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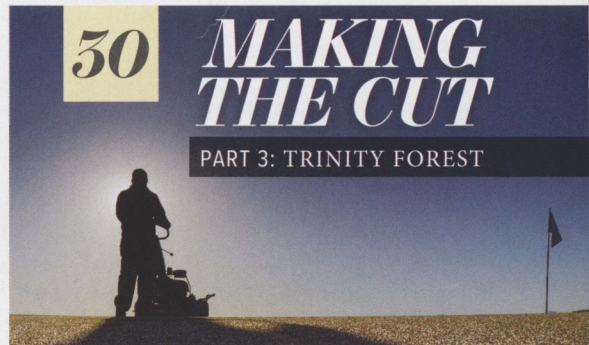
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MAKING THE CUT

PART 3: TRINITY FOREST



THE LONG OF IT

In this era of supposedly shrinking attention spans and 280-character bursts, we bring to you a pair of stories exceeding 3,000 words. To be fair, this marks the second time in four months we have surpassed traditional industry publication word counts. A pair of 3,000-word stories also anchored our February issue.

Readers told us they enjoyed what we provided in February, especially Trent Bouts' thorough cover story about superintendents coping with retirement. Shortly after submitting the retirement piece, Bouts approached us about pursuing another important topic: firings. Good luck properly examining that subject in 280 characters.

Using connections from years of excellent work for turf communities in multiple Southeast states, Bouts held lengthy conversations with superintendents who lost their jobs. Almost any writer can get a subject to discuss a career highlight such as hosting a major championship or completing a renovation. But persistence and mettle are required to convince a subject to detail his or her lowest professional moment.

As long as golfers, committees and owners expect the seemingly impossible to be achieved, superintendents will lose their jobs. Bouts didn't craft his story to embarrass, shame or scare. He provided perspective for the next person on the wrong side of a perplexing personnel decision. Bouts encountered a few challenges along the way, yet he persevered, producing a story deserving of the space it received.

We're grateful somebody as talented, well-connected and busy as Bouts, who leads turf publications in the Carolinas, Florida and Georgia, wants to be a part of *Golf Course Industry*. So, why place arbitrary limits on talent? We're confident this month's cover story will receive the same positive response as the retirement piece.

The other lengthy feature in this issue is the third part of our "Making the Cut" series supported by John Deere. The series commenced with a February profile of the TPC Scottsdale team, continued in March with a look at the advanced agronomics at TPC Sawgrass and concludes this month by introducing the diverse crew at Trinity Forest Golf Club in Dallas.

The team at Trinity Forest, site of the PGA Tour's AT&T Byron Nelson, includes crew members from five countries and managers from a half-dozen U.S. states. The group has become a cohesive unit, maintaining a championship golf course atop a landfill in south Dallas.

We started spending more time with assistant superintendents, equipment technicians and crew members in 2017 as part of the reporting for our "When the Creek Rises" series about the historic flooding and inspirational recovery at The Greenbrier. Telling the story from a variety of perspectives required three parts and dozens of pages. Had we stopped at 1,500 words and only spoken with two or three managers, the industry would have never grasped the enormity of the flood and how it affected lifelong West Virginians whose livelihoods are linked with the The Greenbrier's golf courses.

At Trinity Forest, we met an equipment manager who started his career as an assistant club pro, former construction workers from Central America, a south Dallas resident and an attorney who would rather be maintaining turf than studying legal cases. Their stories provide inspiration and ideas for superintendents looking for creative ways to fill open positions. Before touring the course and interviewing members of his team, director of grounds Kasey Kauff told us he wanted to see their names in the magazine more than his own. Fortunately, we didn't have to stare Kauff in the eye and say, "We don't have room for their stories." And fortunately, we didn't have to tell Bouts, "Stop at 1,200 words."

Depth, even in a quick-hitting era, can be delightful. Not all stories merit 3,000 words and a half-dozen pages. We understand the importance of offering varied content. But it's nice knowing we can push, expand and help some of you along the way. GCI



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
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A TEXAS THREE-STEP

New managing editor Matt LaWell recaps his first *Golf Course Industry* adventure.

▲ Trinity Forest Golf Club, home of the PGA Tour's AT&T Byron Nelson, at sunrise.

Seven years ago this month, my wife and I were somewhere in the middle of Texas, four states and 20 parks into a road trip to visit and write about every full-season, affiliated Minor League Baseball team in the country. We drove by day, wrote by night, survived on too much fast food and too many ballpark hot dogs, bunked in so many Walmart parking lots.

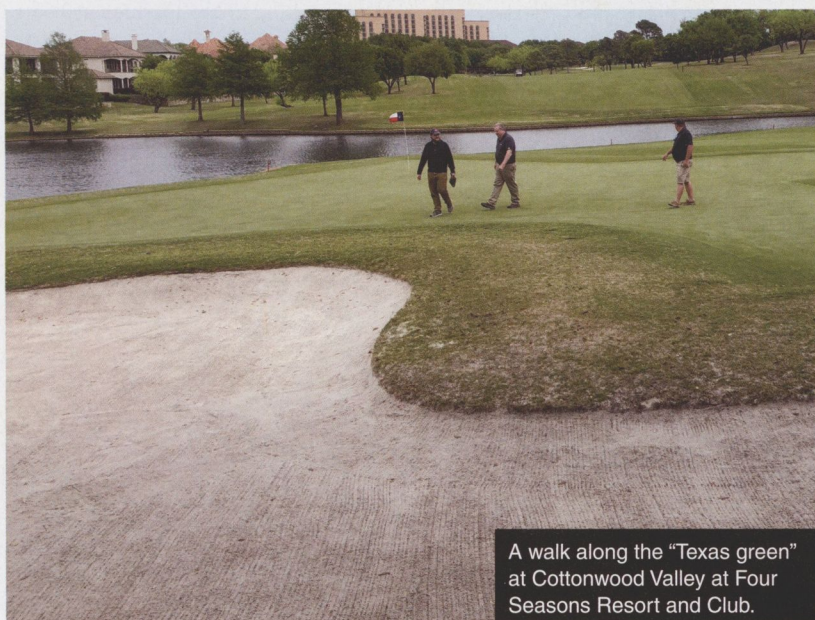
I was back in Texas not long ago, joined this time by *Golf Course Industry* editor Guy Cipriano, for a far less epic but no less interesting trip: Inside a pair of packed days, we visited three clubs, talked with dozens of folks, snapped hundreds of photos — and managed to find some pretty delicious burnt ends in the process.

I started my first GCI trip at Trinity Forest Golf Club, home of both the AT&T Byron Nelson and the Southern Methodist University golf teams, in south Dallas. The course is still new — it opened in the fall of 2016 — and has gained a reputation: Michael Jordan and George W. Bush are among its limited number of regulars. It is also essentially a links without shoreline, its turf fast and rolling, its expanses opened to the sun and the wind of Texas springs and summers. Gusts tend to average around 10 or 15 mph, according to Kasey Kauff, the director of grounds, but they whipped around 30 when we walked the course. I might have lost my cap more than once.

Guy and I were on the grounds for about 10 hours — not quite a full day for most superintendents, assistants and crew members, but more time than most folks, I think —



Matt LaWell, center, chats with Trinity Forest's Kasey Kauff and Oxni Ochoa.



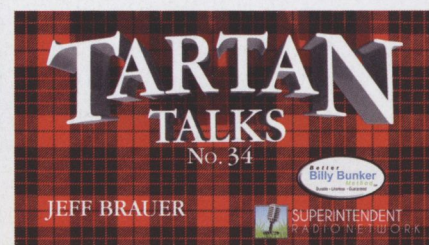
A walk along the "Texas green" at Cottonwood Valley at Four Seasons Resort and Club.

and talked with Kauff and his crew for a long story that starts on page 30.

We traveled the next day to the new Texas Rangers Golf Club in Arlington, a municipal course operated since 1982 as Chester W. Ditto Golf Course and reopened earlier this year as the only Major League Baseball-branded course in the country. Arlington native John Colligan worked through the renovation with his Colligan Golf Design partner, Trey Kemp, and the civic pride in his voice during a cart ride over its 55 feet of elevation change was wonderful. He lives just miles from the course. He wants it to be loved even more than he wants the Rangers to win a World Series.

Superintendent Brick Scott wants the course to be loved, too, and I'll dive more into his perspective in a story that will run in the magazine later this summer — maybe around the time the Rangers surprise everybody and gain some ground on the powerhouse intrastate rival Houston Astros.

We ended our Texas three-step that afternoon at TPC Four Seasons Las Colinas, the former home of the AT&T Byron Nelson, where Anthony L. Williams, the legendary director of golf course and landscape operations, and superintendent Cortland Winkle are working on something special. The course is as beautiful as ever — even



Tartan Talks No. 34

If you enjoyed reading Jeff Brauer in *Golf Course Industry* over the years, you'll savor this month's Tartan Talks podcast.



▲ Brauer

Brauer makes his anticipated debut on our airwaves to discuss a variety of subjects, including how somebody from Arlington Heights, Ill., established a golf course architecture firm in Arlington, Texas, and the impact Dick Nugent and Ken Killian had on his career.

Brauer spent 15 years authoring the monthly "Game Plan" column and his final regular contribution runs in this issue (page 26).

The conversation with Brauer, along with our other Superintendent Radio Network podcasts, can be downloaded via iTunes, Google Play and PlayerFM. They are also available via www.golfcourseindustry.com and biweekly Fast & Firm newsletters.

without 15,000 fans packed high on risers overlooking the 17th green — and they can take much of the credit.

We'll have more on Williams, Winkle and the latest chapters in their stories soon, too. For now, though, a pair of quotes to sum the first of many trips to track down and share stories with you about courses and, more important, people:

The first: "I told the people of my district that I would serve them as faithfully as I had done; but if not, they might go to hell, and I would go to Texas." Davy Crockett said that not long after losing his Congressional reelection bid in 1834, and it captures the pride of every Texan, native or adopted. Crockett had served his home state of Tennessee in the U.S. House of Representatives but narrowly lost his seat to a former state senator named Adam Huntsman. Crockett did go off to Texas. He was



Texas Rangers Golf Club in Arlington.

dead less than two years later. We all know that story.

The second: "Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." That quote is attributed to Mark Twain, but odds are he never wrote or said it. The sentiment

remains, though. Get going. Do things. Maybe visiting 122 ballparks in 153 days isn't your perfect road trip. Maybe you'd rather hit a new course every day for a winter, or test gear for a year, or bum through Scotland.

Whatever your dream — personal, professional, other — carve out the time and go do it.

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ADDITION BY (AGRONOMIC) SUBTRACTION AT THE PHOENICIAN

By Judd Spicer

Tyler Rasmussen has a new toy. Rasmussen took over as the head golf superintendent at the fully-renovated Phoenician in Scottsdale, Ariz., in January, two months after the iconic resort's on-site course reopened following a 10-month renovation by locally-based architect Phil Smith, which took the grounds from 27 to 18 holes.

The overhaul of the Troon-managed course was part of the final phase of a three-year, \$90 million resort makeover that includes a new spa, sport courts, athletic club and pool area.

From a turf take, keeping up with the impressive new slew of luxuries comes with a scale of reaction.

"When I see how great the new, state-of-the-art amenities



The Phoenician reopened last year after a major renovation.

are, it does put more pressure on the golf course to match the other amenities," Rasmussen says. "But at the same time, as personally-driven as we are to do our absolute best, it can also take a little pressure off the shoulders to drive all the profits. They spent a lot of money to renovate and to match the renovation work done at the resort. So it's our job to match

© THE PHOENICIAN



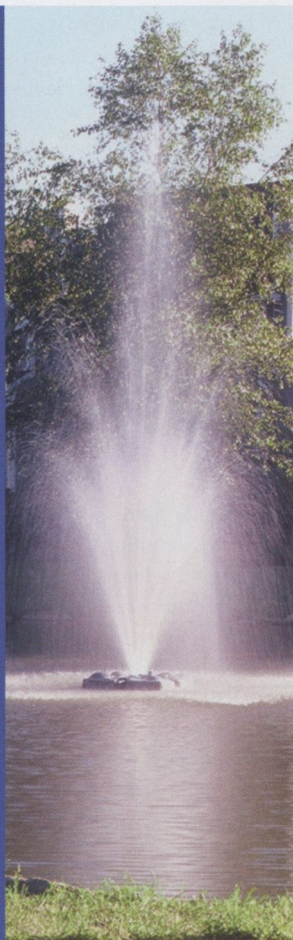
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those two worlds; to make the course an unbelievable amenity for the resort. That's the expectation."

While player reaction to the new layout is fast finding positive traction for a more seamless routing through the Sonoran Desert, the turnaround time puts an onus on the grounds to find full fruition. As of mid-March, the rework continues to mature into its vision.



▲ Rasmussen

"It was a pretty quick turnaround, 10 months," Rasmussen says. "But I'm lucky that I came in to new irrigation, new greens. It's a new course, it's great, but there will be challenges."

Rasmussen will implement aggressive cultural practices in the early phases of the maturation. "The biggest challenge looking forward will be the spring transition; going from the rye back to Bermuda," he says. "Given the short construction time, some of the final holes that sprigged, they were overseeded 30 days later. So was that turf fully established to a point that it's gonna come back good in the spring? There will be areas that will be thin, so it's our responsibility to be on top of all the cultural practices and push that transition early."

Included in the renovation are new TifEagle greens.

