don't ever forget why you fell in love with this profession. In other words, don't sweat the small stuff. **GCI**



**MATTHEW WHARTON, CGCS, MG**, is the superintendent at Carolina Golf Club in Charlotte, N.C., and President of the Carolinas GCSA. Follow him on Twitter @CGCGreenkeeper.



Sedges, including yellow nutsedge, can disrupt play and discolor golf courses, lawns, and sports fields. They steal water, nutrients, and sunlight from the turf, and can be a beast to control. If you don't take control of it, sedge will take over. The first step in controlling sedges and almost all weeds in turf is to grow dense, strong turf that can win its battle with the weeds. Proper maintenance is key. Keeping the turf at the correct height will prevent weeds from forming seed heads. Sedges do best in moist conditions. Drainage is vital. The best way to control sedges and weeds in turfgrass is to grow a dense turf that can win its battle with the weeds. Proper maintenance is key.

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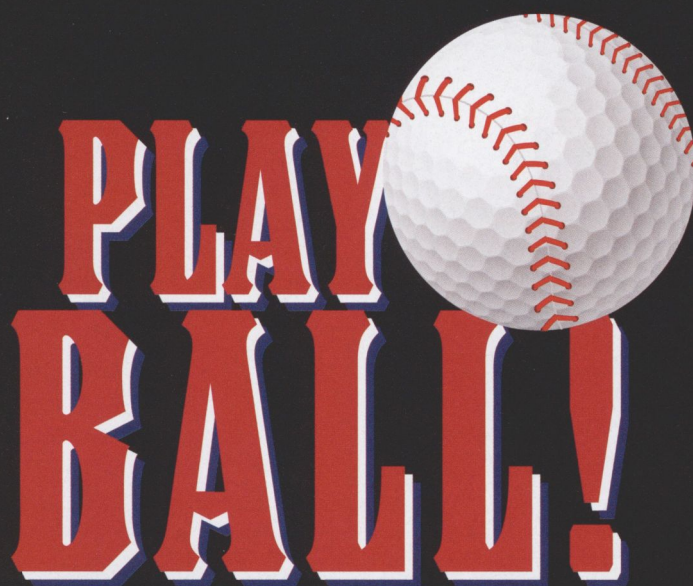
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The City of Arlington-owned Texas Rangers Golf Club reopened earlier this year following a major renovation.





# PLAY BALL!

**A REVAMPED TEXAS FACILITY PARTNERS WITH A MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAM TO BRING BASEBALL THEMES TO THE COURSE. PLUS, TURF MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT TIPS FROM THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING BALLPARKS SPARKLE.**

By **Matt LaWell**

**B**

rick Scott showed up in Texas a dozen weeks to the day after the Rangers played their first game. The team had arrived in the Lone Star State by way of Washington, D.C., where their fans still clamored to keep them even after the thud of 11 unaccomplished seasons as the second edition of the Senators.

Scott arrived more traditionally, by way of birth.

They remained entwined, team and tyke, for years to come. The Rangers climbed the division ladder throughout the 1970s and early '80s, knocking on the proverbial postseason door but never quite stepping in. Scott, meanwhile, climbed his own growth chart during his childhood over in Sidney, an unincorporated community deep in the heart of Texas — “outside Comanche between Brownwood and Stephenville,” he says. “Population about 300.” For years, he cheered for Jim Sundberg, the star catcher and six-time Gold Glove winner, wearing out a Sundberg No. 10 jersey after receiving it as a gift. The day Iván Rodríguez, another star catcher and a 2017 Baseball Hall of Famer, first crouched behind the plate, he was listening on a radio from the top of a tractor in a hayfield on the family farm.

“I’m a big Rangers fan,” Scott says, “and I’ve watched these guys for years.”

Which is why this year especially is so much fun. Sure, the Rangers are winning again, and sure, their new Globe Life Field — which will finally offer a roof to protect fans from the oppressive Texas summer sun — is under construction and will open next March. But what really cracks Scott’s smile is the logo on his work cap: After decades on golf courses and decades more as a fan, he now wears the familiar shaded T of his favorite baseball team to the office every day.

Because his job is superintendent of Texas Rangers Golf Club.







Until earlier this year, right around the start of another spring training out in Arizona, there was no Texas Rangers Golf Club. The municipal course itself was still under construction — and the clubhouse, scheduled to open in early 2020, still is — its small mountains of earth moved a little more every day throughout the winter. “They brought a (Caterpillar) D10 out here,” Scott says, “and it looked like they were going to change the Earth’s axis, it was so huge.”

Part of a quartet of courses owned by the city of Arlington and operated by Arlington Golf, it had been called Chester W. Ditto Golf Course from the time it opened in 1982 until it shuttered for renovations in late 2016, not long after Arlington voters approved \$24 million for the course. An opportunity to partner with the Rangers through 2054 — reportedly for 150 rounds per year in exchange for an equal value of game tickets and the rights to a brand name worth plenty in Texas — followed.

And now, as the Rangers push through the summer for their first playoff berth since 2016, “it’s been difficult getting stuff done

on the golf course,” Scott says, “because there’s been so much play.”

Scott has plenty of reference and plenty of stories. He worked at Ditto for about a decade and a half and he remained on site throughout construction, working for almost two years out of a Home Depot shed dropped in the parking lot. He knows the course well enough that storing a fleet of 34 pieces of equipment — some of which are more than a quarter of a century old — and relocating his crew provided more of a challenge than a roadblock.

“I can’t say enough about how Brick and his crew persevered through all the adversity,” Greg

Durante, golf services manager for Arlington Golf Division, says from inside the temporary pro shop that is only slightly larger than that old pop-up shed. “Getting this golf course grown in without a maintenance facility, working out of a parking lot, mechanics outside —”

“Outside with a light plugged in,” Scott chimes in from across the table. “Extension cords with a little shop light. It got a little crowded with eight guys.”

“It was amazing what they were able to do with what they had to work with,” Durante says.

The fall overseeding, for example. Scott worked with Turf and Soil

Bunkers were revamped as part of the project.



The on-deck circle adjacent to the first tee.



▼ Holes are named using baseball terms.





# FIELD REPORTS

Three top minor-league baseball groundskeepers share tips from another corner of turf maintenance.

**G**olf and baseball aren't all that different. Both require a sweet swing. Both go just a little better with a beer or three. And both are played on beautiful blankets of green grass. Course superintendents and ballpark groundskeepers aren't all that different either. We talked with three top groundskeepers — starting with **Matt Parrott** of the Triple-A Charlotte Knights, who has been named the best groundskeeper in his league five times in the last nine seasons — for stories from another side of turf maintenance.

**It's not as much you** as it is the people you surround yourself with.

**Ultimately, somebody does have to** make the decisions on a daily basis, but you can only be successful if you set yourself up to be.

**Full-time, it's a salaried assistant** and me, and then I'm pretty fortunate that I rent hourly labor. They're mostly seasonal employees, but I am able to keep hourly staff on as needed throughout the year. We're running a payroll between 22 and 25 hourly employees. We'll bring in eight hourly guys starting at 5 o'clock, and we had four hourlies since 10 o'clock, so it equates out to two seven-hour shifts, hence the reason for such a high number. We don't have them here all the time.



▲ Parrott

**With so many people on payroll** now, it's a lot of juggling and piecing together. You get halfway through the season and you're just starting to figure out which crews are jelling together and you have to schedule based on that. If you have people who aren't accustomed to working together on a regular basis, you're less efficient.

**There's a lot of stuff** in the golf industry that we're trying to, as a collective group in sports turf,

adopt from over there. I'd like to quit saying over there and for us to get on the same page in general.

After stints at Chisago Lakes Golf Course and the Grand Forks Park District, **Marcus Campbell** arrived in Minnesota in 2015 to become the director of grounds for the independent St. Paul Saints — whose ownership group includes the gregarious Mike Veeck and a onetime golf tournament champion named Bill Murray.



▲ Campbell

**The biggest challenge up here** is the growing season being so short. If you're down South, you have a little time to recoup after the season and get the grass growing, but up here, as soon as the field is clear, it's gotta be ready to go. It's hard to have the field look really nice when guys are tearing it up before it's grown. We really only have a couple weeks that we aren't using the field out of our growing.

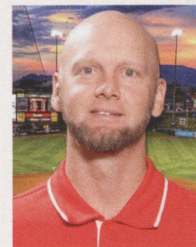
**When the team is on the road** and we have time to do stuff, we slit seed quite a bit, just try to always have a seed bank going down. We do the whole field twice a year, usually spring and fall, and we'll slit seed the whole field.

**We don't have as much time to sod.** That's the biggest issue for us. We have so many games that even if we did put sod down, it wouldn't be healthy enough by the time someone's playing on it, so we just keep pounding it with seed, hoping it fills in enough to get us through the season.

**Having guys come in who** appreciate having a good field to play on so that they can get to the next level, that's what drives you to make sure you're doing your job right. It's not only your career that's on the line. You're helping them

reach their goals, too.

Now in his second full season as head groundskeeper for the Albuquerque Isotopes — the Triple-A affiliate of the Colorado Rockies — **Clint Belau** has an interesting challenge at hand: turn the baseball field at Isotopes Park into a soccer pitch ... almost a dozen times in five months.



▲ Belau

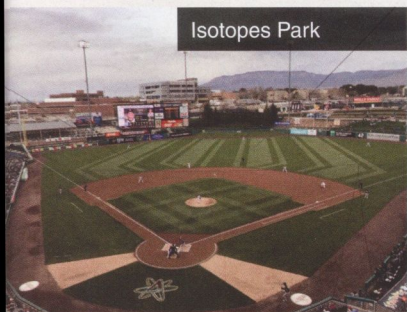
**We work with Mountain West Golfscapes.** They're local and they're the ones who actually build the field. We have a trade with them, so they do our aerations throughout the year, they do a laser-grade every year. They had never done a soccer transition, either, so everybody did a little bit of research on it.