"They're two different stories right now," Rasmussen says. "Some of them were sprigged, but as the timeline became



tighter and tighter, some of them were sodded. So, it will probably be two different types of cultural practices, as far as core aerification, and how much material we're moving from the sprigged greens to the sodded greens."

From a macro vantage, the Phoenician golf philosophy of adding more with fewer holes is an impression undoubtedly shared by myriad high-end club and resort properties. The course downsized removed 45 acres of turf which, in concert with the new irrigation system, is already bringing returns in water conservation. In turn, published reports suggest that the former golf land will eventually be repurposed for houses and condominium sales.

Seeking to engage and attract members and guests with more

non-golf amenities, luxury brands around the country are actively investing respective attentions (and dollars) into re-routing sport and leisure time.

While the Phoenician's golf re-work saw a reinvestment into a solvent and popular facility, the decrease of holes to present an improved play and more focused course canvas may well represent the newest of high-end property trends.

Not that addition-by-agronomic-subtraction is a bad thing.

"I think that's more where golf is going," Rasmussen says. "I once worked at a different property in Arizona with 45 holes, and that was a lot. It was too much almost to take care of, considering the amount of water and resources needed for the operation. Factoring in the price of equipment, the price of labor, I can definitely see a trend where places with multiple courses or 27 holes, they're gonna start reducing down to 18 holes."

INDUSTRY buzz



Another quarter, another acquisition for **Troon**, which recently added **OB Sports Golf Management** of Scottsdale and its portfolio of more than 70 courses and clubs to its roster. OB Sports will join Troon Golf, **Honours Golf**, **Troon Privé**, **CADDIEMASTER**, **Troon International**, **True Club Solutions**, **Cliff Drysdale Management** and **RealFood Consulting** under the Troon umbrella, and will continue to operate within its own brand.

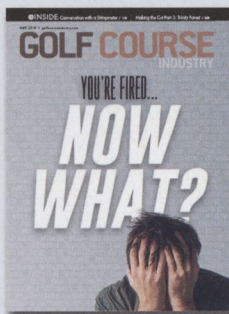
Less than a week before winning his fifth green jacket, **Tiger Woods** and his TGR Design company were unveiled as lead architects for the Makaha North Course at Makaha Valley Resort on Oahu, Hawaii. **Gil Hanse**, who has designed the Black Course at Streamsong, Pinehurst No. 4 and the Olympic Course in Rio de Janeiro, will develop the Makaha South Course in concert. Both projects were commissioned by **Pacific Links International**.

Rees Jones is keeping busy, thanks to a pair of renovations announced just weeks apart. Jones and his associates are at work now renovating a pair of holes at LedgeRock Golf Club outside Reading, Pa. — a course of his own design that opened in 2006 — that should be finished around Memorial Day. He's also overseeing a \$7.5 million renovation of the South Course at BallenIsles Country Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., originally designed in 1964 by **Joe Lee** and **Dick Wilson**, that should be finished by December.

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Covering isn't just for music

The inimitable Elvis Presley's version of *Hound Dog* sold 10 million copies and holds the 19th spot on *Rolling Stone's* list of 500 Best Songs of All Time. But the King of Rock 'N' Roll can't claim *Hound Dog* entirely as his own. Elvis was covering a version recorded three years earlier by Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, an American rhythm and blues singer and songwriter.

Elvis has been accused of stealing or culturally appropriating *Hound Dog*. But the truth is that covering was even more popular in his day than now. The more important takeaway is that we should always be paying attention to the past, learning from others and developing our own plans for success. There are three distinct plans that club leaders should have within easy reach at all times.

STRATEGIC PLAN

A strategic plan should clarify two aspects of purpose: what we are and what do we intend to accomplish. An effective strategic plan builds on the knowledge of past experience and market understanding to describe the club's goals and objectives.

All businesses benefit greatly from the discipline and clarity provided by sound strategy. Although many golf facilities lack formalized strategy, those that actively use their strategic plans hold a distinct competitive advantage. According to research completed by Global Golf Advisors, 73 percent of clubs that rely on a strategic plan to guide their operations outperform their competition.

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Most golf courses and private clubs do business in markets that are extremely oversupplied. Further, many of these facilities lack a current and actionable understanding of the people who are their customers, members and prospects.

In highly competitive and crowded markets, the advantage goes to those who know whom they are looking for, where to find them and how to communicate with them effectively.

Effective and purposeful communication plans are target specific. Knowing how to communicate with your baby boomer audience is different than reaching millennials, for example. The best communications plans utilize multiple media and reinforce messaging on a disciplined schedule.

Most people find time only for trusted information sources. Thus, golf courses and private clubs have the advantage in most cases of being "known" to their active market segments. What tactics are working best?

- Robust and engaging websites are the platform for any communications plan today. They must be inviting, engaging and functional.
- Print communications – newsletters and postcards, for example – are sticky with many golfers, especially those over 50, and should not be disregarded even in a digital age.
- Engaging social media help create conversations within your community of members

and prospects.

- Video that shows images of people enjoying the golf course and clubhouse activities help tell the club's stories in authentic ways.
- Person-to-person contact from key staff members remains a difference-maker. There is no substitute for a personal invitation.

STAFFING PLAN

Access to affordable labor is one of the most important operational challenges at most golf clubs. With labor costs now exceeding 55 percent of most clubs' operational expenses, thoughtful planning is essential. Borrowing ideas from the past enables managers to create meaningful relationships with employees and keep them committed to their jobs. What's more, clubs that encourage their best employees to recruit friends and relatives have an advantage in attracting top talent.

A reliable staffing plan identifies the utilization flow of the facility to ensure that the club is properly staffed at all times. The plan must calculate labor and payroll burden costs to enable dependable budget projections. The best staffing plans show the position title and description, number of employees required, allotted compensation and benefits, and options for flexing staff size and positions as conditions change.

Big Mama Thornton inspired Elvis to lay claim as the King of Rock 'N' Roll. Who's your inspiration, and what's your plan for success? **GC**



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

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Conversation with a Stimpmeter

Whenever major championship season heats up, I think of an old friend who I haven't spoken with in many years. He's made of steel, tends to be a little rigid, is very unforgiving and, in the wrong hands, can create quite a stir. Despite all that, I realized it was time I reached out, so, ladies and gentlemen, may I present The Stimpmeter – better known to the other veterans of course set-up as “Stimpie.”

TM: LONG TIME, NO SEE. YOU'RE LOOKING GOOD, IF A LITTLE STIFF. HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING OUT?

STIMPIE: Yeah, I've been doing a lot of plank work for my core. Worst thing I can do is sag in the middle.

TM: PARTICULARLY SINCE YOU HAVE TO ENDURE ANOTHER SCHEDULE CHANGE THIS YEAR. WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON THE NEW MAJORS CALENDAR?

STIMPIE: Before I say anything, let it be known that I'm only talking to you because we had a close, personal relationship for two decades. You handled me well. And I appreciate you waiting to talk until after the Masters. You know that everything there is under double-secret probation. I didn't want to say something wrong and end up staking Chairman Ridley's tomato plants. As for the new schedule? I'm excited. It will be good for golf, but it's going to keep me on the road for some time. And I love the idea of holding the PGA at Bethpage Black and listening to those crazy New York sports fans.

TM: GIVE OUR READERS A LITTLE FAMILY HISTORY. YOU'VE

EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS, AT LEAST SINCE YOUR ANCESTORS' DAYS, RIGHT? WHERE ARE YOU AND HOW'S THE FAMILY?

STIMPIE: I now live in New Jersey. So, as they say, “I got a guy!” – Edward S. Stimpson Sr., my great-grandfather. He was the 1935 Massachusetts State Amateur Champion and former captain of the Harvard University golf team. He made the first Stimpmeter out of wood. We called him “Papa Woody.” In 1976, Frank Thomas of the USGA (who's now puttering around with frogs) perfected our performance and recast us in aluminum. That was the year we made our public debut at the U.S. Open. Two years later, we were being mass produced and available to anyone. We quickly found out that in the wrong hands, I can be very dangerous!

TM: HOW SO?

STIMPIE: When golfers don't understand our true job. I'm just an angled track that releases a ball at a known velocity so that the distance the ball rolls on a green surface can be measured. The key word there is “measured.” But golfers, especially low handicappers, and many golf superintendents are obsessed with how far I can sling a golf ball. Lots of money, time, labor and turf are wasted as a result.

I think people have forgotten our original intent. They're more interested in how fast greens are rather than how smooth and healthy. Now

others are accusing me of hurting pace-of-play. I say, ‘Don't blame the tool, blame the carpenter.’

TM: OTHER THAN DETERMINING A GREEN'S SPEED, WHAT'S YOUR TRUE PURPOSE?

STIMPIE: Consistency is my middle name, although many seem to have forgotten this. The goal is not to make a green as fast as possible, but as consistent as possible, using appropriate green speeds for the weather conditions, green design, course budget and the handicaps of players. And let me define “consistency.” I mean similar surface pace from green to green. No surprises for the golfer. The PGA Tour turf staff does this well.

TM: SO, YOU'RE NOT A SPEED FREAK? CRAZY-FAST SPEEDS AREN'T PRACTICAL FOR DAY-TO-DAY PLAY?

STIMPIE: Damn straight ... like me. Most golfers aren't as good as they think they are, and fast green speeds stress the turf and slow down the pace of play. I never understood why the worst players out there want the fastest speeds. Hello?! They're not that good!

The average player doesn't understand that there are many factors affecting what the superintendent has to deal with when preparing a green surface: weather, humidity, contours, shade, drainage, over-the-top outings, golfer's ability levels. Then, God forbid, I get into the wrong hands, like that of an overzealous green



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

chairman or an ego-driven golf course superintendent who thinks fast automatically means good. And, even worse are those who buy those silly knock-off stimp-meters! I don't even know those stimps.

TM: WHAT ABOUT WHEN GOLFERS COMPLAIN TO THE SUPERINTENDENT THAT THE GREENS ARE TOO SLOW?

STIMPIE: Duh ... hit it harder.

TM: BESIDES MAJOR-TOURNAMENT SEASON, WHAT'S YOUR LEAST FAVORITE TIME OF YEAR?

STIMPIE: Mid-summer up north. The weather is changing and it's too damn hot! And humid. But if I think it's tough, how do you think a turf plant feels getting a close shave every day to please the masses? Whew!

TM: SPEAKING OF UP NORTH, YOU'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO RETURNING TO BETHPAGE?

“ Golfers and superintendents are obsessed with how far I can sling a golf ball. I think people have forgotten our original intent. They're accusing me of hurting pace-of-play. Don't blame the tool – blame the carpenter!”

STIMPIE: You bet! Great spot and great fans! It'll be nuts, so Sergio and Bryson had better behave. I don't even mind being a bit out of sync with the new timing of the PGA Championship. Luckily, I work with the PGA's Kerry Haigh. Smart guy, you know. Reliable. The speeds at Bethpage might be a little slower than the U.S. Opens there. I bet Kerry is relieved we're not trying to get green speeds up in August. Even I would start sweating and powdering my grooves with Gold Bond.

TM: HOW ABOUT THE U.S. OPEN AT PEBBLE BEACH? IS THAT A TREAT FOR YOU?

STIMPIE: Absolutely! The Mrs. always enjoys Carmel. Ca-ching! And our National Open, the toughest to win. The small greens at Pebble are tough to putt and tough to stimp. But Chris and Jack will have it ready.

TM: DO YOU EVER FEEL AS IF YOU'RE BEING USED?

STIMPIE: Dude, I'm over-used. People dragging me out early each morning – I haven't even had my first espresso and cannoli! Off we go, running around, rolling golf balls back and forth. To add insult to injury, members want the superintendent to post my daily measurements in the golf shop! How would you feel if you're trying to drop a few and everyone knows where you're at? But you know the tricks to get the readings faster than they are, right? (chuckles)

TM: A FEW RAPID-FIRE

QUESTIONS. GIVE ME YOUR FIRST THOUGHT ON THE FOLLOWING. WHAT ARE THE HARDEST GREENS YOU EVER MEASURED?

STIMPIE: Oakmont Country Club. Crazy-fast! I almost slid off their surfaces one year.

TM: LEAST FAVORITE GOLF COURSE?

STIMPIE: Don't have one. I love them all, but

especially those that listen to common sense when using me.

TM: FAVORITE GOLF COURSE?

STIMPIE: Too many to think about, but I do enjoy The Old Course.

TM: SPEAKING OF THE HOME OF GOLF, ARE YOU CLAUSTROPHOBIC WHEN THE R&A PUTS YOU IN A WIND TUNNEL AT THE OPEN TO GET A "TRUE" GREEN SPEED?

STIMPIE: I get nervous. It's like an agronomic MRI, but it makes great sense when the course is firm and their winds are howling. Keeps my balls on track.

TM: WORST MOMENT?

STIMPIE: There have been a few. Usually when the "N.A.R.P.'s" or "Non-Agronomic-Real People," use me incorrectly and don't listen to the actual data produced.

TM: ARE YOU ARE GOOD FOR THE GAME?

STIMPIE: Yes. Again, consistency is the mantra. Excess is not good. Also, I'm evolving. Look at my new ball placement slot. The USGA created it when I'm on the steep, sloped green surfaces of our great, classic courses. It's a great idea because it keeps the classics from becoming like pool tables, flat and boring.

TM: WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST FEAR?

STIMPIE: Rust!

TM: WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE STIMPMETER USER?

STIMPIE: Come on! You're my one and only. Thanks for the memories, buddy. GCI



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Case Study of the Target Specialty Products™ CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



Ron Furlong

As more tailored fertility programs become available on the market, it's getting easier for golf course superintendents to settle on an exact program that perfectly fits their specific needs.