**We have a hill in center field,** so we have to run from home plate to left field, which means we have to take out our mound every time. We're on our fifth mound of the year right now. We've gotten pretty good at building mounds.

**From a turf standpoint,** I just try to do everything I can to stay beefed up. Kind of adjusted the fertilizer program to add some things to help with growth. Being the first year, I didn't know if it would be better to be tighter sideways and use growth regulators to get bluegrass to intertwine as much as I could, or to grow straight up and grow out of the damage. So far, we've been fairly successful and I haven't added any regulators into the program at all.

**We have a baseball game,** then two days of transition, then a soccer match, then two days of transition, and then baseball's back, so we don't have a lot of recovery time, and we don't have as much detail time as we used to. I'm just here 24 hours straight.

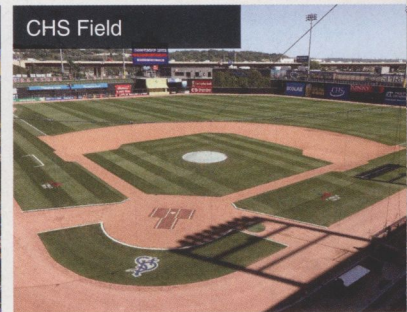
Isotopes Park



BB&T Ballpark



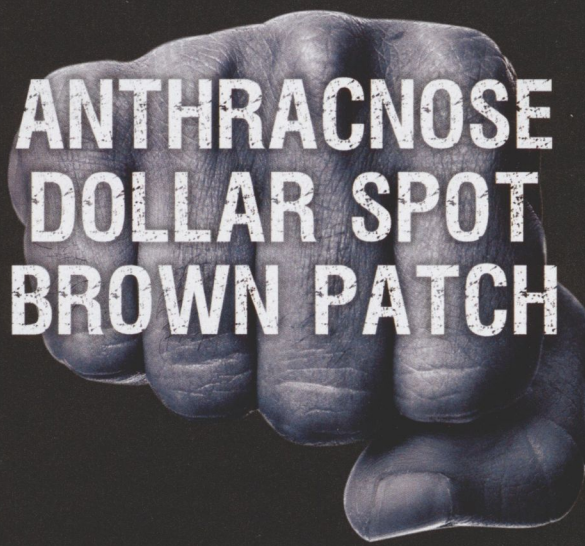
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## COVER STORY

Management — a small Texas company, of course — to handle an October overseed of a 70-30 blend of ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass: “They typically do ball fields,” Scott says, “so this was the first time they had something of this magnitude. They had to have a no-till seed they seed with, and of course, they hadn’t done it and I’m new at it, so after a couple holes, it was like, ‘OK, we need to regroup here.’ And so we outlined it with the seeder because it was taking so long, and then we came back with the broadcast spreader and did the middle. It worked out good.”

And regular maintenance and care for almost three dozen pieces of ever-aging equipment: “One of the things that’s definitely important for me is to have two greens mowers and two tees mowers,” Scott says. “We obviously don’t walk mow, but we have two of the new Triplex from Toro for our greens, we have a couple of fairway units — and I actually kept one of my older fairway units. We mow at fairway height. When we’re mowing three times a week, we’ll mow 46 acres at tee height.”

And, now that the course is filling up with golfers again, there are differences in working around folks who are paying far more for a round than they once did on the same property: “That has also been one of the dynamics we’ve had to change with the crew, just the mindset that we’re asking these people to pay a lot of money. You need to kill your equipment. I’ll pay you to wait. A lot of guys aren’t used to that mindset. So much of the work we do is predicated

on us getting out early and beating the golfers. Before golfers tee off, I really want the majority of my guys to be on their second job.”

Scott’s full-time crew has bumped up from seven during the last year at Ditto to 10 today, along with some regular part-timers. That includes a couple veterans who have worked at the club even longer than he has — one just celebrated 20 years, another 22 — “but the majority of my crew are all new, so there have been some growing pains. But they’re good guys,” Scott says. “The resources are there for me. Obviously, my budget went up. The city has given us everything we need to make this a good course for a long time.”

The budget and the crew size are both subject to change, of course, especially if the course attracts more players and schedules more rounds than Ditto did during its last years.

“We base everything on demand,” Durante says. “At this facility, at some point you wouldn’t want to increase your rounds to 60,000 a year, because then it’s so hard to maintain it at that level, and it becomes counterproductive to run that many players through.”

The symbiotic branding between club and team has provided a p.r. bonanza, but newspaper, magazine and television stories about the club would not be as numerous as they are without a quality redesign and an impressive public course. Texas Rangers Golf Club has both thanks to Scott and Arlington native John Colligan.

Colligan and his Colligan





**“THERE’S NOBODY IN THIS ROOM, NOBODY IN THIS TOWN, NOBODY IN THIS STATE, NOBODY IN THIS WORLD THAT WANTS THIS PROJECT TO BE BETTER THAN I DO. LAST THING I WANT IS TO GO DOWN THE STREET AND HAVE PEOPLE GO, ‘THERE’S THE GUY WHO SCREWED UP TEXAS RANGERS GOLF CLUB.’”**

— John Colligan

Golf Design associate, Trey Kemp, overhauled an older course that, to hear him tell it, never maximized its sheer area or capitalized on its potential elevation change. Colligan and Kemp shuffled 18 new holes — each of which carries a baseball-inspired name, like Lead Off, Line Drive, Double Play, Triple Play, Around the Horn and, of course, Texas Leaguer — around the property’s 164 acres, incorporating 55 feet of elevation change and opening up enough land for a 23-acre practice area that includes a double-ended range. They also planted native grasses and buffalograss faces on the bunkers that just sort of look like Texas.

Colligan is a Dallas native, but he packed up and moved to Arlington back in 1974 — the year both Scott and the Rangers turned 2. Among all the courses he has designed during a decorated career, this one is probably the most personal, he says, and maybe even his best.

“I told Trey when we went in for the interview, ‘We’re pulling out all the stops. Don’t

leave anything to chance and hopefully we’ll be selected,’” Colligan says. “I figure I’m here for the long haul till they stick me in the ground. I went to college here, and Trey went to UT-A as well, got his Master’s there, and I jokingly tell everybody that I have 70 or 80 guys I could call on any given night to bail me out of jail.”

Colligan lives about four miles from the course, and his office is even closer, only about two miles away, so he and Kemp visited 200 or so times during construction. The passion and pride they have for the project, Durante says, are obvious.

“To be able to do this project,” Colligan says, “there’s nobody in this room, nobody in this town, nobody in this state, nobody in this world that wants this project to be better than I do.

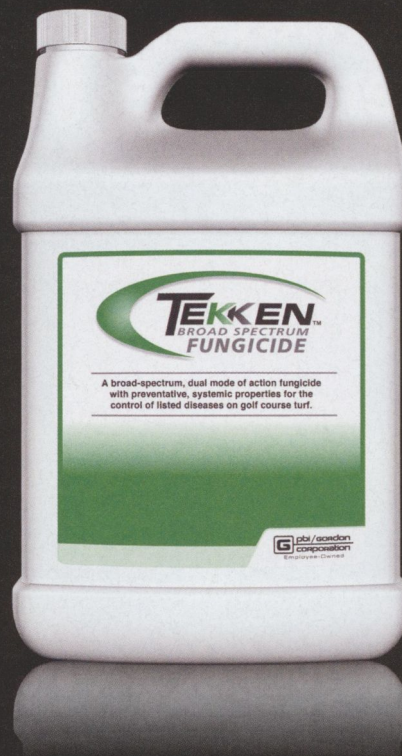
“Last thing I want is to go down the street and have people go, ‘There’s the guy who screwed up Texas Rangers Golf Club.’”

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▲ John Colligan, Brick Scott and city employee Phillip Rogers.

to a golf club — nor are they even the first in the Metroplex, thanks to the Cowboys opening their namesake Golf Club in Grapevine back in 2001 and the Stars slapping their name on what is now called Stonebridge Ranch Country Club in McKinney in 2003. They are, however, the first Major League Baseball team to partner with a golf club and

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“Baseball players tend to play a lot of golf,” Colligan says. “I think that’s going to be a big draw, coming out here and not knowing who you’re going to run into.”

Iván Rodríguez has already tested the course, playing the first round back in February. Anybody know what Jim Sundberg is up to these days? GCI

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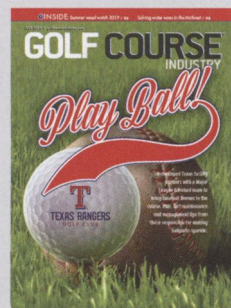


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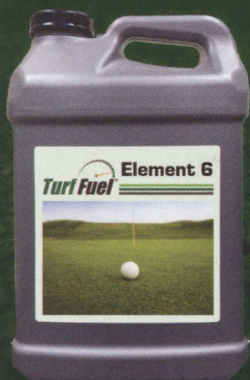
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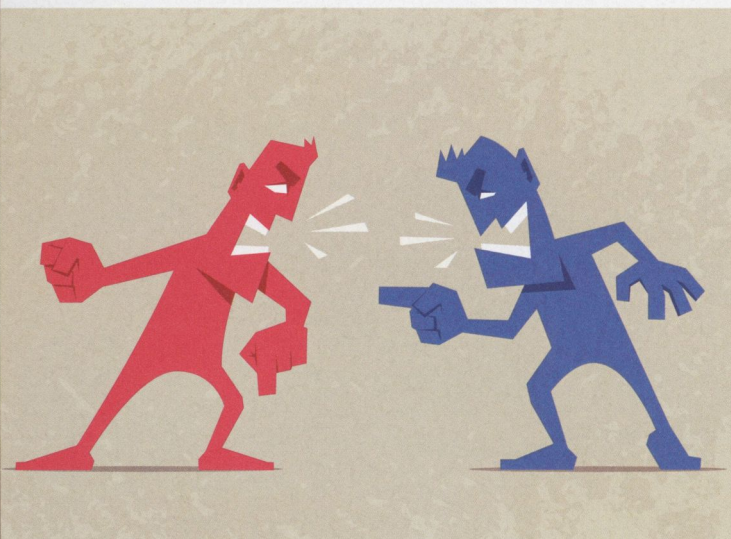
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## Weed whackers vs. shirt stackers

**B**elieve it or not, I have some good friends who are PGA pros. I was talking with one of them recently, joking about the “weed whacker” and “shirt stacker” reputation each side has with the other. That evolved into a serious conversation about the sometimes-contentious relationship between pro and super at any given club, which led me to poll my fellow superintendents on the biggest challenges they face dealing with their pro.

Before you start tweeting and emailing me, remember, it’s a two-way street.

The secret is communication. I don’t care if you read any further or where you work. You two are the key to a successful course or club, and especially to the member/golfer experience. If you don’t communicate, everyone suffers.

You can’t act as independent satellites. No hiding in your maintenance compound or holing up in your office behind the pro-shop counter. The golf pro and course superintendent have a symbiotic relationship: You need each other, depend on each other and can help each other. Hand in hand, that spirit of cooperation is good for everyone, and good for the game.

Since this is a forum for superintendents, what follows are the irksome habits we’ve noticed in our pros. But I advise all you supers out there to think about the things you might be doing that are annoying — or real obstacles — to your pro. Don’t just nod your head in recognition. Think how you can improve the relationship from your side.

A common theme was “the pro and I don’t see eye to eye.” Or worse, “we just don’t get along.” Whether that’s work-related or personalities clashing, you don’t have to be the best of friends

to work together. But you do need to be pulling in the same direction.

One superintendent said he’d been on the job for 10 years and the pro has yet to come to his office. Is your office meeting-worthy? Is it clean, functional and professional?

Another said his pro never returns phone calls or emails. Just to you or to everyone? And how responsive are you? I’ve noticed more and more supers doing the same thing. It’s not only rude, it’s the sort of behavior that leads to getting fired. No one likes being ignored, so carve out times throughout the day to respond, even if it’s just to say you need more time to get back with the information.

Tournament schedules were a big issue. Do you work with the pro to set events, so they coordinate with agronomic needs? I’ve always said cultural practices and agronomy should take precedence: Have you explained this to the green committee, board of directors and the golf pro? Do they understand and agree?

When it’s time for events, are the golf and grounds staffs communicating regarding set-up and shotguns? You likely have a routine, a way of doing things that works for you and your team. But can you be a little more flexible a few times a season?

As for “pop-up special events” not on the calendar? I’m with you on this one, but again, communication is key.

One superintendent said that when he needs to work on the course, particularly when

he needs to shut it down, the pro gets bent out of shape because he’s not making money from cart rentals, lessons, shop sales, etc. The pro has a right to be peeved but should understand when you explain that if you don’t do your job and conditions deteriorate, golfers won’t want to play the course, and nobody will make money.

Course conditions were a source of many super-pro conflicts: The pro who doesn’t believe what the super tells him about conditions, who rides around to check for himself, who calls other clubs to see how their conditions are. And who doesn’t believe it when you say the course should be closed due to the weather? Be honest: Are you closing it down just to show who’s in charge? Or are you discussing your concerns with everyone first and thinking of the course’s best interests? Course conditioning is not the pro’s area of expertise, so the more information you can provide, the better off you’ll both be.

Build a partnership. Take the high road. Set weekly meetings to talk. Become a team.

But I also don’t think you should sit quietly if the golf professional refers to you and your team as weed whackers, dirt farmers, sod busters or grass asses. Part of making sure they see you as the professional in your field and as the true “managers of the game” is standing up and demanding the respect deserved for the level of responsibility and golf industry knowledge you have and deal with every day. **GCI**



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





# Keep sharp, **keep grinding**

**Turf equipment pros offer tips to keep your equipment operating at its best this summer.**

**By Rick Woelfel**

**T**he golf season is at its height in most of North America, meaning crews are busy with ongoing mowing responsibilities. So, what can courses do to ensure their equipment is operating at peak efficiency?

Tony Bevolo is the equipment manager at Trinity Forest Golf Club in Dallas. Bevolo, who has worked in the industry since age 16, stresses the importance of checking mowers on a daily basis. "Bring that machine into the shop and have a skilled technician, or even a superintendent who is very versed in the equipment go through the cutting units daily and

adjust the height of cut and the quality of cut or reel to bed knife," he says.

"I think that plays a real big role because if you let that machine go out and mow a week, a week-and-a-half, two weeks without checking it, you're developing a big gap between the reel and the bed knife. That tends to dull out a little quicker. It will for sure allow more plant material to get in between the reel and the bed knife and encourage a little bit of ripping or tearing of the turf. That's when you kind of see ill effects on the quality of cut."

Bevolo is working with zoysiagrass at Trinity Forest. For that reason, he has all his cutting units on a regular

schedule and pays especially close attention to his equipment. "(Zoysia) has a thick, dense, leaf blade that tends to wear out the blade a little faster," he says.

Nick Testa, a faculty member at SUNY Cobleskill in the Agricultural Engineering Technology Department, is a frequent presenter at industry events and serves as a consultant to numerous golf facilities. He notes that one of his clients provides its staff with individualized checklists for each of its machines. "Before the equipment goes out, they have an inspection check sheet," Testa says. "Every worker that goes out, whether it's to do a fairway or greens or tee box or whatever, they have a check list unique to that machine."

Testa says checking bearings and tolerances should be part of any daily inspection. "Keeping tolerances 1/ to 2/1000th between the bed knife and the reels, no more than 3/1000th for bentgrass, that's what my rule of thumb has always been," he says. Make sure the reel stays in its true cylinder shape, no cone shapes, and that all comes from adjustment and



all that. In terms of sharpening, certainly you're going to do spin grinding to get rid of all your gouges and all that and then you're going to put your relief grind in it."

Jim McCool is the reel technician at Bellerive Country Club just west of St. Louis. He is constantly monitoring the condition of his equipment. "We don't actually grind on a regular schedule," he says. "What we do is we constantly monitor whenever a piece of equipment goes out and comes back in. We check its cutting condition, monitoring everything really, really closely."

"With the greens mowers, every time they come in, I take a file and just touch up the front edge of the bed knife. Just a few swipes. It seems to really help keep things sharp be-

tween grindings."

An industry veteran of three decades, Bellerive equipment manager Chris Rapp is responsible for zoysia-grass fairways and bentgrass greens. Each requires a different strategy.

"The seedheads are actually the worst part about zoysia," he says. "You can have freshly ground units and it won't cut those things. Bentgrass, at least the variety we have here, changes personality throughout the season. We try to adjust the setup of the cutting units to (deal with) that."

Rapp also had to alter his approach in deference to the wet weather he's encountered this season. "We'll switch to smooth rollers in the summertime," he says. "This year, we never did put grooved rollers on them. A grooved roller makes for a

little more aggressive cut because it allows the cutting unit to settle down into the turf a little further.

"We haven't had a lot of good growing days for either the cool- or the warm-season turf, so we've had to be pretty gentle on everything and not go over-aggressive on any of the setups."

Testa notes that not every facility can grind its equipment as often as it would like, but there are ways to maintain the equipment and stick to a budget at the same time.

"One club (where I'm a consultant) will actually pull the reels apart and sharpen three times a year," he says. "Locally, we have a more of a (lower-budget) course and they sharpen once a year and back blade half a dozen times during a season." **GCI**

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# Grasshoppers, water and the golf business

**B**eginning in June 1874, a swarm of grasshoppers dense enough to block the sun's rays – so copious that you could scoop them up with shovels – descended on the drought-ravaged Great Plains. They mowed down crops and brought economic devastation to entire communities. In a scene eerily familiar, the chewing herbivorous insects, a close cousin of the locust, did it again in 1931 in regions suffering from prolonged periods of below normal rainfall.

No one is predicting a return of the grasshopper, although that seems a haunting title for an apocalyptic movie. But history does warn us of the dangers of extreme drought, when grasshoppers can flourish and when turfgrasses are most vulnerable. As we move into the summer months, when rainfall is scarce in many parts of the United States, golf courses and sports facilities are reminded that they must manage water usage and consumption diligently.

Audubon International, which promotes sustainability for businesses, recreational properties and communities, is committed to bringing solutions to golf and sports facilities. "Putting your golf course, community or resort on the path to sustainability may seem overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be," Audubon International CEO Christine Kane says. "We suggest starting by establishing an environmental policy that will guide your operations. This will bring your employees and members onboard and pave the way for incorporating topics such as water conservation, IPM or wildlife management into your budget, marketing and maintenance processes."

Golf facilities and clubs also benefit from sustainability's halo effect. Many members today expect greater levels of environmental stewardship from businesses and other organizations with which they are associated. In addition to its environmental impacts, sound water management has taken on a good-for-business shine as well.

Research points out that sound environmental stewardship matters to women and millennials especially.