Three years ago, Alan Slaughter, superintendent at Eagle Landing Golf Club near Jacksonville, Fla., was recommended a program by one of his trusted sales representatives, Gary Morgan, with Target Specialty Products.

The basis of the new program Morgan was suggesting to Slaughter would be centered around three products from Target Specialty Products from Target Specialty Products and their Turf Fuel line. Element 6, Photo Fuel and Quick Green represented Turf Fuel staples capable of fitting the specific requirement of Eagles Landing.

For Slaughter, who has been at Eagle Landing since the club debuted its Clyde Johnston-designed course in 2005, it all starts with spring green-up on the course's TifEagle Bermudagrass greens. "I really depend on the combo of these three products for the all-important spring green-up," Slaughter says. "We start applying the Turf Fuel program when the TifEagle breaks dormancy."

Element 6, fueled by exclusive Nutrifense technology, helps create very resilient plants on closely managed turf-like golf course greens. It also promotes exceptional root production.

Photo Fuel, a 12-0-0, which has Nutrifense technology along with two biostimulant components, is specifically designed to enhance photosynthesis.

Quick Green is a 14-20-0 high phosphate biostimulant that focuses not only on that all-important spring green-up,



EAGLE LANDING GOLF CLUB RECEIVES HEAVY USE ON ITS TIFEAGLE BERMUDAGRASS GREENS.

but also on new establishment, winter damage and aeration recovery.

"It's not just the spring green-up that we rely on these products for," Slaughter says. "It's also aeration recovery, and after that a weekly push during the summer. Following that initial spring green-up app, we apply weekly after aerification, usually Memorial Day through October."

Slaughter uses all three products in his Turf Fuel program at 4.8 ounces per thousand throughout the season on the TifEagle greens. "The combo gives me soluble N, P, K, Si, Mg, Mn, Cu and Mo," Slaughter says. "Also amino and fulvic acids."

Turf Fuel products were designed specifically to enhance plant strength. A stronger and healthier plant can handle more extreme growing conditions and

the related stress that high quality turf surfaces must endure. Energy conservation is a big key to the success of the Turf Fuel products.

The philosophy behind the Turf Fuel products is simple: give plants the nutrients and stress-fighting components they need in the best raw material forms possible, thus creating exceptionally strong plants. Three years into his Turf Fuel Program, Slaughter displays enthusiasm about the results.

"With inconsistent winters and 50,000 rounds per year, we've found the turfgrass is retaining better color and the root mass generated is far more substantial," he says. "It's simply the best combination I have used to push and maintain TifEagle for consistent color and wear tolerance."

YOU'RE FIRED...

NOW WHAT?

**THE EMOTIONS,
REALITIES, CHALLENGES
AND AFTERMATH
OF LOSING A
SUPERINTENDENT JOB.**

By Trent Bouts



One day, Kirsten Conover was, at long last, about to begin grassing near the end of a massive overhaul of a coastal course in Florida. That greening was to be the wrapping on her first renovation and, as such, no small validation for a woman as a golf course superintendent in an industry dominated by men. Later that same day, she went home – was sent home – suddenly out of a job and feeling like someone stamped “L for loser” on her forehead.

One day, Tim Davis, covered in grease from a cantankerous blower, answered a call from his general manager at a country club in central North Carolina. “Hey Bud, what you doin?” he remembers hearing. “Can you come on up to the office? Take your time.” Later, back in his shop, Davis stood, in tears, before his staff, breaking the news that he was no longer their boss.

One day, Superintendent A, who cannot be named, nor who can identify his former employer because of terms dictated by a separation agreement, was, at least to the outside world, firmly ensconced in a position ambitious colleagues would aspire to. The next morning, he stood anonymous and alone at a local driving range, unemployed. Torn by a tug of war between shock and anger at being fired, he pounded balls for a couple hours. “I just didn’t know what else to do,” he says.

Getting fired is tough on anybody. But it can be eviscerating for

golf course superintendents.

Many develop an affinity for their property and their people that makes a pseudo-marriage of the former and the latter feel like family. It’s a common catchphrase that superintendents spend more time with their course and their staff than they do with their own families. Some even refer to their greens as their “kids.”

Of course, some have flesh and blood spouses and kids as well, nearest and dearest who often find themselves uprooted from their homes, schools, friends, routines – life as they’d known it – because the major breadwinner’s next job is in another town.

Another recently fired superintendent, who we’ll call Superintendent B because of another separation agreement, explains: “It affects everybody, a lot of people. You feel like you’re letting a lot of people down. You’re letting your family down, you’re letting the people on your crew down, people that have confided in you and trusted you with their welfare.” This superintendent did secure another job, in another state, and so the family home for more than a dozen years went on the market.

For six weeks after Davis was fired, his wife turned right out of their neighborhood, just a mile from the club, preferring the long route to anywhere else rather than lay eyes on the property to which her husband devoted 31 years. The property where, at the height of the Great Recession, he volunteered for a \$10,000 pay cut. The one, while things

were still tight, for which he dipped deeper still into his own pocket paying for four pieces of equipment. The one where he sometimes rolled out of bed in the wee hours over a weekend to get a member home safely.

“I’ll die doing it,” he’d once said of his job, and proudly.

Conover is not married and has no kids. But she did have a golf course. “It’s a very personal thing because there’s a lot of blood, sweat and tears goes into it,” she says. “You can go to every green – you go out and talk to them – every part of the property that you’re so intimate with. ... And you know, it is like a death or it is like a divorce. There is a process you’re going to go through, all those emotions, and I think they’re all legitimate and everybody deals with them in different ways.”

Indeed, when the job is taken away, the void is deeper than a 50- or 60-hour chunk of the former superintendent’s week. Often, it is also a major chunk of who they are and how they see themselves. It has been said that anyone can be a golf course superintendent, but you cannot be a good golf course superintendent unless you love it.

Which explains in part why Conover says, of being fired: “It’s like someone cut your arm off, or stabbed you, and you can’t stop the bleeding.” Exacerbating the pain and anguish is the fact that not all who get fired are at fault. Of course, some are completely so. But the far end of the spectrum can stretch to something as thin as the whim of the new club president, or

IT AFFECTS EVERYBODY, A LOT OF PEOPLE. YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE LETTING A LOT OF PEOPLE DOWN. YOU'RE LETTING YOUR FAMILY DOWN, YOU'RE LETTING THE PEOPLE ON YOUR CREW DOWN, PEOPLE THAT HAVE CONFIDED IN YOU AND TRUSTED YOU WITH THEIR WELFARE."

a green committee chair looking to flex some muscle. Legally, at least for the employer, everything in between is fair game ... no matter how unfair it might feel.

In terms of labor law, employees in most states work at-will, essentially meaning they can be fired for any reason with no onus on the employer to provide, let alone establish, just cause. There are exceptions in some states but without a formal contract or protections negotiated through collective bargaining by a trade union, an employee is done pretty much when the boss says so.

And it happens a lot. Facilities decide to "go in a different direction" or that "it's time to make a change." Sometimes these are euphemisms for "younger and cheaper," or "looking for a bigger name," but sometimes it's to be kinder than saying "you're not good enough." Regardless, every golf course superintendent out there – every single one – has either been fired or knows someone who has.

There is no such thing as a superintendent census, but *Golf Course Industry's* 2016 State of the Industry survey found that about one in 10 superintendents had been fired "for job performance reasons." The question omits a swath of other reasons for losing a job, not least of which is the fact that, in most situations, employers don't have to give a reason at all. That could explain why at a recent meeting of superintendents at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, one guesstimated that "maybe a third" of all superintendents – current and former – had seen the axe. Another put the figure closer to 15 percent. A few days later, at the Southeast Regional Conference at The Walker Course at Clemson University in South Carolina, two others independently put the figure closer to 50 percent.

While that hardly amounts to a scientific study, each estimate was

made in good faith and extrapolated from experience. So, when the average comes out to around one in three, it points to a degree of volatility not seen in many professions.

Some superintendents get tired, some get bored, some get overconfident and some get cranky. But, frankly, some get shafted. Whatever the reason, or the degree of culpability, the individual in the firing line finds him- or herself not so much confronted with a new reality as condemned to it.

"You feel like a criminal," Conover says. "You have to be escorted out of your office. That was hard. But it is part of the job. It happens to everybody, or so it seems like. Some people are lucky, or maybe they are just more savvy. I'm not very political and sometimes I don't read situations, I guess, the way I should. I just think everybody goes through life like I do. I'm pretty transparent, so I expect they should be transparent. But clearly it doesn't work like that."

Earlier in his life, Superintendent A endured divorce and a serious illness. Getting fired was "a hell of a lot worse" than either, he says. "It's not the end of the world, but it's pretty close. Because it's the uncertainty. When I got divorced, I still had an income – so, it was just a reallocation of resources. With the illness, the surgeon said there was a very high rate of recovery.

"But when I lost my job, I didn't have an income. That is very stressful on a relationship. You get home and you tell your wife and the color drains out of her face and it's like, 'Well, how are we going to pay the mortgage? How are we going to pay the bills?' All that uncertainty started to flood my mind."

And it lingered.

It took more than a year for Superintendent A to secure his next job, not as a superintendent, but in sales for a golf industry supplier. He freely admits that 20 years earlier he

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“WHEN IT HAPPENS, YOU’RE IN SHOCK, YOU’RE IN DISBELIEF, YOU’RE ANGRY, YOU’RE ASHAMED. AND YOU’RE CONFUSED, UNTIL YOU GET SOME ANSWERS ON WHY THIS HAPPENED. SO, THERE’S JUST AN ARRAY OF EMOTIONS. THEN YOU SIT BACK AND GO, ‘NOW WHAT?’”

would never have imagined himself in such a role. And even when he accepted the position, he considered it temporary.

“I thought this would be a year, maybe two, that would give me the opportunity to continue to look for jobs,” he says. “And I did. I continued to look for a couple of years. Then I came to the realization that I really liked what I was doing, and I liked the quality of life that it afforded me. I liked the freedom that it afforded me. You never say never, but I don’t see myself going back.”

Eventually, Superintendent A had to tap into savings he’d put aside to get children through college. He also signed up for unemployment benefits. “That was about the most humiliating thing I’ve ever done,” he says. “Unemployment is there for a reason and it’s certainly something that everybody needs to take advantage of when you do find yourself let go from a job. But I found that to be extremely humiliating.”

As Conover says, though, “Superintendents are resilient, we’re problem solvers, that’s what we do. So, you have to apply that to the situation you’re in. We do what we need to do and move on.” The day she was fired – “It was a Thursday,

the last day of the pay period” – she called her boyfriend, shattered. They went for pizza, then a swim in the Gulf of Mexico.

Since that day in 2016, after 15 years as a superintendent, Conover has worked hourly jobs in golf course maintenance. To help bridge the shortfall from her salaried days, she took in roommates. “I don’t have kids. It’s me and my cat, and (my boyfriend) can fend for himself. But I did have a mortgage,” she says. “And I had the space, so I thought, ‘Why not?’ I took in a mother and son. The father had to go back to Venezuela to get his papers. They moved in for 18 months until he could come back. I helped them and they helped me.”

In contrast, Davis landed squarely on his feet. Less than a week later he went to work for a friend with a landscaping company. What was to be three days “helping out” turned into a few weeks. Then another friend called and today Davis manages six building projects for a \$15 million company as a construction superintendent.

Call it luck, or karma – considering what he left on the table offering up that pay cut – but thanks to severance pay and accrued vacation

time, Davis says he took home more money in the first six months after losing his job than he had over a similar period at any point in his career.

Still, there was heartache in the moment.

As Superintendent B says: “When it happens, you’re in shock, you’re in disbelief, you’re angry, you’re ashamed. And you’re confused, until you get some answers on why this happened. So, there’s just an array of emotions. Then you sit back and go, ‘Now what?’”

That very question is why they agreed to speak, in the hope that their experience may shed some future light for superintendents yet to know their career’s darkest days. That takes some doing. “I’ve never cared to talk about it,” Superintendent A says. “Because the other emotion, when it happens, is embarrassment. Everybody is going to know that you got fired.”

Conover remembers that red-faced feeling all too well. “It’s almost like you’re the kid at school that everyone else is talking about,” she says. “You’re around, but you don’t know what to do. You’ve been sidelined. Because you don’t have a golf course, you don’t feel a part

of the fraternity and it's like you have big stamp on your forehead, L for loser."

The immediate challenge, Superintendent A says, is keeping your wits despite the shock. He remembers his "head was spinning" as he took in the news. "Getting fired blindsides you," he says. "I didn't think about anything to ask for while I was in there, such as a letter of recommendation, or being able to get three or four years' worth of your reviews. When you find yourself in that situation, those are some of things you need to ask for ... if you can think of it."

And there are some things you should not do. Davis declined to immediately sign separation papers waiting for him on the general manager's desk. "I said 'No. I'm not going to sign anything until my lawyer looks over it and makes sure I'm covered, and you're covered. I'll have it ready for you in a week,'" he says. "We had to change some things, but it was fair. We parted on good terms. They took care of me. And I have no animosity."

Long before getting to that point – like right now – Superintendent A's best advice for any superintendent or assistant superintendent is to draft a Plan B. "I didn't have a back-up plan. I was the guy who said, 'This will never happen to me. I'm good at what I do.' I think one of the reasons it was so hard and stressful, is that there was no Plan B. People need to put thought into, 'What if?' I certainly never did. Whether it's doing lawncare, or doing a completely different job altogether, you've got to have a backup plan."