Eighty-three percent of U.S. women believe that climate change is a serious problem, according to a 2015 Pew Research Center study. Nearly 70 percent of the women polled worry that such changes will affect them personally. The bottom line is that women are concerned about sound environmental practices and are receptive to learning how golf course managers are caring for Mother Earth.

Pew further reports that drought is among the top four climate-related concerns. "Fully half of Americans name drought as their chief climate change concern, and this is especially true in drought-plagued Western states compared with other regions of the country," according to the research.

Clubs and courses seeking to attract younger members would do well to take a responsible approach to environmentalism. "Brands that establish a reputation for environmental stewardship among today's youngest consumers have an opportunity to not only grow

market share, but build loyalty among the power-spending millennials of tomorrow," says Grace Farraj, an executive with Nielsen Environmentalism.

Audubon International launched its Water & Sustainability Innovation Award this year to recognize landscape companies, organizations and municipalities for sustainable, water-efficient projects. Corica Park South Course of Alameda, California, and its management firm, Greenway Golf, was the first recipient.

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf provides a tangible form of recognition for clubs and courses committed to protecting the environment and preserving the natural heritage of the game. By helping people enhance the valuable natural areas and wildlife habitats that golf courses provide, improve efficiency and minimize potentially harmful impacts of golf course operations, the program serves an important environmental role worldwide.

Audubon International also has developed Standard Environmental Management Practices that are generally applicable to all golf courses. These standards form the basis for the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for golf certification guidelines. Points of focus from the ACSP for golf facilities include habitat planning and management guidance, which educates club members and other golfers while increasing the understanding of best management practices for pesticide use. **GCI**



**HENRY DELOZIER** is a principal in the Global Golf Advisors consultancy. He is currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of Audubon International.



# Summer 2019 weed watch

**THE LINES BETWEEN WARM- AND COOL-WEATHER  
TURF ARE FADING. EXPERTS OFFER INSIGHT INTO  
WHAT SUPERINTENDENTS SHOULD EXPECT AS  
TEMPERATURES RISE.**

By **Ron Furlong**





**E**ven when superintendents have dealt with and seemingly eradicated weeds – at least to tolerable levels – they can’t quite understand why they keep returning year after year. Weeds are like that unwanted guest who finally takes the hint and leaves, only to show up again the next spring ready to settle in for another long visit. — or if you don’t do something about it, they try to move in permanently.

Accepting why weeds return is a challenge for many superintendents. It seems almost unfair that efforts from the previous season are seemingly for naught.

One of the startling new trends in the world of weeds on golf courses is the intensity levels being experienced across the country, as well as the movement of some weeds from one region to another. Some weeds are becoming a problem in areas they never were in the past.

We talked with experts from both cool-weather turfgrass and warm-weather turfgrass regions of the country, trying to get a better understanding of the weed picture as we head into the heat of the 2019 summer.

### WARM-WEATHER TURF

Dr. Jim Brosnan is an associate professor in the Plant Sciences Department at the University of Tennessee, as well as the leader of the school’s Weed Diagnostics Center. He has noticed a definite increase in warm-season perennial weeds in the last few years.

“One weed that has just exploded recently is doveweed,” he says. “If you ask any superintendent Tennessee south, that’s become one of their big summer challenge weeds for sure.

“And then there is the kyllinga species,” he adds. “Whether it’s green kyllinga in the south, or false green kyllinga in the north, that’s a perennial species that’s become a widespread problem in terms of



▲ Yellow nutsedge *Cyperus esculentus*

HOWARD F. SCHWARTZ, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY, BUGWOOD.ORG

turfgrass over the past several years. The kyllingas used to be confined to the Transition Zone, but it’s really become a widespread problem for superintendents in other regions of the country as well.”

Dr. Bert McCarty, a professor of turfgrass science at Clemson University and a Certified Professional Agronomist, agrees with Brosnan about the increase in the kyllingas, but also sees problems occurring at very high rates with other weeds.

“*Poa annua* problems continue to grow (spread) due to its ability to adapt and develop resistance to most herbicide modes-of-action,” he says. “And a similar trend is starting to occur with goosegrass.”

McCarty blames a lot of the problems on an increase in the resistance of those weeds.

“Many believe weed resistance is the number one potential agronomic issue this industry faces,” McCarty says. “Clemson and 12 other additional universities have secured a federal grant to look into herbicide resistance in *Poa annua*, including its distribution, genetic/biochemistry, competition, and how the industry is addressing this. And other increasing herbicide resistant weeds, including nutsedge and spurge, Virginia buttonweed, dallisgrass, tropical signalgrass and many others continue to plague the industry.”

Brosnan also believes resistance is a developing problem, and he agrees with McCarty that it’s not just an issue with *Poa annua*, but he is seeing it with the sedges as well in particular.

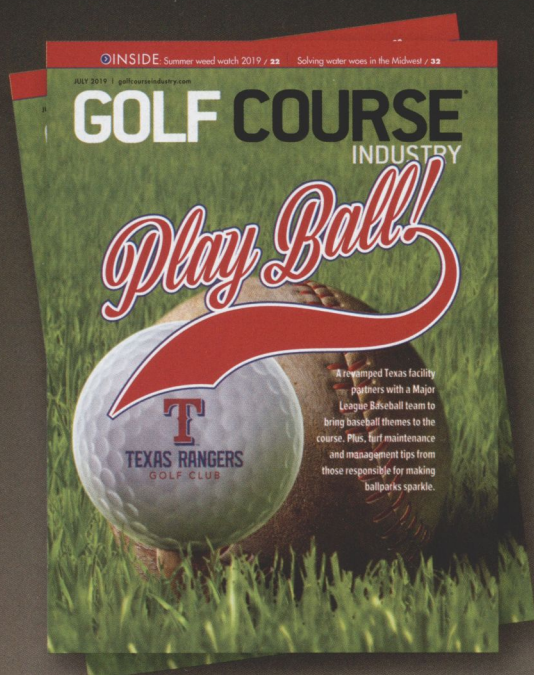
“My counterpart at Georgia, Dr. Patrick McCullough, he’s been working on resistance in sedge,” Brosnan says. “Most of our conversations in the past about resistance have centered on annual bluegrass, but Patrick has done a lot of good work showing resistance in sedge species — particularly purple nutsedge in the deeper south and yellow nutsedge as you move into more northern geography.”

Brosnan and McCarty agree that the wetter winter/early spring weather much of the country has been experiencing in recent years is contributing to the high weed levels superintendents are dealing with.

“Goosegrass, torpedograss, nutsedges and clover all tend to explode with the wet weather,” McCarty says. “What we have seen so far in 2019, with an extremely wet winter and spring, is shortened efficacy of certain preemergence herbicides. Thus, these weeds are more problematic much earlier in the year than they would be after a drier, more normal







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winter/spring.”

Chris Sykes, superintendent at Toqua Golf Club in Tellico Village, Tenn., agrees with Brosnan and McCarty that the extremely wet weather in late winter is making weed control a more difficult issue than ever before.

“We had 13 inches of rain in February,” Sykes says. “In addition to seeing more *Poa* than normal, much higher levels of goose grass and more crabgrass are prevalent as well. It’s funny, but for years I didn’t worry too much about weed pressure. I was more focused on putting surfaces and disease pressure. But now we’re really having to direct a lot of our attention to weeds.”

### COOL-WEATHER TURF

The trends in the cooler-weather turf areas seem to be mirroring those weed trends of the warmer-weather turf areas. If anything, we’re seeing the traditional demarcation lines blurred and even disappearing as the climate seemingly changes before our very eyes.

Dr. Jared Hoyle, an associate professor and extension turfgrass specialist at Kansas State University, is seeing significant weed pressure. “Definitely more yellow nutsedge out there because of the wet conditions,” he says. “As well as more crabgrass.”

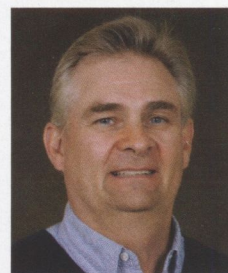
Trampis Nickle is a superintendent in Hoyle’s region of Kansas, at Wamego Country Club, less than 20 miles east of Kansas State’s main campus in Manhattan, and he agrees that wet springs are wreaking havoc on golf courses.

“We got 18 inches of rain in about 35 days, late April into the first part of June,” Nickle says. “Because of the rain, we’re seeing huge outbreaks of yellow nutsedge in areas that traditionally we’d only see them in irrigated areas. Normally we spot spray our weeds post-emergent, but this year we had to do a blanket app. Weeds are definitely more of a problem with the unusual weather patterns.”

Dr. David Gardner is a professor at The Ohio State University in the Department of Horticulture and Crop Science, and he’s noticing a lot of interesting new trends in weed development in the cool season areas of the country.

“Recently in Ohio we have been introduced to the *paspalum*,” he says. “This is a tropical grass that is perennial. This is entirely unique amongst our weeds in this part of the country. Also, different sedges and *kyllingas* that were once only a problem in the south. Big increases in *veronica* and hairy bittercress as well, which are both winter annuals.

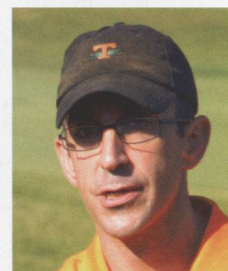
“Really noticing that winter annuals are becoming a problem



▲ McCarty



▲ Gardner



▲ Brosnan



▲ Hoyle



because of our warmer autumns, which makes for better growing conditions for these weeds. Warmer and wetter periods going into winter seems to be increasing the annual grasses.”

Hoyle is noticing summer rains can present problems as well.

“Last year was really hot and dry here in the Midwest,” he says, “and then it got wet all of a sudden, and then the weeds just start popping really quickly with that water and those compacted conditions that led into it. Especially in non-irrigated areas.”

#### TIPS GOING FORWARD

As mentioned, the lines be-

tween warm-weather and cool-weather turf seem to be fading rather quickly. Superintendents need to be prepared to battle weeds — as well as environmental conditions — that they might not have faced in the past. What everyone seems to agree on is the rapidly changing blending of those traditional north vs. south weeds.

Hoyle thinks the best bet might be to try and keep it as simple as you can, while still educating yourself on the new problems you might have to deal with.

“Always step one is having healthy turf,” he says. “It seems simple, but it really is the most important step. Do right by the turf first. Anything you can do

to keep out these opportunistic type of weeds. With preemergent herbicides, really keep on top of your growing degree days to get the most out of those initial apps. And if those growing degree days get you out earlier in the year, then look at switching it up from the past and maybe hitting them again with a second app — not adding herbicide but splitting it up into multiple applications.”

With higher levels of weeds, and weeds moving from their traditional regions into new areas, Gardner suggests reeducating yourself on your weeds. “Know your weeds and know your control options,” he says. “For example, applying a broad-leaf herbicide in April is going

to not only miss the summer annuals, but it is also going to miss things like white clover.”

McCarty stresses that everyone should be aware of resistance. “Remember to rotate modes-of-action,” he says. “This is the best way to reduce chances of herbicide resistance.”

Although the future of weeds and weed control looks a bit daunting, it’s good to know so many experts are on top of the issue and offering scientific solutions and advice to help superintendents chart these new weedy waters. **GCI**

*Ron Furlong is the superintendent at Avalon Golf Club in Burlington, Wash., and a frequent GCI contributor.*

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# OUR MAJOR

*AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE PEOPLE AND  
PRIDE ASSOCIATED WITH PREPARING FOR A  
COURSE'S BIG MOMENT*

*Part 1: RBC Canadian Open*

By **Guy Cipriano**



A national open, especially one contested in a country with a proportionally low number of worldwide televised golf showcases, presents reoccurring moments for celebration.

On a Monday that methodically shifted from frigid – even by June in Ontario standards – to fantastic, the Hamilton Golf & Country Club turf team and volunteers mingle around the maintenance facility. The first of two pro-ams scheduled for RBC Canadian Open week becomes a slog, delaying the start of an evening maintenance shift.

Nobody seems bothered six-hour rounds are prolonging the day. Perhaps, after starting work 13 hours earlier in 37-degree weather, evening temperatures approaching 70 degrees yield cheer. Or, more likely, sharing a major moment with a friend, mentor, cousin, neighbor, parent, child or sibling must be savored regardless of unexplainable waits.

So, instead of moping, a half-dozen youthful females and males gather around a picnic table and play a version of “Cotton-Eyed Joe” recorded in 1994. As they sing and dance, a co-worker who started fixing turf equipment before the song was released discusses his personal evolution and how the 2019 Canadian Open contrasts other televised tournaments at Hamilton. The first professional tournament of Wayne Shaw’s career, the 1996 du Maurier Seniors, included an infamous personal moment: somebody stole his truck.

Shaw borrowed his sister-in-law’s truck and made it to the course. The truck was later found and Shaw, the club’s mechanic, tells the story nonchalantly after the music stops. The festive banter moves to a

paved area outside the maintenance facility Shaw has called his office since 1986. Once assistant superintendent Tracy Fowler, a colleague with a similarly lengthy tenure, sounds a horn signifying the start of the evening shift, Shaw roams an enchanting course, checking the operational quality of an equipment fleet that has morphed over the last 33 years. “You look around here,” he says. “You see how much stuff we have. We have 10 tractors. We had two when I started here.”

The Canadian Open also has morphed. Harry Colt designed 27 holes when the club relocated to Ancaster, a stately community seven miles from the city of Hamilton’s industrial center. The South and West nines support tournament play. Later in the week, the singing and dancing reaches the first hole of the East nine, site of a Friday night concert slightly bigger than maintenance facility singalongs: a performance by popular country duo Florida Georgia Line.

Golf Canada officials reported around 120,000 fans entered the Hamilton grounds June 3-9 and beer sales in-

creased 65 percent over the 2018 tournament at Glen Abbey Golf Club in suburban Toronto. The golf headliner, Northern Irishman Rory McIlroy, smashed the field to capture his 16th PGA Tour title. The tournament marked the 100th anniversary of the first of six Canadian Opens at Hamilton and the final major event contested on the current version of the course. An aggressive 27-hole project led by Colt savant Martin Ebert commences later this year.

A Monday evening spent observing the scene and meeting the people responsible for maintaining Hamilton negates any hyperbole when people of the host country refer to the Canadian Open as a “major.” Canadians are golf enthusiasts. Nearly one in six plays golf, according to a 2017 report released by Golf Canada, The PGA of Canada and National Golf Foundation. Canada’s participation rate is double the rate of its southern neighbor.

Canada has 2,298 golf facilities, according to the same report, with nearly a third of the supply (682 courses) located in Ontario. “We are one of the bigger hubs of golf cours-





es,” says Hamilton superintendent Rhod Trainor, who will retire this year after a successful 30-year-run at the admired club. “We compare ourselves to Chicago and some of those American hotbeds.”

**“Americans have a sense of pride in America. Canadians have that same sense of pride. Allowing the world to see anything in this country means something to us.”**

– Clayton Campbell

Despite the golf fervor and abundance of quality facilities, only one Canadian course receives the annual honor of hosting a PGA Tour tournament. By comparison, the 2018-19 PGA Tour schedule includes 37 American venues. Golf Canada rotates Canadian Open sites, although Glen Abbey hosted the tournament 30 times from 1977 to 2018. Trainor attended his first Canadian Open in the 1990s at Glen Abbey, where his best friend Dean Baker served as superintendent. “Canada has the Toronto Blue Jays and they might as well be the Canadian Blue Jays,” says Trainor, referring to the country’s lone Major League Baseball franchise. “This is the only PGA Tour tournament in Canada. Whether you live in Ontario or British Columbia or Nova Scotia, this is the one you’re most interested in.”

Bonds within the Hamilton crew and Canadian turf community run deep. Chris Wallace, a 22-year Hamilton veteran and Shaw’s second cousin, met Trainor through curling, one of Canada’s winter pastimes. He spent his first three Canadian Opens leading a crew responsible for maintaining Hamilton’s nearly 90 bunkers to PGA Tour specifications. A sore back means he’s sitting on a fairway mower while waiting for the Monday evening maintenance shift to begin. “This Canadian Open is big,” he says. “I don’t know how

big, but it’s like waiting for a bomb to go off. You can tell it’s bigger than the other ones.”

Scott Borer, a longtime curling friend of Trainor, is an electric lineman who used a vacation week to work split golf course maintenance shifts. Borer also volunteered the 2003, ’06 and ’12 Canadian Opens at Hamilton. “I’m a lineman by trade, but golf is my passion,” he says. “Even though I take vacation to come here and don’t get paid, I wouldn’t want it any other way. I love being here for the week.”

Borer’s fourth Canadian Open carried special meaning because his 16-year-old son Noah works at Hamilton. Borer dropped Noah off at school following morning shifts and the duo enthusiastically returned to the course each afternoon. Employees with the same last name are part of Hamilton’s charm. “This industry is a brotherhood and sisterhood all the way down to the people who work here,” associate superintendent Jordan Kitchen says.

Tracy Fowler and her brother, Jamie, the club’s arborist, demonstrate the familial ties. Tracy has worked at the club for 33 years, three years longer than Jamie, who briefly left golf course maintenance to pursue a welding career. “It was a horrible environment,” he says. “You’re breathing in smoke all the time. This course is our office. This course is our factory.”

The course also feels like home. Tracy and Jamie’s father, Tom, worked 47 years at the club, ascending from crew member to mechanic. Tom retired three years ago, but still asks his children about the club and its people.



▲ Chris Wallace and Wayne Shaw

Tracy and Jamie started working at Hamilton, where their uncle Bill Thompson held a supervisory position, before they could drive. Uncle Bill handed Tracy a garbage can

and she weeded bunkers on her first day of work; Jamie was handed a trimmer and gas can and told to tidy the areas surrounding Ancaster Creek. “We grew up on a farm, so we were used to being outside,” Tracy says. “We loved being outside. The job just worked for us.”

Following high school, Tracy explored multiple career routes. She earned a horticulture degree from the University of Guelph and Trainor offered her an assistant superintendent position. A childhood job turned into a career. “I didn’t think it would last this long,” she says. “But I was like, ‘I don’t want to move, I don’t want to commute, and I like it here.’ One year led into another year, and the next thing you know, I have been here for 33 years.”

Without their current jobs, Tracy, who has 6-year-old twins, and Jamie are unsure how much time they would spend together, because they live busy adult lives. Remaining at Hamilton has allowed them to share four Canadian Opens. “I just want people to see how beautiful this place is,” says Jamie, whose tree clearing efforts opened enthralling views of valleys and mounds Colt utilized in the early 1900s.

Hamilton’s other sister-brother duo, Kayla and Clayton Campbell, worked their first Canadian Open together last month. Kayla, a former early childhood education student determined to pursue a career in golf course maintenance, excitedly





▲ Longtime Hamilton Golf & Country Club superintendent Rhod Trainor speaks with students during RBC Canadian Open week.

bounced between holes, mowing greens for golf stars, including 26 participants from her home country. “This is my first Canadian Open and I’m very excited,” she says before the Monday evening shift. “The energy is very high with me. I’m an energetic person anyways. I’m very proud of mowing those greens.”