As weeks and months rolled by, calling contacts, sending out resumes, building a website and sitting for interviews with no job secured, Superintendent A found important respite and release, ironically enough, on the golf course. The general manager at a nearby

club was a friend and extended an open invitation. "I wasn't a member anywhere and certainly, at that point, I wasn't going to pay to play public golf, so for him to extend that offer was pretty important to me at that time," he says. "At least it gave me something to do and filled up some of the waiting time. The waiting is the worst."

There was a lot of getting close and missing out. Not that there was a wealth of available opportunity back then. The global economy was still teetering from the Great Recession, and there was another obstacle.

"Honestly, I was not a very good interview," he says. "I'm not very good at the fluff, talking with people and being all warm and fuzzy. You ask me a question, I'm going to give you a pretty much black-and-white answer. And I found that most clubs didn't want that honesty. And if they did want it, they didn't want it from me, I guess. I worked at it. I worked with a couple of interview

coaches and they did the best they could to help me through it. But I was just not a very good interview."

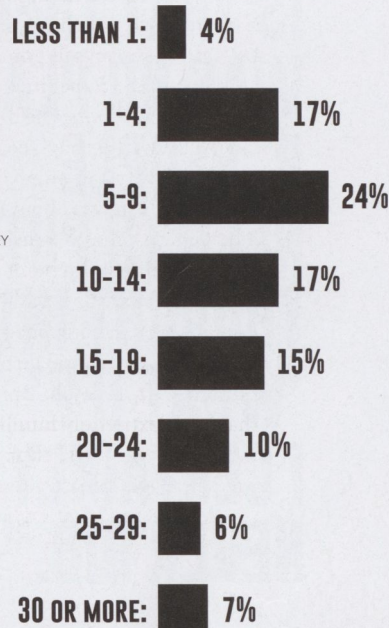
Such introspection is common among superintendents who lose their jobs. The sudden jolt is a shake-up that Conover says initiates "a personal journey." "It kind of helps focus you," she adds. "There's always rumors about what happened. And since I didn't know why I got fired, you listen to some of that and ask yourself if maybe there's something in there that I can work on, that I can apply."

After making her first call to an early boss, Matt Taylor, CGCS at Royal Poinciana Golf Club – "Because Matt knows everybody, right?" – Conover was hired immediately by Tim Hiers, CGCS then at The Club at Mediterra. When Hiers moved to a new project at White Oak Plantation, she switched to Quail Creek Country Club where Kevin Leo needed a landscape and project manager.

"If you take advantage of the

SUPERINTENDENT TENURE YEARS IN CURRENT POSITION

SOURCE: 2017 GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY STATE OF THE INDUSTRY SURVEY



I DIDN'T HAVE A BACKUP PLAN. I WAS THE GUY WHO SAID, 'THIS WILL NEVER HAPPEN TO ME. I'M GOOD AT WHAT I DO.' I THINK ONE OF THE REASONS IT WAS SO HARD AND STRESSFUL, IS THAT THERE WAS NO PLAN B. PEOPLE NEED TO PUT THOUGHT INTO, 'WHAT IF?' I CERTAINLY NEVER DID."

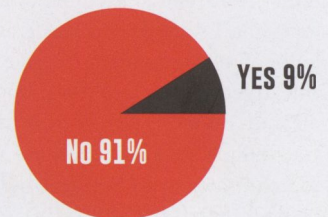
networking that you've done, there are people that are willing to give you a hand," she says. "You have to just swallow your pride and just move forward, because there's nothing else you can do. You just have to move on and try not to let it color the way you look at everything else."

In addition to his family and friends, Davis says his faith helped enormously when dealing with that "head-spinning." "It takes a few weeks, don't get me wrong," Davis says. "But there's no need to be bitter. Life does not stop to pick up your butt. You have a family you are responsible for and life is way too short. People say to me, 'How are you not the most pissed off individual after giving them 31 years of your life?' I say, 'Who's that going to help? It's not going to make me feel any better. Matter of fact, it's going to make me feel worse.' I've got 31 years invested in that club and the people there. And they are good people. I hope they flourish."

Something else helped Davis cope, a perspective that grew out of something his son, Tyler, used to say as a toddler. "He'd say, 'This is my daddy's golf course,'" Davis recalls. "It took about 10 years into my tenure in the business to realize that, in fact, it was not my golf course. And that was probably one of the biggest things that helped me through this. I knew it wasn't mine. I'd known for a long time I was a worker just like everybody else. I was a higher-paid worker with a lot I was responsible for. But I was just a worker."

That lesson also hit home with Conover. "I didn't realize quite how much I got caught up in my job," she says. "I can actually take a weekend and not have to worry if my greens are going to die. It can be an opportunity to ask, 'Do I

HAVE YOU BEEN FIRED FOR JOB PERFORMANCE REASONS?



SOURCE: 2016 GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY STATE OF THE INDUSTRY SURVEY

really want to be a superintendent again and have all that grinding, and playing all the political games, trying to provide a product when you don't have enough help?' After all this time, almost three years, I still get upset about it. But I don't really have any complaints. Life is pretty good."

Approaching a year since he was let go, Davis still scans superintendent job websites almost daily. "People ask me, 'Do you miss the golf business?'" he says. "I miss the people, I miss the guys, you know. But do I miss the grind? No? I don't miss working every Saturday like I was doing. (My wife) Jennifer and I go and get coffee on Saturday mornings. I mean, c'mon, what did I miss out on (all those years), you know? It's been a blessing."

"It took me leaving the industry to realize that. Now I'm preaching it to every friend I have. I tell them, it's not worth you being there from sun up until 7:30 every day. They don't care when you're gone. They'll just be sticking a tee in the ground again. Make being a superintendent what you do, not who you are." GCI

Trent Bouts is a Greer, S.C.-based writer and frequent GCI contributor.



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This Time, It's Different

Jeff Brauer, ASGCA, describes the joys – and rigors – of a 15-year column writing run.

▲ Tempest Golf Club in Gladwater, Texas, is one of Jeff Brauer's recent projects.

Astute readers may have noticed my regular column has been absent recently, which had happened occasionally over 15 years. I missed two deadlines, and once, I missed the editor's memo about a "theme" issue and was wildly off topic. This time, it's different, as I won't be regularly writing a column for *Golf Course Industry* moving forward, and any contributions will come as an outside writer.

It was an annual rite of spring at the Golf Industry Show for me to offer my resignation. Why?

- Those of you writing a monthly newsletter are familiar with pre-deadline writer's block, which struck often. Fortunately, I always have an opinion on golf course architecture.
- I covered a dozen architectural topics each year with my singular viewpoint, whereas some singular topics deserved a dozen viewpoints. I could only write from my experience, which is mostly with mid-range clubs and public courses willing to spend about \$1.5 million on renovations. But there are courses struggling to spend \$15,000 on renovations and high-end clubs spending \$15 million, sometimes every 15 years. Could my columns ring true with everyone?
- I was always cognizant that any publication needs eternally fresh content.

This year, Pat Jones agreed. Prior to his own departure, he was directing GCI toward an "extreme makeover"

geared to the social media age. I have no doubt GCI will be better off moving forward while at least tweaking its format under Guy Cipriano.

I started the column in January 2004, when my publicist, Mark Leslie, recommended me as a columnist to what was then called *Golf Course News*. They gave me a short trial opportunity, with neither of us betting on the column lasting a year, much less through two publishers, five editors and 15 years. Perhaps, unwittingly, I might have been a better choice than they knew.

Truthfully, many architects write in a style that is frustratingly superficial. They use too many words and say too little. My original editorial direction was to favor solid answers for real world problems over broad architectural platitudes.

I think the column survived so long because I stuck to that editorial charge, with my writing style purposely focused on a straightforward "just the facts, ma'am" style, aimed at DIY greens superintendents and committees. Few architects would offer up a column focused on the mundane subject of designing cart paths to avoid worn spots at fairway entrances and exits, but it was an altogether fitting topic of my last regular column.

It's rare among architects to write concisely, but a requirement in the publishing world, with its strict word counts. My relative brevity stemmed from some fatherly advice: "Good ideas are quickly explained. Bad ideas take longer." Both truth and good ideas are simple, uncon-

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plicated and largely self-evident. In Dad's view, after the words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident," the Declaration of Independence needed only a few bullet points.

I once asked Dad what he did at work. He said he wrote letters, adding that on some days, he spent all day on just one letter. I was astonished then but understand it now. The Mark Twain quote, "I would have written something shorter, but I didn't have the time" is true. While other writers are probably more efficient, my column writing process usually went like this:

1. Constantly copying, clipping and cataloging anything that might be relevant to a future column, combined with constant worry about subject matter, except when using "leftovers" in "Part 2" of the previous month's overly long column.
2. On the fifth day pre-deadline, I picked a topic and started "stream of consciousness" writing, usually clocking in at about 3,000 words.
3. On the fourth day of pre-deadline, I cut the word count by eliminating many clever sidebar jokes, non sequiturs, undue repetition and passive tense wording. Active tense always saved a few precious words and my high school English teachers would be proud. And yes, I am writing this to the tune of "The 12 Days of Christmas" in my head. A non sequitur, yes, but it's my last column. What are they going to do, fire me?
4. On the third day of pre-deadline, I further shortened and ordered the paragraphs for flow and sense. It was a struggle at first, but being the word police came naturally soon enough.
5. On second day of pre-deadline, I put the column away and out of my mind.
6. On the last day of pre-deadline, I made one final review with a clear mind. I usually tweaked it some more. I might allow myself to add in one humorous aside in

the name of "readability."

7. On Christmas Day, or at least by New Years at the deadline (or thereabouts), I emailed it to HQ, always with a short cover letter making fun of Cleveland's weather, lousy (and undeserved) reputation as a city, and most often, the Browns.
8. After the deadline, I got feedback from the eraserhead editors, often beginning with "What the heck did you mean by?" Sentences that were perfectly clear to me could be interpreted by others in wildly unintended ways. All kidding aside, they were fairly gentle in the editing process, which I took as a sign of my ever-increasing writing prowess. I could be delusional, though.

Considering the nominal monthly stipend received, I spent more time writing than I should have. But I never wanted to send a column and feel like I was just "mailing it in," so I endlessly massaged them into acceptable condition.

I was lucky to get some good advice early on. Terry Buchen shared some wisdom from legendary sports writer Rick Reilly. Short version: write with passion about your passion. Longtime *Golf Digest* editor Ron Whitten shared the problems he faced in changing from stilted lawyerly writing to popular writing. Short version: make it a toilet read. They both assured me to write in my own voice, which meant both good advice and bad puns.

The times, they are a changin', like my hair and waistline. When I started this column, I was a mainstream architect in style and method. Over the last decade, the profession has seen drastic changes, which introduced some issues about my industry relatability. Design build is increasingly favored over the

Jeff Brauer has devoted most of his architecture efforts to working with public facilities such as Tempest Golf Club.



complete plans and bid style that I practice. Some younger architects think quite differently than the old school, sometimes repudiating long held architectural conventions that I espouse, and which my experience tells me lead to architectural mistakes. Millennials tell me, "This time, it's different." Again, I could be delusional, but only time will tell.

Regrets? I have a few. My run ended just before I was able to finalize a series on the topic of bunker design philosophy. For all the monthly angst, how could I not have covered that topic in 15 years? There is so much more to be written.

Another is that I rarely knew how well I was connecting with readers or if I was providing truly beneficial advice. I especially appreciate those who contacted me with comments or told me in person they enjoyed my column. When my confidence was low, I took comfort in the old teacher's mantra, "If I helped just one student, it was worth the effort" and hoped that, after 168 columns, the blind squirrel theory applied.

Now seems as good a time as any to pass the baton of monthly writing to the next generation of architects. It's been a blast and I really enjoyed writing for you every month. I'll miss it. I gather that you and I will just have to discuss your future architectural questions in some other venue, and I look forward to those discussions. **GCI**

Jeff Brauer, ASGCA, is a veteran golf course architect with more than 50 course designs and 100 renovations under his belt. Email him at jeff@jeffreymbrauer.com.

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MAKING THE CUT

A SPECIAL SERIES PRESENTED BY JOHN DEERE

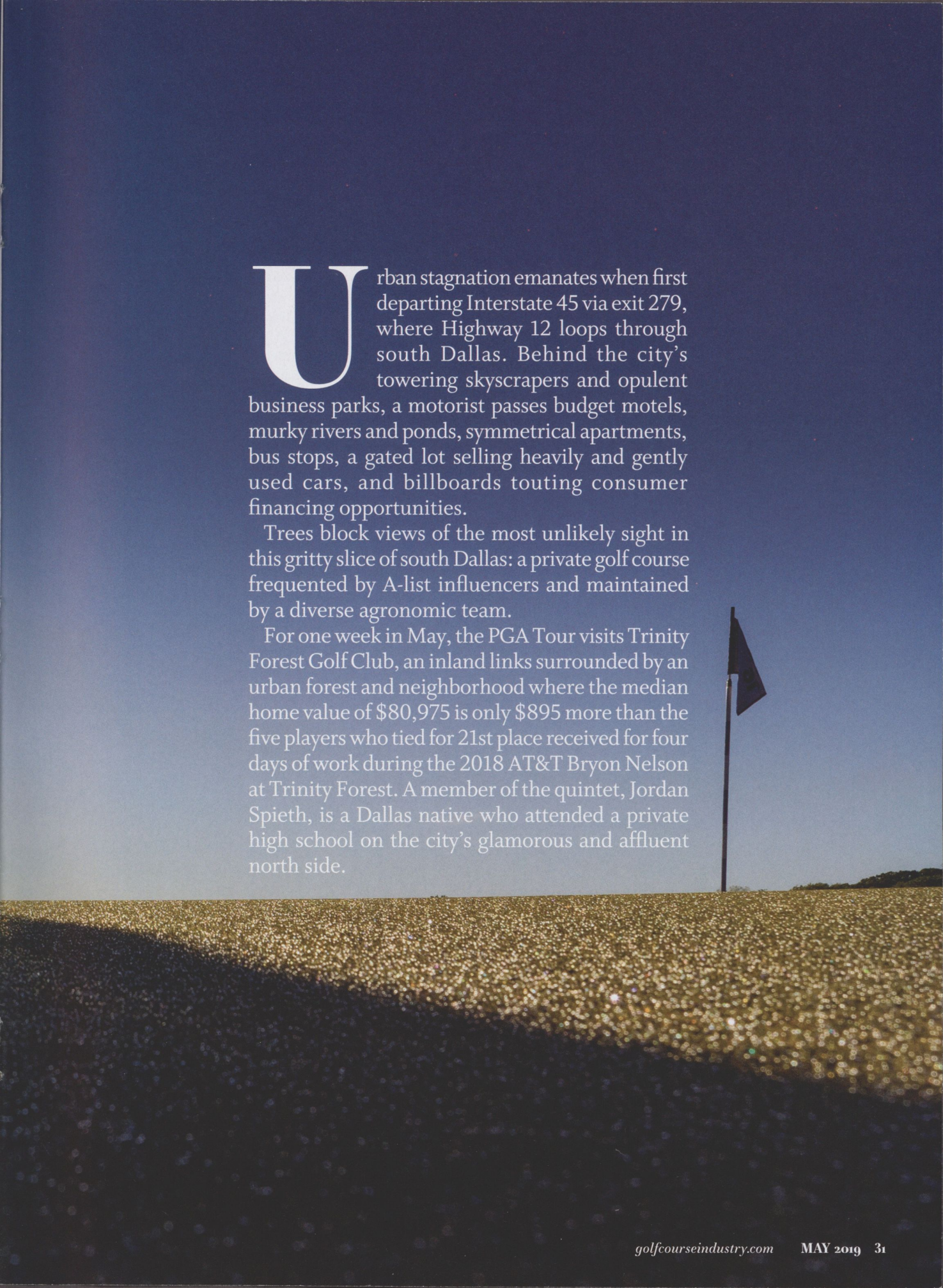


MAKING THE CUT

Big crowds, famous holes and acres of prized turf. An inside look at a trio of unique tournament venues.

PART 3: TRINITY FOREST

By **Guy Cipriano**



Urban stagnation emanates when first departing Interstate 45 via exit 279, where Highway 12 loops through south Dallas. Behind the city's towering skyscrapers and opulent business parks, a motorist passes budget motels, murky rivers and ponds, symmetrical apartments, bus stops, a gated lot selling heavily and gently used cars, and billboards touting consumer financing opportunities.

Trees block views of the most unlikely sight in this gritty slice of south Dallas: a private golf course frequented by A-list influencers and maintained by a diverse agronomic team.

For one week in May, the PGA Tour visits Trinity Forest Golf Club, an inland links surrounded by an urban forest and neighborhood where the median home value of \$80,975 is only \$895 more than the five players who tied for 21st place received for four days of work during the 2018 AT&T Byron Nelson at Trinity Forest. A member of the quintet, Jordan Spieth, is a Dallas native who attended a private high school on the city's glamorous and affluent north side.

MAKING THE CUT

A SPECIAL SERIES PRESENTED BY JOHN DEERE



JOHN DEERE

Neither neighborhood affiliation nor wealth matter at 6:08 a.m. on a mid-April Monday morning. Managers hailing from Florida, Illinois, Alabama, Wisconsin and a pair of Texas cities introduce daily assignments to two dozen workers representing Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and, yes, south Dallas. A 3½-inch dousing two days earlier keep the brakes on the John Deere

mowers Trinity Forest uses to maintain more than 100 acres of deceptively delightful playing and practice surfaces. With the AT&T Byron Nelson just three weeks away and mem-

bers returning to the course Tuesday, a 10-hour workday consisting of restoring bunkers to their normal condition, repairing drainage, blowing clippings to wayward spots and “slinging’ fert” commences.

Workers execute tasks in small groups, wearing Trinity Forest hoodies, jackets and even stocking caps on the slow-to-warm Dallas morning. Multiple languages are spoken, yet groups operate in unison.

Directory of agronomy Kasey Kauff allows his managers to lead the morning meetings and he begins this day completing administrative tasks inside his office. The walls are partially covered with pictures and memorabilia of celebrities such as Michael Jordan, Trinity Forest co-architects Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw, and Kauff’s mentor and Georgia Golf Hall of Famer Ken Mangum.

Kauff is the only director of agronomy in Trinity Forest’s history. He received the job in 2014, two years before the course opened. Creating an environment to promote zoysia-grass and Bermudagrass growth atop a former landfill is exhilarating. But assembling a cohesive agronomy team in an area where nobody envisioned a world-class golf development represents the most fulfilling accomplishment of his career.

“It has been a really interesting dynamic,” says Kauff, who lived in West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida before arriving in Texas. “I love the fact that we have men, women and different races working here. That makes me proud. I want to show people the diversity of our staff. That’s what this neighborhood is – it’s diverse.”

» About this series

Golf Course Industry is partnering with John Deere to provide an inside look at three unique tournament venues. As the part of the project, social media tours of each facility will be available @GCIMagazine and podcast interviews can be found at www.golfcourseindustry.com.

Part 1 February: TPC Scottsdale; Part 2 March: TPC Sawgrass; Part 3 May: Trinity Forest

Trinity Forest worked with Austin Turf & Tractor to establish a fleet to maintain its vast playing surfaces.



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Inside the Cut

The Trinity Forest grow-in

Zoysiagrass started growing. The workspace remained primitive.

The early stages of Trinity Forest Golf Club offered stark contrasts to its current state as a Dallas private golf haven and site of the PGA Tour's AT&T Byron Nelson.

The agronomic team embarked on a grow-in sparking industrywide curiosity – the hitting surfaces on all but two holes were sprigged with LIF (now called Trinity) zoysiagrass – while operating out of steel shipping containers. The crew had no permanent equipment besides the items in equipment manager Tony Bevelo's toolbox and a backlap machine. "It was rough on the guys," Bevelo says.

Director of grounds Kasey Kauff says transforming sprigged zoysiagrass into a playable condition consumed the equivalent of nine growing months. The process started with the sprigging of the 14th fairway on July 4, 2015 and culminated with the Oct. 28, 2016 unveiling of the Bill Coore- and Ben Crenshaw-designed golf course. The agronomic team went more than a year between the first sprigging and the Aug. 1, 2016 opening of the club's maintenance facility.

Enduring the humble beginnings included a major assist from Austin Turf & Tractor, a John Deere dealer with a significant presence in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Austin Turf provided grinding reels – a necessity Trinity Forest lacked until moving into the maintenance facility – and a half-dozen pieces of loaner equipment to mow the young turf. Austin Turf sales representative Jon Manning and principals Chad Mobley and Harry Jukes visited the course dozens of times as a rotating John Deere loaner fleet consisting of an 8700A PrecisionCut fairway mower, two 2500B triplexes and three 260SL PrecisionCut walking greens mowers prepared zoysiagrass fairways and tees and Champion Bermudagrass greens for play. Every time Trinity Forest needed equipment during the lengthy grow-in, the Austin Turf team responded with a timely delivery.

"There's a lot of stuff that we pulled off that wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for Austin Turf," Bevelo says. "It's hard to put into words what they do."

During the spring of 2016, Manning worked with Kauff and Bevelo to help establish Trinity Forest's first four-year equipment lease. A mowing fleet consisting of seven 7500A PrecisionCut and two 8700A PrecisionCut fairway mowers, six 2500B triplexes and 10 220E walking green mowers was stored in a temporary white circus-like tent until the completion of the maintenance facility. The tent developed into a part of Trinity Forest grow-in lore. The door wasn't big enough to maneuver a fairway mower or sprayer through, so Bevelo crafted a sizable indentation using a backhoe.

The opening of the maintenance facility symbolized a milestone in Trinity Forest's development: the start of daily maintenance. Fairways are now mowed twice a week at .300 inches; greens are mowed six times a week at .100. "We were all ready to start maintaining a golf course," Bevelo says. "We were done with projects and haul roads and dump trucks. After coming from a golf course where you are on a regiment, it was very relieving getting into a maintenance mode."

The debut of golf further strengthened the relationship between Trinity Forest and Austin Turf. Trinity Forest worked with John Deere to create a parts-on-site program and Austin Turf customer service representative Ray Plasencio visits the club weekly to replenish inventory.

Austin Turf provides significant support during the AT&T Byron Nelson, delivering fairway units with lightweight reels two weeks before the tournament. Instead of using units with 7-inch reels like other warm-season courses, Trinity Forest maintains fairways with 5-inch reels to ensure the low height of fairway cut.

"You have to have support when you're hosting a tournament," Kauff says. "We need more fairway mowers for the event and there's no reason for the club to be at 13 or 14 fairways mowers year-round, because we don't use that on a day-to-day basis. We use a fairway mower that's so lightweight and the cut is so short on fairways that they don't have any around town. Austin Turf brings them down from Iowa. Bentgrass courses are using them because the reels are so lightweight. They go out of their way to find those mowers for us."

The mowers arrived two weeks before the tournament. The Austin Turf team is omnipresent during the event, providing uniforms and meals for staff and agronomy volunteers. "It feels like a family when you're dealing with them," Kauff says.

DIGGING THE REVIVED LAND

Tierra means soil, dirt or land in Spanish. Trinity Forest's *tierra* doesn't resemble what other courses possess. Before Coore and Crenshaw arrived, and before Kauff uprooted to Dallas, Trinity Forest was a landfill for contractors and residents looking to cheaply and discretely unload waste. Dump a giant concrete road barrier on the site – Kauff has the pictures to prove such actions – and eventually see it disappear beneath shifted *tierra*.

State-mandated remediation resulted in the landfill being capped with impermeable clay. A partnership's desire to build a golf course on the site led to sand mined from a pit across the highway being used to add another cap to the former landfill.

Oxni Ochoa arrived at Trinity Forest to work in the *tierra*. Family brought him to the future golf course. His father-in-law, Jesus Ruvalcaba, was serving as a construction superintendent for the Landscapes Unlimited team building the course. The company needed people to install the irrigation system.

Ochoa dug away, wearing full Personal Protective Equipment, even during devilish stretches of 100-degree Dallas days, installing HDPE pipe needed to irrigate an 18-hole championship golf course, 9-hole par-3 course and spacious practice facilities. More than 1,200 sprinkler heads alone irrigate the 18-hole course. Attached to their blue Tyvek apparel, workers donned methane detection meters.

"We made the lake," says Ochoa, pointing toward an irrigation lake beyond the periphery of the championship course. "We did all the pipe. Everything here before this was garbage."

A native of the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa, Ochoa emigrated to the United States in 2003 and worked a variety of home construction and painting jobs before landing at Trinity Forest. The equipment



◀ Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw designed an inland links course atop a former landfill at Trinity Forest.

used to maintain the *tierra* intrigued Ochoa enough to convince him to explore employment opportunities as Trinity Forest morphed from construction site to golf course.

"He came up to me one day and said, 'Tony, I want to be your mechanic,'" equipment manager Tony Bevolo says. "I asked him, 'Do you have any experience? Are you a mechanic?' He said, 'No.' I said, 'That's not too far off, I did the same thing. No big deal.' I knew he worked hard, he was a nice guy and we got along. He knew the golf course better than anybody. He built it."

Like he did with installing irrigation, Ochoa proved a quick learner. Ochoa is Trinity Forest's assistant equipment manager, helping Bevolo and colleague Felix Hernandez maintain a fleet consisting of 49 John Deere units ranging from reel mowers to tractors.

A married father with two children, Ochoa proudly wears a shirt with his name on it. The Trinity Forest *tierra* has been good to Ochoa, who spoke little English until beginning his equipment management career.

"When I started

as a mechanic, all I could do was change oil," he says. "It wasn't easy for me at first, because I didn't speak good English. Now somebody calls me, tells me the problem and I will fix it."

FROM THE PRO SHOP TO THE EQUIPMENT SHOP

Ochoa's boss also took a circuitous route to Trinity Forest.

A native of Plainfield, Ill., a growing community in Chicago's west suburbs, Bevolo decided as a 16-year-old he wanted a job offering free golf. So he accepted a non-paying maintenance position working three days a week at The Links at Carillon, a 27-hole public facility less than 10 miles from his home. For income, he added a second job at a pizzeria.

Inspired by an uncle who served as a golf pro at a pair of prestigious St. Louis clubs, Bevolo determined he

wanted to become a club pro. He packed his bags for Bluffton, S.C., and enrolled at Professional Golfers Career College. He graduated and spent two years as an assistant professional at Berkeley Hall in Bluffton. But ... "I hated it," he says.