Clayton, a technician in his 10th season at Hamilton, exudes similar energy and pride, especially when observing his sister’s zest for golf course maintenance. Kayla approached Clayton a few years ago about working at the course. Neither imagined the conversation would lead to a third Campbell pursuing a full-time turf career. Their older brother, Ryan is an assistant superintendent at Beach Grove Golf & Country Club in Windsor.

The Campbells are philosophical about the Canadian Open and its impact on their family. Anything pro-

viding glimpses into the Hamilton region’s changing demographics – Canada’s ninth-largest city possesses an industrial reputation – to a wide audience must be embraced, thus the greens Kayla mows and Clayton treats represent something greater than immaculate *Poa annua*.

“It’s like the Raptors being in the NBA Finals,” Clayton says. “It allows people to see what Canada is about. We’re not showshoes and all those stereotypical things.” Kayla interrupts to emphasize the irony in her brother’s statement. “We were in scarves this morning!” she says. Clayton chuckles and adds, “Americans have a sense of pride in America. Canadians have that same sense of pride. Allowing the world to see anything in this country means something to us.”

Kayla plans on obtaining a turf managers’ short course certificate through Guelph, where Trainor, Kitchen and Tracy obtained their formal turfgrass education. The managerial trio provides guidance on apprenticeship and job training programs to young employees considering golf course maintenance careers. “Our strength is our people,” Kitchen says. “We have been a great incubator for some great turf professionals. We want to be a launching pad for careers.”

The camaraderie, career boost and festive atmosphere turf professionals experienced last month will be duplicated when the Canadian Open returns to Hamilton in 2023. The PGA Tour’s decision to move the Canadian Open from the July week following the British Open to the June week before the U.S. Open attracted a marketable 2019 field. A side benefit of the move is enhanced turf quality. “Early June is typically our best conditions,” Trainor says. Fan friendly additions such as the weekend concerts and a raucous hockey-themed par-3 called “The Rink” further contribute to the momentum.

Unless the Raptors become an NBA Finals regular, one of Canada’s seven NHL teams experiences a revitalization or the Canadian Football League’s appeal extends across borders, there’s no other major reoccurring major summer sporting event in a nation of 37 million proud and active residents. The opportunity to prepare surfaces for the celebration will always be worth the wait. **GCI**

## About this series

**O**ur Major is a three-part series exploring turf teams preparing for big moments. Subscribe to Golf Course Industry’s newsletters for digital exclusives about the events profiled by entering <http://bit.ly/GCInewsletters> into your web browser. Part 2 will profile the people and pride associated with the Sparrows Point (Md.) Country Club member-guest.



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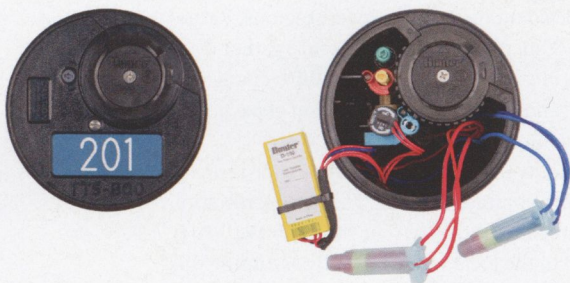
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# *A soggy* **HAZARD** *no longer*

TODD QUITNO, ASGCA, EXAMINES HOW A QUARTET OF  
MIDWEST COURSES REVERSED WATER MISFORTUNES  
AND HELPED SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

*W*ater issues in the Midwest are often on the opposite end of the spectrum from those we see in other parts of the country, like the arid Mountain and Southwest regions. Rather than lacking water, our communities are often desperate to identify places to gather, hold and clean it up before gradually releasing it to the local streams and rivers. With changes in our climate causing more severe and frequent storms, and the continual expansion of pavement in our urban areas, the management of water has become a serious issue.

Golf courses are vital, vibrant members of the community that also happen to be vast in terms of acreage, making them ideal for storing and cleaning large volumes of water. The natural filtration qualities of turfgrass, wetlands and golf course ponds are helping to serve our communities' water quality goals while returning that reclaimed resource to the local water table. By assuming this responsibility, golf course operators are actively improving public relations in their immediate community while enabling upgrades to their own products, often at prices that are reduced or even mitigated by the very water management issues those communities are obliged to address.

It's a fact: the game of golf is working for our communities and the environment. Here are a few great examples of how, both public and private.



## *The Bridges of Poplar Creek*

The Bridges of Poplar Creek, owned by the Hoffman Estates (Ill.) Park District, is an upscale municipal golf facility built in the late 1970s on what was then rural farmland. With a central creek and several ponds situated throughout the course, water was always a part of Poplar Creek's identity, but decades of development dramatically increased the volume of water within the course's watershed, threatening both adjacent landowners and the long-term viability of the golf operations.

Compounding the growing storm water problems, the course became known locally as a "flood-er," closed as many as 10 days a year with annual losses reaching as high as \$135,000 (10 percent of annual revenue). A reputation for closing sparked remarks like, "I never book there when rain is in the forecast; there's too good a chance it will flood." The tangible revenue losses — and the more damaging impacts of a bad image — were hurting the bottom line.

The park district realized long-term sustainability, a grand mission of the district as a whole, would require significant change and thus committed the necessary funding to pursue a redevelopment strategy focused on expanding on-course water

storage capabilities. To accommodate the runoff that routinely flooded the golf holes and upstream properties, ponds were expanded or added and all 18 holes were improved in some capacity — including drainage additions, elevated fairways (above flood levels) and integration of these new waterways into the golf course routing.

Just two months after re-opening, the area received a record rainfall equivalent to a 100-year storm. The renovated golf course was the only one open for play the following morning — a story that has been repeated several times since. The course has also seen increases in play and elevated rates since the renovation and has reduced storm clean-up costs by more than 90 percent (from \$35,000 annually to \$3,000).

A course renovation project like this would never have been even considered if the larger district and community goals were not served by the project. Over time, adjacent properties also reported less severity in flood levels and much-decreased high-water durations. Since maturing, the acres of filtering wetlands have improved water quality tenfold at the creek's outlet. Today, The Bridges at Poplar Creek is once again a source of community pride and a vital environmental resource in the region.

## Bridges of Poplar Creek **by the numbers**

- 2-to-1 increase in water holding capacity (2-square mile watershed)
- More than 10,000 linear feet of creek shoreline repair
- More than an 18 percent reduction (27 of 150 acres) of maintained turf:
  - 5.5 acres of emergent wetland and mesic plantings to enhance aquatic habitat and water filtering capacity
  - 6.8 acres of native area for further water infiltration
  - 15-plus acre conversion of maintained turf to low-maintenance fescue plantings
- 5 fairways raised out of floodplain
- 2 new greens
- 35 new tees, providing overall yardages from 4,600 to 6,500
- 9 new timber bridges incorporated into course branding and name change



The 17th hole at The Bridges of Poplar Creek, a municipal course owned by the Hoffman Estates (Ill.) Park District.



### *Reid Municipal Golf Course*

New state and federal mandates developed in recent years have sent Wisconsin municipalities looking for places to collect their runoff – specifically vast, open spaces. The purpose? To remove total suspended solids and phosphorus from the water, cleaning it up before it enters state waterways.

A typical urban development located in the Lower Fox River Watershed, the City of Appleton was lacking in available open space that could fulfill these needs, prompting the City Storm Water Department to consider alternative options. Operated by the Parks and Recreation Department, the 115-acre Reid Municipal Golf Course was perfectly positioned in the middle of town and already serving some of the intended function by gathering local runoff via an old concrete channel. The golf course was also in a bit of a lull itself, struggling to make ends meet financially and in need of a spark.

They say necessity is the mother of invention, and it can also breed collaboration. Working as a united front, the two city departments developed a plan to transform Reid into a giant filtration system, which took two seasons to construct and \$4 million to fund. The golf course now holds and cleans up storm water as it enters from the neighboring streets through a series of ponds and a newly naturalized channel dug to replace the old concrete one. This channel is the outlet for nearly 50-acre feet of new flood storage, providing enough space to handle a 100-year storm and then some. In order to facilitate the



ponds, several course upgrades were made, including alterations to four holes that now play over and along the new ponds and various other additions using spoils from the pond excavation.

Funding for the project was provided almost entirely by the Storm Water Department, which also factored in compensation for lost rounds and other pro shop revenues during construction, with the Parks and Recreation Department only required to cover the cost of the grow-in. Aside from helping the city be compliant with the water quality mandates, the most encouraging result of the work at Reid has been a significant uptick in golf play and a burst of new life in the local golf economy. All those good vibes are even prompting talks of more course improvements in the coming years.

▲ The renovated third hole at Reid Municipal Golf Course.

◀ The 15th hole at Westmoor Country Club.



### *Westmoor Country Club*

Courses don't need to be municipally owned in order to assist the greater public. The private Westmoor Country Club was approached by the City of Brookfield, Wis., several years back about solving a festering water-quality problem — silt, salt and other street debris was running off a particular neighborhood development and degrading the waterways.

Realizing an opportunity to help themselves and their community, the club took control of the remediation effort, creating a filtrating wetland system on their 15th hole that connected to a further series of ponds. The hole required upgrades to accommodate the change and now sports an expanded water feature and attractive stone retaining wall that greatly enhances drainage and visual appeal. The pond work, which fit into a larger renovation effort that was already underway, was funded by the city.

The dirty water passing through this system is now filtered clean before exiting the course and re-entering the city waterways or being re-used by the course's irrigation system. The naturalized plantings around the pond also serve as a home for bee-keeping pods that pollinate the flowers around the golf course and the surrounding neighborhoods, contributing to the club's much-strengthened relationship with the community it serves.





### *Deerpath Golf Course*

Some golf properties take on storm water by obligation and not choice, thus leaving them to deal with the impacts of excess water themselves. City-owned Deerpath Golf Course in Lake Forest, Ill., was built in the early 1920s along a branch of the Skokie River. Acres of watershed from the north flow into the course during major storms, covering as much as 90 percent of the property in the severest of events. A hospital campus — basically a giant slab of concrete and hardtop — sits directly to the west and feeds additional runoff across the course, compounding soil saturation problems.

Historically, even when flood waters receded at Deerpath, it could take days or weeks for the course to dewater, making it difficult to maintain and operate the facility. Golfers

stayed away, cart usage stopped, turf died and the course's reputation suffered. In 2017 alone, the facility reported 41 days of direct revenue impact from closures due to flooding, resulting in tens of thousands of dollars in losses.

Searching for answers, the City commissioned a comprehensive master plan to target immediate "revenue-driven solutions" and foster long-term course health. The first phase of that effort, implemented in fall 2017, included a \$1.1 million cart path and drainage enhancement project aimed at getting golfers and maintenance equipment back on the course quicker. A full asphalt path system was installed on all 18 holes and underground turf drains fitted in the worst of the saturated areas to aid in moving excess water

out of play when the main flood waters recede. The spoils created from digging were used to build several forward tees or piled in containment mounds in upland areas.

The project's effectiveness was demonstrated immediately. Despite recording three major flood events in 2018, the golf course reportedly lost only six days to closure and experienced no extended cart shutdown. Projected greens fees and cart revenues saw substantial gains from the year prior as well, upwards of \$70,000, and turf recovery following the floods was greatly enhanced. Bolstered by these positive gains, golf course management expects to continue with more upgrades over the next several years to continue the pursuit of long-term sustainability.

▲ A new cart path helps golfers and maintenance workers access Deerpath Golf Course during wet periods.

### *Conclusion*

Could these sorts of projects work on any course, public or private, where the surrounding community is battling water-retention and water-quality issues? The answer is a resounding yes.

With total maximum daily loads and other new directives garnering attention across the country, communities will continue to be on the lookout for places to store and clean their water. Golf is one of the only sports whose playing surfaces are not restricted in shape or design, which makes courses malleable and highly adaptable to this potential change. If courses have the room and are located in the right spot in the watershed, it just makes sense that we employ them in the betterment of our communities and the environment. **GCI**

*Todd Quitno, ASGCA, is the vice president of design for Chicagoland-based Lohmann Quitno Golf Course Architects.*



# Adapting to new stresses

After two successful decades at Cincinnati's Camargo Club, superintendent **Doug Norwell** is still finding ways to enhance his agronomic program and help others.

**By Matt LaWell**

**D**uring the three-and-a-half years that Doug Norwell worked as an assistant superintendent under the legendary Matt Shaffer at The Country Club outside Cleveland, he learned plenty about water management and conservation. He learned even more about how to work with people.

"He was interested in growing people and moving them on, not keeping people and holding them back," Norwell says. "And that's how I approach working with my assistants."

Shaffer, of course, is the former the director of golf course operations at Merion Golf Club, where he hosted a handful of headline events, including the 2013 U.S. Open, before retiring in 2017. Norwell, meanwhile, is still out on the course almost every morning, deep into his 20th consecutive year as superintendent at the historic Camargo Club in suburban Cincinnati.

Approaching its centennial, the Seth Raynor-designed gem is considered among the top classic courses in the country, with a footprint of more than 349 acres — 285 of them devoted

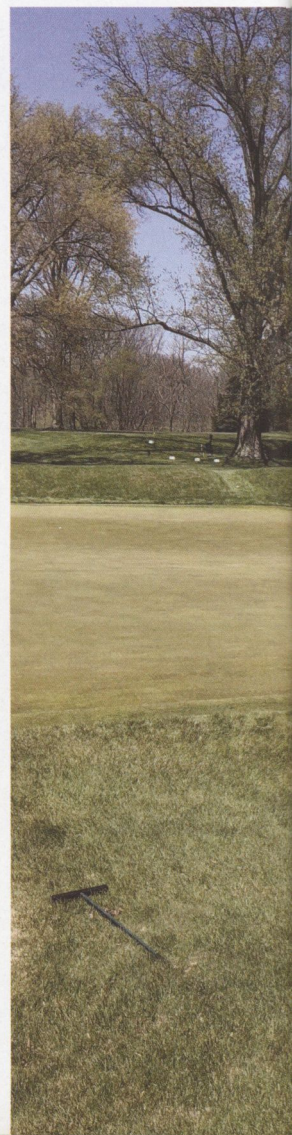
to the course, and another 64 or so to a recently renovated practice area and stables. Norwell, too, is interested in growing people and moving them on, evidenced by his five former assistants who are now in charge of courses of their own — four of them within 25 miles of Camargo — as well as by his recent addition of a third assistant superintendent.

"I was just getting spread thin with additional responsibilities and went to three assistants, which I think is a good number," says Norwell, who recently added assistant Kevin Veeley to a crew of 27 that includes fellow assistants Josh Clock and Bill Jones. "It's been great, too, because it takes a little pressure off everybody. I think we're all finding that stress isn't good for any of us."

Norwell is candid and open on and off the course, and he minces no words whether discussing his personal life, his years in the industry, even perceived differences between, say,



Norwell







baby boomers, Gen Xers and millennials. But on the brink of 50, he tells nobody to get off his lawn. Instead, he listens and adapts, shifting his crew to become more representative of the current crop.

"I think it's important that we do change and adjust to the workforce that's coming to us," he says. "We have to meet them in the middle a little bit, and I think it's helpful to have three assistants to keep people happy in their jobs. Happy workers are better workers. It does reduce the stress."

Norwell has also reduced stress over the last year by adding products to his agronomic program, including Daconil Action and Secure Action fungicides, both from Syngenta, which he uses almost exclusively on greens — "on the finest, most intensively maintained turf," he says, "where you need the best results."

To combat dollar spot, which is manifesting more easily than ever thanks to Cincinnati heat indexes in the high 80s and low 90s that tend to stretch now into the middle of October, he introduced Posterity fungicide last fall, too. "And I was really pleased that, with the high disease we did have, we didn't have many issues at all with dollar spot," he says. "It gave me three weeks of control during heavy rains, high humidity, high heat."

And unlike his early years at Camargo — even his first decade and change — Norwell has spotted more and more signs of nematodes on the course. "It's something I hadn't really paid a whole lot of attention to because we were all taught it was a Southern problem," he says. "It's no Southern problem anymore."

When he spotted the thinning and discoloration that are so closely tied to nematodes, Norwell consulted Syngenta territory manager Gregg Schaner, who first steered him toward disease testing the turf. "We sent in a nematode test and it came back really high," he says, "at which point we had to start some treatments."

Working with Schaner to develop a plan of attack, Norwell ultimately introduced a pair of nematicides into his program, including Divanem. "This year, starting out," he says, "we were able to control the population a lot better. The generations are closer and tighter together, so we started earlier and are doing a lot better. You just control them. No matter what anybody says, you're just trying to manage nematodes."

The migration of nematodes, the evolution of dollar spot, even the more extreme maintenance of turf in general are all newer developments during Norwell's almost three decades in the industry — and his two decades working on the same course. "You just need every tool at your hands, you know?" he asks rhetorically.

Last winter, Norwell started to gather together some of his old assistants — one more tool, more metaphorical than literal — their aim not golf, but beer. The monthly meetings serve as a sort of informal reunion and a cleanse from the stresses of daily grinds.

Pat O'Brien worked under Norwell until 2004 and has been the grounds superintendent at Hyde Park Golf & Country Club in Cincinnati ever since. Jon Williams is still in Cincinnati, too, where he works as the course superintendent at Coldstream Country



TOP: © CAMARGO CLUB BOTTOM: © GUY CIPRIANO





Club. Scott LesChander is now the grounds superintendent at Terrace Park Country Club in neighboring Milford, less than four miles door to door from Camargo. Joel Hanlon is the most distant: as the grounds superintendent at Four Bridges Country Club in Liberty Township north of downtown, he works a whopping 23 miles from Camargo. Only Mark Daniels ventured out of state: he's the head greens superintendent at Wannamoisett Country Club in Providence, R.I.

"They're all older," Norwell says. "They've got kids, which is interesting. They've all had the same kinds of trials and tribulations — they all put up with me for years — and now they're out with their own job. They can vent about me, or they can vent about whatever's going on, and everybody's a good sounding board. You start to feel like a parent to some extent."

Beers, like a regular round of golf, are an excuse for gathering together and catching up. "They feel like they can open up because everybody has

**I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE DO CHANGE AND ADJUST TO THE WORKFORCE THAT'S COMING TO US. WE HAVE TO MEET THEM IN THE MIDDLE A LITTLE BIT. I THINK IT IS HELPFUL TO HAVE THREE ASSISTANTS TO KEEP PEOPLE HAPPY IN THEIR JOBS. HAPPY WORKERS ARE BETTER WORKERS."**

— *Doug Norwell*

their back," Norwell says, adding that his old protégés help keep him young. Like most folks approaching a half-century of life, he has a variety of new aches, but he weighs only 13 more pounds — 168 total — than he did when he arrived at Camargo back in 1999.