So Bevolo ap-

proached former Berkeley Hall superintendent Danny Malone about joining the club's agronomy team. Knowing Bevolo had mechanical skills and understanding the looming talent shortage within the golf industry, Malone suggested Bevolo pursue a career maintaining equipment. "Danny told me nobody can find a golf course equipment manager who gets the game of the golf and also understands mechanics," Bevolo says. "He told me, 'If you can do that, you're writing your own ticket to wherever you want to go.'"

Malone had Bevolo contact Skip Heinz, the respected equipment manager at Belfair Plantation, a highly regarded private course. "Skip said, 'Give me two years of your life and I'll get you a head gig somewhere,'" Bevolo says.

The wait for a head position proved shorter. On a whim, Bevolo contacted James Morgan, an industry acquaintance whom he interviewed with at Belfair. Morgan, one of Kauff's first hires, described what was being constructed at Trinity Forest. Bevolo targeted Dallas as a career destination because he had family in the area. Shortly after speaking with Morgan, Bevolo saw an online posting for the Trinity Forest equipment manager position. He sent a resume and portfolio to Kauff. "We had a few interviews and we have been inseparable ever since," Bevolo says.



WE MADE THE LAKE. WE DID ALL THE PIPE. EVERYTHING HERE BEFORE THIS WAS GARBAGE."

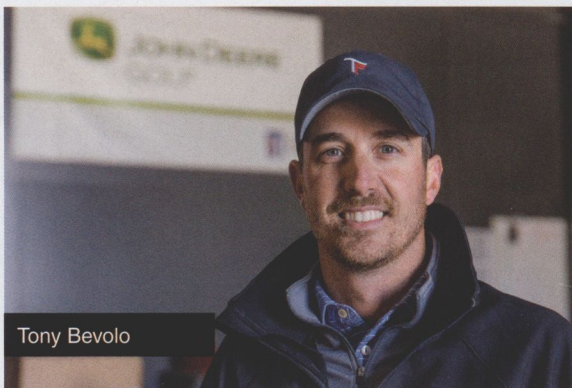
— Oxni Ochoa

MAKING THE CUT

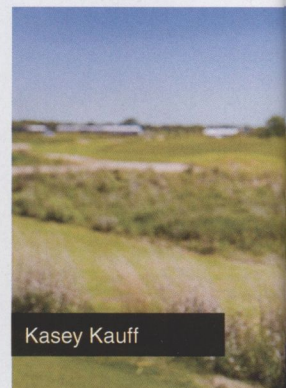
A SPECIAL SERIES PRESENTED BY JOHN DEERE



Jose Sarlmaeron Jr.



Tony Bevollo



Kasey Kauff

"It's been a wild ride."

Bevollo worked with Kauff to design a maintenance facility, helped acquire a fleet of John Deere equipment to maintain nearly 100 acres of Trinity zoysiagrass fairways and more than five acres of championship Bermudagrass greens, and hired and trained Ochoa and fellow assistant Hernandez. The 29-year-old Bevollo displays the same zest for the game as a 16-year-old working for free golf. He never envisioned consuming donuts and chatting golf for 45 minutes with a legendary architect such as Coore or organizing the equipment efforts for a PGA Tour event.

"I feel very blessed to be in the position that I'm in at such a young age," he says. "I think I'm home. I want to say I'm home for good. I love this club. I hope Kasey stays here forever. I love what Trinity Forest is, what it's going to be and what it stands for."

AROUND SINCE THE BEGINNING

The acquaintance who sparked Bevollo's interest in Trinity Forest immediately discovered the prowess of a Texas-sized storm when he reported for his first day on May 15, 2015.

"It was flooded at the time," says Morgan, taking a break from dispersing fertilizer on the 10th fairway on a windy afternoon nearly four years later. "The river was at a 100-year floodplain. We were skipping rocks because there was so much water."

Morgan didn't envision slinging

rocks or fert on a Dallas golf course when he finished high school. His initial plan involved playing quarterback at North Greenville (S.C.) University. But ... "It wasn't quite as much fun as I thought it was going to be," he says.

He returned to his Orlando, Fla., home, transferred to nearby Valencia College and secured a summer maintenance job at Country Club of Orlando. "I fell in love with working on a golf course," he says. Morgan enrolled at Lake City Community College in Lake City, Fla., and started hearing about a Lake City alum named Ken Mangum leading a crew preparing to host the 2011 PGA Championship at Atlanta Athletic Club. Kauff, one of Mangum's AAC proteges, landed the superintendent job at CC of Orlando following the PGA Championship. Morgan worked for Kauff throughout college and followed him to Dallas after graduating with a turf degree.

Morgan meshed with Kauff and young assistants Chad Kuzawa, Adam Deiwert and Grant Sherwood. Bevollo says Trinity Forest might have assembled "one of the youngest grow-in teams in the history of grow-in teams." Whatever pressure they felt growing sprigged zoysiagrass atop a landfill became tolerable because of the bonds formed.

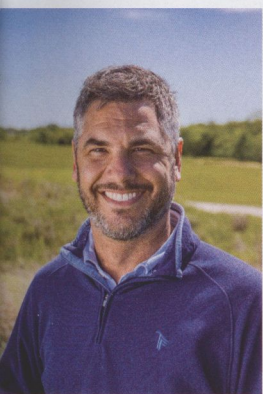
"It was definitely tough, but we made the most of it," Morgan says. "We made it a fun experience. I don't think any of us realized how rough it

was because of the group of people we have."

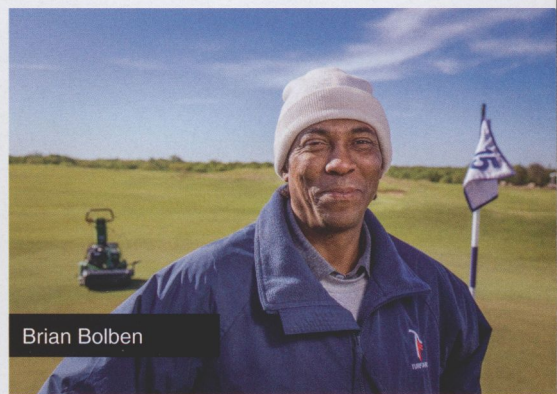
Floods, wind, 100-degree temperatures. For Jose Sarlmaeron Jr., working alongside family and seeing a sports icon lurking in his workspace make the challenges worthwhile.

Sarlmaeron Jr. and his father, Jose Sarlmaeron Sr., also joined the Trinity Forest team in 2015. Sarlmaeron Sr. hails from El Salvador and the father-son duo worked a variety of construction jobs until arriving in Dallas. The pair spent most of their first year installing sod and drainage. They still execute sod and drainage work, but they also help mow the zoysiagrass fairways, tees and surrounds, a massive twice-a-week effort because most of Trinity Forest's 100 acres of zoysiagrass resides on the surfaces. "The fairways are too big," Sarlmaeron Jr. jokes.

The view from a Trinity Forest mower can be memorable. President George W. Bush frequently plays the course. Bush speaks Spanish and has held conversations with multiple crew members. Jordan doesn't speak Spanish, but he also enjoys Trinity Forest. Looking to gather information for a golf course development in Florida, Jordan has studied Trinity Forest's zoysiagrass. Kauff was once explaining to Jordan how brushes attached to a mower promote upright zoysiagrass growth. Sarlmaeron Jr. looked down from the John Deere 2500B triplex and noticed Michael



Oxni Ochoa



Brian Bolben

Jordan studying the machine he was operating. "I was nervous meeting him," he says. "He touched the machine while I was sitting on it."

The celebrity encounters are memorable. But Trinity Forest provides steady employment for Salmaeron Jr., his father and his brother-in-law. Working on a Texas golf course, Salmaeron Jr. says, beats working construction in Washington D.C., where his family lived before moving to Dallas. "A lot of people that come here like the work and they stay," he adds. "There's not a lot of coming and going."

HIDDEN DALLAS

Sometimes ditching law for landscapes proves worthwhile.

William Weller leads the maintenance of Trinity Forest's "northside," a parcel featuring nearly every imaginable warm-season turfgrass variety for nearly every imaginable level of golfer. Weller is a trained attorney – he graduated from the University of Cincinnati College of Law and passed the Texas bar exam – who would rather be preparing surfaces for Trinity Forest members honing their games on the practice range or nine-hole par-3 course, Southern Methodist University golfers and The First Tee of Greater Dallas participants. Law pays more than turfgrass management. But ... "I hated being in an office all day," Weller says.

Weller figured golf course maintenance,

a job he relished while in high school, offered a career alternative. After leaving law, he landed positions at a trio of Dallas-area clubs, ascending to an assistant superintendent at each facility. He taught himself the science behind golf course maintenance by studying agronomy books, articles and digital resources like a student preparing for the bar. "I don't think people would know that I didn't go to turf school," he says.

The turf knowledge allows Weller to guide a seven-person team maintaining three varieties of Bermudagrass, two varieties of zoysiagrass, ryegrass, and bunker sand from three states. He also must juggle various personalities. Division I college golfers and private club members harbor different expectations than children learning the game.

The confluence of elite and entry-level golf in south Dallas surprises Weller, who attended Rockwall High School in the city's east suburbs. "It's amazing to see what was created on what was pretty much a useless piece of property," he says. "I'm from the suburbs. Almost nobody knew there was a landfill down here until they built a golf course on it."

Brian Bolben lives in south Dallas, where his grandmother has resided for 95 years, and he says many of his neighbors didn't realize a golf course had been built until seeing giant images of Spieth near a spectator entrance prior to last year's AT&T Byron Nelson. "They know it's a golf

course now," he says.

Bolben's connection to Trinity Forest is different than other south Dallas residents. A temporary employment agency placed him on the crew in 2017 and he has spent the last two years learning land he had only previously heard stories about. "I never saw it," he says, "but I knew a landfill was back here."

The job provides stability for Bolben, whose body was breaking down after years in the long-distance furniture moving industry. He considers working on a golf course the "most laidback job" of his life. That doesn't mean the work is always easy.

He spent his first week at Trinity Forest shoveling sand from an 8,000-square-foot bunker on the first hole. "It was a test to see if I was going to stay," he says. "That's the only way I can look at it. I had to prove myself. I was new. It was a temp agency job. I wanted them to say, 'We need this guy.'"

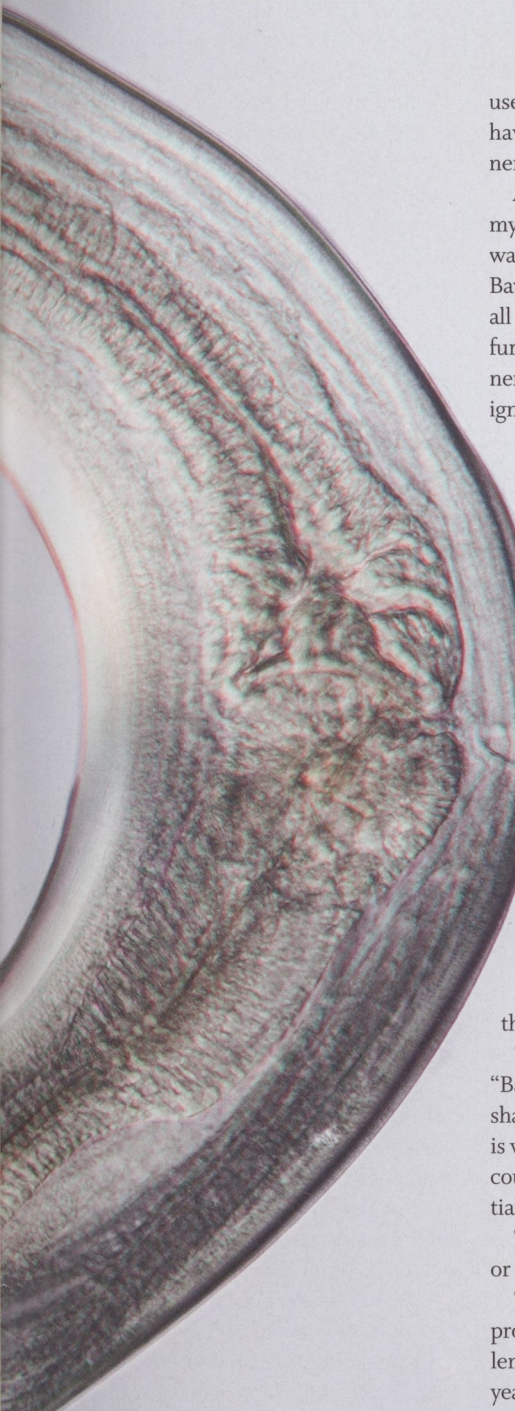
Kauff decided Trinity Forest needed Bolben. But Bolben wasn't sure if he needed Trinity Forest. He waffled on accepting the job. He's glad he stayed. Where else in south Dallas can somebody witness a different sunrise every morning, observe hogs sprinting in open space, learn the nuances of zoysiagrass and work alongside equally determined professionals from different diverse backgrounds? "There's so much here," Bolben says, "that's hard to believe." **GCI**

A large, detailed microscopic image of a nematode, showing its segmented body and internal structures. The nematode is curved, with its head at the top left and its tail at the bottom right. The body is covered in fine, longitudinal ridges and has a distinct, darker, textured area in the middle. The background is a light, neutral color.

NOT JUST A WARM-WEATHER NEMESIS

PERMANENTLY LOSING
A VENERABLE CONTROL
OPTION CONTINUES TO RAISE
NUMEROUS QUESTIONS ABOUT
NEMATODES ON GOLF COURSES.

By **Rick Woelfel**



October 6, 2017 marked the start of a new era in nematode control. On that date, the protocol for dealing with nematode issues dramatically changed when an EPA ban on the use of Nematicur took effect. Ever since, superintendents have employed a variety of chemistries to deal with nematode concerns.

At this point, we'd like to dispel two nematode-related myths. Some believe that nematodes are an issue only in warmer climates, but Dr. Axel Elling, a turf specialist for Bayer, says that's not the case. "Nematodes are a problem all over North America," he says, "and I would go one step further and say nematodes are a problem worldwide. So, nematodes are not something superintendents should ignore."

Some have suggested that nematodes are migrating northward in response to warmer temperatures but Dr. Lane Tredway, a field technical manager for Syngenta, says that really isn't so. "Certainly, nematodes can be moved in soil and in plant material," he says, "but we don't tend to move those things long distances, just because of the expense, so most of our soil and turf is distributed more locally."

Dr. Nathaniel Mitkowski at the University of Rhode Island is one of the nation's foremost authorities on nematodes. "We have always had the nematodes in the North," he says, "and we have always had damage. When I was an undergraduate (at the University of Massachusetts under Dr. Robert Wick) in 1994, we were actively counting and studying damaging nematodes in New England, and Wick had been working on it since the mid-1980s."

One issue that is problematic for turf professionals is that nematode issues are not necessarily easy to identify.

"The symptoms are very nondescript," Tredway says. "Basically, you end up with turf that has very weak and shallow root growth and as a result of that, the top growth is weak and very prone to a variety of stresses. And so, of course, there are a lot of different issues that can essentially cause those same exact symptoms."

Those "different issues" might include excessive foot or cart traffic, soil issues or the weather.

Tredway notes that the pressures, real and implied, to produce faster greens, are also contributing to the problem. "We're putting more stress on our turf, it seems like, year in and year out," he says, "with lower mowing heights and the ever-increasing demands for fast putting greens."

Mitkowski believes that warmer temperatures have contributed to an increased nematode presence in a post-Nematicur world.

According to the Northeast Regional Climate Center, which analyzes weather data in 12 states from Maine to

Maryland, the mean March temperature in Rhode Island for the whole of the 20th century was 36.1 degrees. Over the last two decades however, the average March temperature in the state was nearly two degrees warmer at 37.8, and over the last 10 years (from 2009 through last year) it increased to 38 degrees. For the entire region, the mean 20th-century March temperature was 33.5 degrees. For the past two decades, the region's average March temperature was 34.64. Over the last decade, it was 34.8.

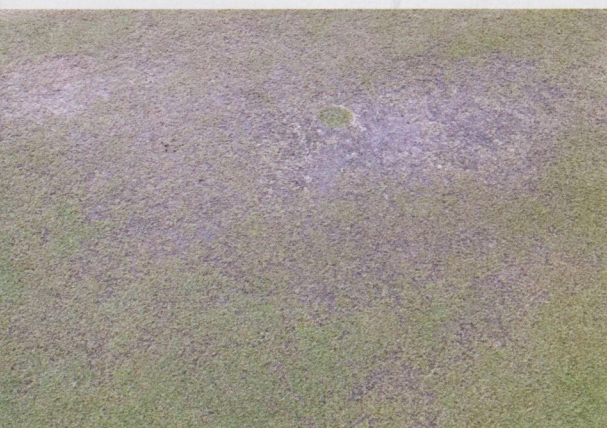
"With cooler temperatures, (nematodes) are less aggressive and have fewer generations," Mitkowski says. "My personal feeling is that while nematodes are becoming a bigger issue on northern turf because of increased temperatures and climate change, we would be much less concerned if we had Nematicur."

Mitkowski notes nematodes tend to be more aggressive in warmer locales. "Nematodes are creatures of temperature," he says. "Their rate of feeding and reproductive rate are directly correlated with temperature. The warmer the soil, the more nematodes produced and the more feeding that happens. In northern locations, we have a shorter growing season and a frozen winter, which slows the nematodes down and controls their populations."

"But with climate change, the nematodes will be more successful. Sting nematode cannot survive northern winters, but it is likely to start showing up farther north as the climate warms."

With Nematicur no longer available, superintendents must utilize other chemistries. Divanem (active ingredient: abamectin), Indemnify (fluopyram), Nimitz Pro G (fluen-sulfone) and MultiGuard Protect (furfural) are among the nematode control products available to superintendents.

Divanem was first approved for mite and insect control. It was first utilized as a nematicide in 2011 via



Examples of nematode damage on turf maintained at various heights.

a local-needs label (under the brand name Avid), then registered in October of 2016 before being introduced at the Golf Industry Show the following February.

Originally developed for mite and insect control, it has proved effective against a broad spectrum of nematodes — including sting, lance

and root knot — but has been less effective against *Anguina* nematodes.

Indemnify was developed as a crop fungicide but interest in its effectiveness as a nematicide picked up in 2013 when it appeared that Nematicur would be banned the next year (the ban was eventually postponed). It was officially introduced as a nematicide in August of 2016 and has proved effective against sting, root-knot, ring, stunt and *Anguina pacifica*.

Mitkowski offers an overview. “The most effective turf nematicide currently on the market (based on his research and that of others) is Indemnify,” he says. “Unfortunately, Indemnify does not work on all nematodes. It generally provides no control of lance nematodes. That said, it is extremely effective against stunt and sting nematodes, and I have seen it be active against stunt populations for more than 60 days.

“Divanem and Todal (both abamectin) have a very broad spectrum of activity against most nematodes but getting them to the nematodes is sometimes difficult.

“These products are reported to bind to the thatch and positive results can be hit-or-miss. A number of superintendents are using both Indemnify and abamectin and getting good control, but this approach is usually cost prohibitive.

“Other products are also available, namely Nimitz and Multiguard, but our research results using these materials is variable. Sometimes we see positive results and sometimes we don’t see any result. We are never quite sure why the discrepancy. We have yet to see any nematode resistance to any material.

“When Nematicur stopped working, it was typically because the bacteria in the soil was consuming the material so quickly it never makes it to the nematode. That happened occasionally in northern states but was much more common in the South.”

Nematicur was not only extremely effective as a nematicide, but it was

cost effective; one application per season would often take care of the problem. Tredway says superintendents must now develop a multi-faceted approach to nematode control, as they do with their fungicide programs.

“They have their own strengths and weakness so, depending on the spectrum of nematicides you have ... maybe you incorporate multiple products into a program,” he adds. “I tend to think of nematode management in the same way as disease control, because the products we do have available to us today are just so different.”

If a superintendent suspects they may have a nematode issue, Tredway suggests they first take a good look at their turf. “Observe the symptoms and the distribution of the symptoms across the turf,” he says. “You want to compare the depth and quality of the root systems in affected vs. unaffected areas. And if you see a drastic difference, or any distinct stunting or abnormal growth on the affected roots, then that could be a good sign that you might be dealing with nematode issues.”

Mitkowski notes that nematodes are not necessarily easy to detect. “Nematodes attack roots,” he says, “so anything that resembles root damage could be nematode-induced. Unusually shallow rooting is a common symptom, as is wilt, loss of vigor and being unresponsive to watering and fertilization. Other pathogens also attack roots however, so these symptoms are not exclusive to nematodes.

“If a superintendent suspects nematode damage, they should contact a diagnostic lab to figure out the best way to test. Different labs have different procedures and depending upon the time of year, the lab may not be open. Most labs can get results back to the sender in a day or so and then a management plan can be devised if necessary.” GCI

Rick Woelfel is a Philadelphia-based writer and frequent GCI contributor.



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The awesomeness of Augusta

When Alexander Pope used the phrase, “Hope springs eternal ...” while composing “An Essay on Man” in the early 1700s, there is no way he could have known there would one day exist a golf tournament held annually in Augusta, Ga., the second week of April. With dogwoods and azaleas in bloom, signaling the arrival of spring, the Masters annually ushers in a renewed sense of hope and excitement. The majors have arrived for professionals and top amateurs alike, and another season of golf has finally arrived for everyone tired of winter in the Northern Hemisphere.

There are so many great things about the Masters, the Augusta National Golf Club and that symbolic renewed sense of hope. Maybe this will be the year you trim a few strokes from your handicap, or make your first hole-in-one, or win the city championship. The list goes on and on. Hope springs eternal for everyone loving the game of golf when the Masters arrives.

For many others, the Masters also signals the arrival of returning members, guests and patrons as courses reopen for the new year. There is a worry within our realm that these returning players will expect perfection right out of the gate after viewing the impeccably maintained and presented ANG on high-definition television. This worry and sometimes dread have led many superintendents and course managers to begin referring to the so-called “Augusta Syndrome.”

But rather than complaining that the Masters creates false or unrealistic expectations from our members, guests and patrons, I propose an alternative ... the “Augusta Inspiration.” This year I had the good fortune to attend the Masters on Wednesday

(par-3 contest day) with my wife. It was her first visit in five years, and we were excited to experience ANG together again. I listened to Masters Radio on Sirius XM PGA Tour Radio as we made the 2 ½-hour drive from Charlotte while she “rested her eyes.”

I thought about how perfect everything was at that moment. The anticipation and excitement, the sun rising as we timed our early arrival. One of the stories I heard that morning was how co-founder Clifford Roberts would spend time in his office inspecting every item the club purchased as gifts for the participants. Whether it was ensuring zippers worked properly or personally removing loose, dangling threads with tiny scissors, it wasn’t enough for a Masters gift to be the perfect gift. The gift needed to be presented perfectly to every participant.

I think we can all agree the attention to detail at ANG is unrivaled and that tradition and expectation has been passed down from founders Bob Jones (he tolerated being called Bobby) and Roberts to everyone involved with ANG today. In the years since Mrs. Greenkeeper last attended, they have built a new media center and totally revamped the golf shop and patron entrance.

You know from memory something is different from the moment you walk in, yet it looks like it’s always been that way. They do a remark-

able job ensuring everything is presented consistently with impeccable attention to detail, nothing is missed. Perhaps ANG and the Masters truly represent the possibility of what is achievable when attention to detail is at the absolute highest level. What if we look to the care and presentation of ANG as inspiration of what we can achieve on our own courses if/when we think outside the box and pay even closer attention to every tiny detail?

Yes, budgets, staff sizes, equipment, and more are limiting factors. You will still need to communicate to your members, guests and patrons when your staff size is smaller than the contingent of fairway mowers alone at ANG. There are limitations to levels of expectations. But instead of thinking of the Masters and ANG as creators of a negative syndrome, let’s look to them and their impeccable attention to detail as inspiration of what is truly possible when we allow ourselves to dream.

Before you chastise me for writing about a tournament that happened last month – especially when Bethpage Black hosts the PGA Championship this month – let’s applaud the efforts of my fellow Syngenta Business Institute 2015 alum Andrew Wilson and his team of all-stars and volunteers for their work. Perhaps they were even inspired. **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.

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TRAVELS WITH TERRY

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



GROOVY ROLLER

Jerry Lemons, ASGCA, president of Lemons Golf Design/Golf Links, Inc. and Better Billy Bunker, designed this implement to firm-up newly seeded creeping bentgrass greens 25 years ago. Instead of “dimpling-in” the seedbed with a riding bunker rake’s knobby tires, the seedbed is firmed-up nicely in rows for a much faster fill-in. A 6-inch diameter ADS solid drainage pipe is filled with concrete with a 1 ½-inch piece of PVC pipe with a rod through it attached to the frame. The frame is made of scrap angle iron and flat steel with a tongue bolted to the back of a John Deere Bunker Rake. It cost about \$150 and took a couple hours labor time to build. Lynn B. Ray, CGCS, gave the “Groovy Roller” its name.

SAND PRO SPRAYER

It now takes 3 ½ hours to spray all the greens by one person vs. seven hours with two employees using a walk-behind spray boom with 300 feet of hose. The Toro Sand Pro sprayer boom is 1 foot wider than the rear tires, is made of powder coated 1 ¼-inch square steel tubing that works easily with the Teejet TF-VS-3 nozzles spaced 30 inches apart with an 18-inch height. The on-demand 12-volt Surflo Model 5059-1311-D011 pump operated at 37–40 PSI is part of the 15-gallon spray tank. A Richway TT-3301 Foam Marker with a 60-ounce tank, with controls mounted on the hood, uses Fomark foam marking agent. A Calc-An Acre II hood-mounted computer is used diligently to apply and calibrate the chemicals at three miles per hour. A “nurse tank” fills the sprayer after each green is sprayed. This sprayer cost about \$2,000, took about a day to build and was conceived by Lonnie Aller, superintendent, and Phil Taylor, equipment manager, at The Golf Club at Black Rock in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. The sprayer was custom-built by Ag Industries of Cheney, Wash.



Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He’s a 41-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at 757-561-7777 or terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

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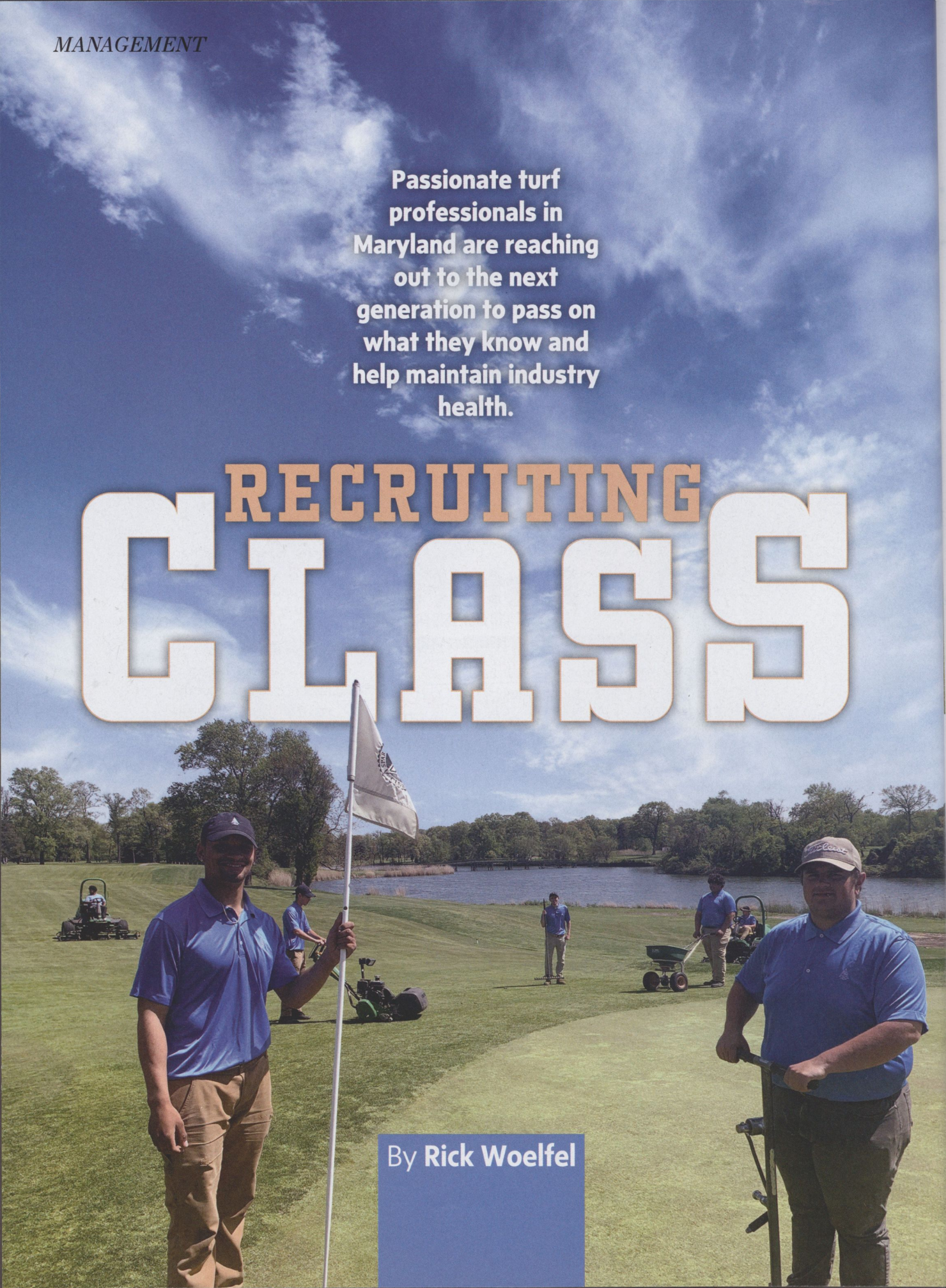


GCI is THE independent voice for superintendents in print, on the web and on social media.

Passionate turf professionals in Maryland are reaching out to the next generation to pass on what they know and help maintain industry health.

RECRUITING CLASS

By Rick Woelfel



It's no secret that the turf industry is dealing with a labor shortage. Enrollment in college turf management programs is on the decline and superintendents are finding it increasingly difficult to find qualified applicants to fill open positions.

Some Maryland superintendents are taking steps to deal with the situation, taking different paths to the same destination by reaching out to students of varying ages.

Ryan Kraushofer is the superintendent and general manager at Westminster National Golf Course, a public facility in Westminster, Md. He's been around the turf industry since he was 12 and currently serves as president of Mid-Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents and its roughly 400 members. Kraushofer looked into the First Green program, which originated in the Pacific Northwest some two decades ago. The aim of the program, which now operates under auspices of the GCSAA, is to introduce students to the turf industry.

Kraushofer's program involves fifth graders. This spring, he scheduled three field trips, one each in March, April and May. The excursions involve roughly 100 students each and are a blend of education and fun.

"We're teaching them about soils found on golf courses and the different types of grasses," Kraushofer says. "We're teaching them about area calculations, how important proper area calculations are for golf course superintendents when it comes to seed, fertilizing, and putting down our pesticides and fungicides.

"And then we teach them about water conservation. We let the kids use moisture meters and explain that we don't necessarily need to water the entire green. We can take hoses out and just hit hot spots.

"Then we have our putting station and a station we created that we call the 411 of golf. We teach them a little bit about physics and how you need to be able to identify your golf ball, so we let the kids draw their name or whatever they want on to a golf ball. And then these kids will break down into a driver group, a pitching wedge group and a 5-iron group, and then we have a pro hit their balls down one fairway."

The students then measure the difference in distance between shots hit with a driver as opposed to a 5 iron, making the conversion from feet to yards in the process.

Kraushofer notes it's becoming increasingly difficult to find qualified help for his staff and thus increasingly important for him and his

peers to engage in outreach efforts.

"It's harder for superintendents to find summer help," he says. "We've posted ads for assistant superintendents. It's getting hard to find qualified candidates or people that want to become an assistant superintendent, just because the enrollment in turf schools is way down."

Tyler Bloom leads the golf course maintenance efforts at Sparrows Point Country Club, a private facility just east of Baltimore. Like Kraushofer and his colleagues elsewhere in the state, Bloom is finding it increasingly difficult to find qualified applicants for openings on his team because of his budget versus the wage scale in the region.

"I kind of recognized my approach on things wouldn't be to go after the college interns or post-graduates," he says. "I was going to have to build from the ground up at every level of my operation from the

assistant level, all the way down to the person who just walks through the door.



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◀ Targeted recruiting has helped Sparrows Point (Md.) Country Club fill open positions on its golf course maintenance crew.



Keeping Turf Professionals After They Start

Separate from the challenges involved in encouraging students to pursue a career in the turf industry are the challenges of retention.

Jon Lobenstine is the director of agronomy for Montgomery County Golf, which owns and/or manages nine year-round public courses in Montgomery County, Md., near Washington, D.C.

During the peak of the season, Lobenstine's agronomic staff numbers nearly 90, but he's lost six employees in the last 18 months.

"They're looking for a similar type of job working outdoors where they get weekends off," he says. "Many have gone on to be managers at landscaping companies, or even work for the local parks system on athletic fields."

Lobenstine urges superintendents to reveal the unique requirements of the profession when targeting prospective employees.

"I think it's important to emphasize that this is a career for people who love working outdoors, that love variety in their daily work," he says. "I think there are a lot of positives you can emphasize in this type of work."

Lobenstine notes a superintendent's job description can include long hours, although the situation varies from one facility to another.

"There's so much variety at every golf course," he says. "I think that there's almost something for everybody out there. Not everybody is going to go work at a \$2 million facility that has a staff of 35 and that kind of stuff. You've got mom-and-pop courses and 9-hole facilities and lower-budget facilities that can be less stressful and provide a little more forgiveness in the schedule."

Lobenstine adds that students thinking about a career in turf management might find themselves drawn to the industry's technology.

"Everybody loves cool technology," he says. "Engage them in discussions, especially at a career day, and show them some of the cool gadgets that we use, between moisture meters and various sensors, and talk about the environmental positives, the green space, all that kind of stuff. I think there are things that can really connect with certain people."

"We had challenges with just bringing in general laborers through routine channels, whether that was through websites or newspaper ads. I kind of knew we needed to find a different recruiting method."

A solution to his problem arrived four years ago when a guidance counselor from a nearby Baltimore County high school (the city and county of Baltimore are separate jurisdictions) walked into his office and wanted to discuss the idea of a work-study program for his students.

"At the time, I really didn't connect the dots that this could be an internship program," Bloom says. "It was just getting bodies in the door, getting the high school students in, and it was just through trial and error and just talking and integrating with the students that I realized 'My God. They don't even know that this is a career.'"

Since that time, with the support of the Baltimore County school system, Bloom has brought in additional work-study students from six different high schools. The first, Adam Naribanchik, is now his first assistant. "I have five or six guys right now that have all kind of followed Adam's path," Bloom says.

That path includes a work-study curriculum in which the student attends school half a day and spends half a day working with Bloom at Sparrows Point.

"This is a full 12-month program," Bloom says. "I really try to hire people in the fall and early spring, sometimes even in the winter, so I can get them introduced into a workplace culture because they have no basis for that."

Bloom says the program not only give the students a real-time lesson about the importance of a work ethic, but provides them with an overview of the career paths the turf industry offers.

"Somebody's got to show them what it's like to work on a golf course and give them the direction," he says.

"This is a career. You don't need to be a superintendent or an assistant, but you can go into sales, you can go into landscaping, you can work on sports fields."

Bloom has considered developing a statewide apprenticeship program for aspiring turf professionals. He's had several meetings with officials from the Maryland State Department of Education on the subject.

Dean Graves will retire in June from his post as the superintendent at the Chevy Chase Club, just outside Washington, D.C. But Graves is looking to stay connected to the industry as a mentor. He points out that he not only has the desire to give back to his profession, but will also have the time to help developing a mentoring program for students that might want to consider a career in the turf industry.

"I can go to different high schools in different counties," he says. "Go there and actually give a presentation to students, parents, or both."

Graves envisions a formal mentoring program that would be affiliated with local school systems. "The superintendent would have to qualify for it," he says. "It's not like (the student) would be a summertime employee. They would actually come and fill out an evaluation. How they're progressing, how they're learning, are you being mentored? It's not just having somebody come in on weekend to fill divots, it's taking them under our wing to teach them."

Graves notes that he has mentored a member of his own staff who is now looking at pursuing a degree in turf management. Graves wants students — and their parents — to know they can make a good living in the industry. His immediate goal is to put more students on that path.

"We're hoping that we get the numbers up," he says. "If we get one out of 10 (students) to continue in the profession, I think that's a pretty good ratio. Right now, we don't have the 10." **GCI**

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Tiger's Song of Freedom

My wife and I were bopping around Nashville, celebrating her birthday on a gorgeous Masters Sunday. I knew in the back of my mind that the Big Cat had a legitimate chance to win, but I refused to allow myself to believe it. He had teased and disappointed us too often before.

So, I stayed away from TVs and tried not to check my phone. When I finally gave in and peeked at the leaderboard, I was flabbergasted to find him up by two with two holes left.

I promptly begged Mrs. Jones to take a break from the birthday fun to pop into a mostly empty bar to see if history could be made.

And it was.

And it wasn't just history. And it wasn't just a "return to glory" as Jim Nantz called it when Tiger raised his arms and screamed in victory. It was one thing above all: Redemption.

After all the physical pain and self-inflicted emotional damage, Tiger Woods had achieved redemption. One dictionary definition of redemption is "being saved from sin, error or evil." Another is "atoning for a fault or mistake." Those are fine words but the meaning that stuck in my head came from Bob Marley:

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery

None but ourselves can free our minds

In short, Tiger is no longer the head case that baffled and frustrated us for 10 awful years. Tiger is a golfer and a dad. And here's the crazy part: I think he's actually happy.

Thomas Friedman, the legendary columnist for the *New York Times* who happens to be a passionate golf fan, said it best:

"For the better part of a decade, he could not win a major until his back was healed and he got the monkey of his own misdeeds off his back — by becoming a good father and a better person to his fans and his fellow golfers. You could see him looking everyone in the eye in the last couple of years, and it finally unlocked his fan base. It gave them permission to root for him again, full-throated, despite all the ways he'd disappointed them. And that clearly unlocked his mind, and I am sure his body, too, so he could swing freely again."

He emancipated himself from mental slavery, freed his mind and found joy on the golf course again. He was having fun. The pictures of him bear-hugging his son, Charlie, after the win — particularly when juxtaposed with eerily similar images of his dad hugging him after his first Masters win 22 years ago — said it all. Tiger's a dad who happens to still have game.

I don't care if he wins another major and surpasses Jack's record. I just hope he's able to live a relatively normal life and find some contentment. He deserves that after all the moments he's given us and, of course, the zillions of dollars he's generated for the golf business over a quarter century.

And let's talk about that. Within minutes of his victory, I started hearing the question: What will Tiger's comeback mean for the golf business?

How will it benefit us?

Well, it doesn't suck to have this kind of attention from a global audience. And he is one of the most charismatic figures on the planet. It's a fantastic comeback story and everyone loves comeback stories.

And it's one more thing that makes kids say, "Hmmm ... maybe this golf thing is worth a try. That old dude seems pretty cool."

But will it really make the cash registers ring like it did 20 years ago? Probably not. Remember that Tiger in his prime was a multiplier factor for an already booming golf business. At the risk of being a Bobby Buzzkill, you also have to recognize that Tigermania may have actually contributed to the overbuilding phenomenon that got us in big trouble. Tiger's popularity led a lot of developers to bet on golf with their hearts, not their heads.

All that said, it's certainly great that he won his fifth green jacket and achieved a measure of redemption, but I'll stick to what I've maintained for years: Tiger Woods winning majors is not a substitute for a good business plan, a great culture of hospitality, investing in your golf course and making a commitment to growing the game in your community.

Enjoy the moment and savor his redemption, but don't take your foot off the gas pedal. It's up to you — not Eldrick Woods — to grow your business. **GCI**



PAT JONES is the editor-at-large of *Golf Course Industry*. He can be reached at pjones@gie.net.

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