"I like the idea of getting fresh guys," Norwell says. "They're fresh, it keeps you fresh, it's helpful. You

look back at some of the great things in history — like the Hoover Dam. If they built a Hoover Dam today, I'd be tempted just to quit my job and go work on building that dam. You know what I mean? Just because you're building something that's going to leave a mark for a really long time. Because what we do every day disappears by the next day. We're cutting grass. That's 98 percent of our job, and by the next day, you're starting over. So how can I do something to put into the people who work closely with me? Help get them jobs and move them out."

Planting seeds in a garden you never get to see. A little legacy, he says, helping others who will help others ... who will help others ... who will help others ...

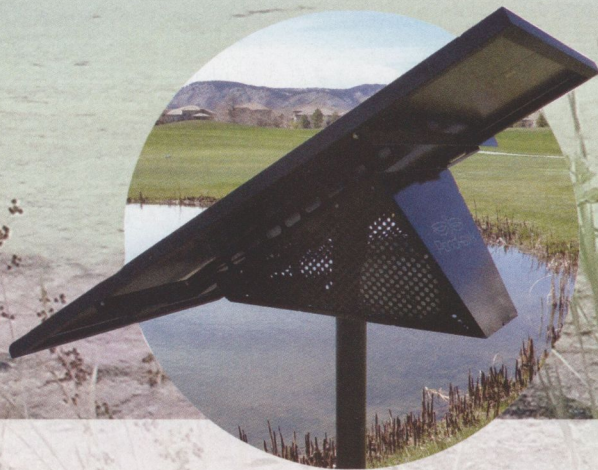
"I mean, it's the truth," he says. "If they were going to build a giant Hoover Dam again, I would love to go work on the construction crew and be part of that. That would be something — to be part of something a lot bigger. And I think you can be a part of something a lot bigger by building into people around you."

Don't hold back. Grow and move forward, onward, upward. And maybe share some drinks with old friends. **GCI**





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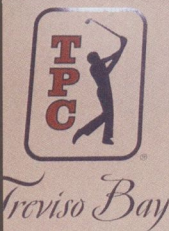




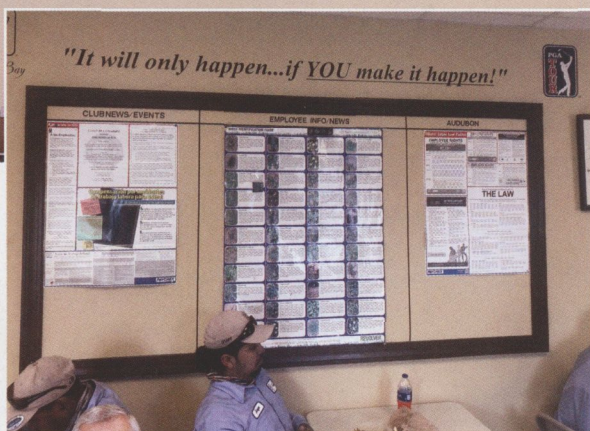
Globetrotting consulting agronomist **Terry Buchen** visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He shares helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits — as well as a few ideas of his own — with timely photos and captions that explore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

## AIRFLOW FERTILIZER SPREADER

**T**his Vortex TR is mounted in the bed of a John Deere Gator. It has a 250-pound granular fertilizer polyethylene hopper that cannot become wet inside, with a 10-foot hose with an on/off switch located near the end of the nozzle. The Echo PB-770T backpack blower blows the granular fertilizer pellets precisely onto bunker faces, tree and shrub basins, and landscape beds. The blower can be dismounted to blow any granular fertilizers off cart paths, parking lots, etc. The unit costs up to \$4,000 depending on the model and it takes less than 10 minutes to install. Richard Garcia, superintendent at The Creek Course at Fiddler's Creek in Naples, Fla., showed me this unique fertilizer spreader.



*Excellence is the result of expecting more than others think is possible.*



## STAFF MOTIVATION

**T**he PGA Tour's TPC Network of resort, daily-fee and private clubs numbers 32 facilities in North America, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. The golf course management and maintenance is thorough, and the in-house recruiting, training and retention of their staff is successful, to say the least. Motivational quotes, in both Spanish and English, are prominently displayed in the employee lunch/meeting room, mechanic's shop area and equipment storage area. Gregory Murray Jack, golf course superintendent at TPC Trevi Bay in Naples, Fla. has a very motivated staff. Todd Draffen was the original superintendent when the phrases were placed on the walls.



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

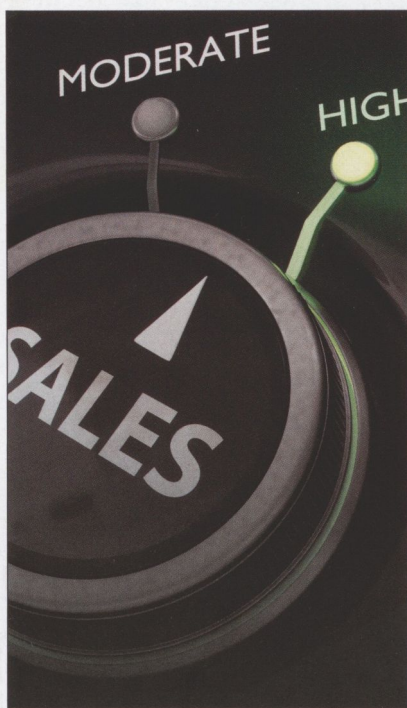


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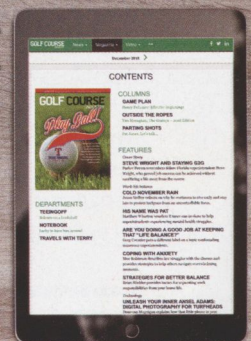
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## The pink unicorn

The game of golf is a collection of curiosities and once-in-a-blue-moon occurrences. For example, the odds of hitting a hole in one on a normal par-3 hole are 12,500-to-1. But things can really get crazy ... like a hole in one on a par-5. Consider this from Wikipedia:

*"As of October 2008, a condor (four under par) hole in one on a par 5 hole had been recorded on four occasions. A horseshoe-shaped par 5 hole once enabled a condor hole in one to be achieved with a 3-iron club. The longest recorded straight drive hole-in-one is believed to be 517 yards on the par 5 No. 9 hole at Green Valley Ranch Golf Club in Denver in 2002, aided by the thin air due to the high altitude. A condor is also known as a double albatross, or a triple eagle."*

### A CONDOR? WHO KNEW?

Yet among all the rarities in golf history – Alan Shepard hitting balls on the Moon or Jimmy the Greek famously winning a bet by hitting a golf ball a mile ... on a frozen lake – there is one thing that stands as the rarest achievement of all. It's so unlikely that I have to call it a "pink unicorn." It is the rarest of the rare in the crazy world of golf.

It's a non-golfer who went to TopGolf and then became a real golfer at a golf course.

Seriously. Can anyone show me a study of how many Americans started playing real golf because they went to TopGolf first? In fact, just show me one. Show me that pink unicorn.

As the great Judge Smails once said, "Well? We're waaaiting."

Look there's nothing wrong with TopGolf. They're building one in Cleveland right now and everyone is breathlessly waiting for the big grand opening. There are now about 50 TopGolf locations

in the U.S. and at least four more internationally.

They are franchise operations like Subway or Krispy Kreme. You buy the franchise rights (which presumably include technology, licensing, marketing, supplies, etc.) then you pay for land and construction on top of that. Total start-up costs average about \$18 million from start to finish, but the Vegas location reportedly cost a whopping \$50 million.

The folks who've bought franchises and built these in major markets are not dumb and they will undoubtedly earn their money back. Smaller markets? It seems to me it would be tough to recoup your \$18 million in Topeka or Greenville but, hey, more power to you if you want to try.

I also have no problem with the concept of TopGolf. Basically, it's a pretty fancy bowling alley with a driving range attached where the lanes would be. I like bowling. I probably go once every couple of years, usually for a party or something. I can't help but think that's pretty much the TopGolf model too. People go there to party – corporate entertainment or birthdays or low-end bachelor parties or whatever. They drop their \$100 a person and everyone has a good time.

My problem is that the NGF and others – who are apparently desperate to tell some kind of good news story about golf – are now touting the growth of "off-course play," including TopGolf, other simulators and

stand-alone driving ranges. They're claiming that 9.3 million Americans now play "golf" exclusively "off course" and somehow this indicates the game is growing. This, to borrow a phrase from bowling, is a gutter ball.

Fundamentally, TopGolf is not golf. It's an entertainment venue that's more akin to a video game arcade than (and I'm just going to say it) REAL GOLF.

If anything, I think TopGolf has the potential to cannibalize course revenues when actual golfers decide to go drop their \$100 there on Friday night instead of teeing it up Saturday morning. Yes, I know I'm being curmudgeonly about this and it's fun and all, but I'm tired of being told by the powers that be that somehow this giant bowling alley thingy is good for our game.

I call B.S.

My version of golf still takes place on a large, gorgeous, unregulated playing field made of real grass. It involves exercise and fresh air. You can keep score or not. There are no bells ringing or electronic buzzers going off because someone hit a great fake electronic shot. It's quiet, it's peaceful and it is fun as hell even when you stink at it.

So, I'd be happy to welcome a pink unicorn to my game but I'm not holding my breath. I think there's a better chance of me scoring a condor than TopGolf growing the game I love. GCI



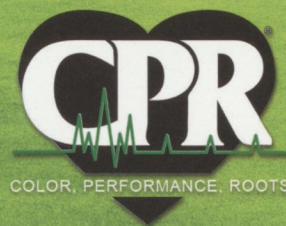
**PAT JONES** is the editor-at-large of *Golf Course Industry*. He can be reached at [pjones@gie.net](mailto:pjones@gie.net).



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