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COLUMNS

- 12 GOLF THERAPY**
Bradley S. Klein: Muni life lessons
- 23 GAME PLAN**
Henry DeLozier: Debunking muni misconceptions
- 29 OUTSIDE THE ROPES**
Tim Moraghan: Be nice or leave!
- 42 AMERICA'S GREENKEEPER**
Matthew Wharton: Muni-P-A-L

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 TEEING OFF:** Seeking clarity and escapes amid COVID-19
- 6 NOTEBOOK:** There is always a way
- 40 TRAVELS WITH TERRY:** Equipment ideas
- 41 CLASSIFIEDS / AD INDEX**

FEATURES

8 THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

A pair of superintendents provide an Emerald City perspective on working in the public sector.

14 COACHELLA VALLEY

Valet parking and televised golf histories highlight super munis in the California desert.

24 NORTHEAST OHIO

How the Cleveland Metroparks are modernizing a course created in response to the Great Depression.

30 NEW JERSEY

A template for municipal fulfillment starts with headlamps.



8



14



24



30

SEEKING CLARITY AND ESCAPES AMID COVID-19

A perfect way to begin, or end, this column doesn't exist. A perfect way to begin, or end, this issue doesn't exist.

The magazine you're reading went to the printer March 31. The curve in the United States had not flattened. Perhaps the curve flattened or dropped the day you opened the magazine. Perhaps it didn't.

Instead of examining March Madness brackets and Masters odds to begin this spring, we studied data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. We watched the stock market plunge and unemployment soar.

Every industry, in every sector, altered its 2020 plan in response to COVID-19. Some of your facilities halted operations. Some of your facilities permitted regular play with enhanced health and safety measures. Decisions were taken out of your hands by people who exert more authority than your bosses or members. Unsettling times, indeed.

Since arriving in America in the late 1800s, golf has endured a pair of World Wars, a Great Depression and a Great Recession, personal and financial insecurities following a horrific act of terror, and the zaniness of the 1960s. Now isn't the time to predict how golf will financially and technically fare in the looming days, weeks and months.

Everything must settle before clarity emerges. Nothing seemed settled on March 31, 2020.

Deadlines in the publishing world are non-negotiable. So, we sent issue No. 4 of the 14th year in the *Golf Course Industry* era to our trusted printer.

We stuck to our theme. We wanted to explore municipal golf and honor turfgrass managers who work in the public sector this month. Municipal golf courses are safe havens dutifully maintained by professionals whose sense of perfection exists in scenes such as the one depicted on the cover. A woman. Three children. Four bags. An open fairway. A natural setting. Did you feel a bit better when you saw it?

All are welcome at a municipal course. Even during a pandemic, many municipalities continued welcoming golfers. Quality outdoor recreation soothes and satisfies in good times. It limits suffering and stress in bad times. Live sporting events were canceled, movie theaters were closed. Golf played on in places where the curve wasn't alarmingly steep.

Golf will play on following COVID-19. Once it plays on fully, we'll understand how the pandemic affected operations. We have our alpha moments and want to immediately chase every development. But we're letting this one simmer. We have far more questions than answers. The stakes are too high to mislead or misinform.

We're in the same situation as most of you. COVID-19 will alter our 2020 plans and there's no perfect way to proceed. We scrapped a prominent story scheduled for this issue because the timing didn't feel right. Perhaps it runs in May or June. Perhaps you never see the story.

We didn't scrap our cover package because the timing still feels right. West Seattle Golf Club, Cedarcrest Golf Course, Desert Willow Golf Resort, SilverRock Golf Resort, Indian Wells Golf Resort, Seneca Golf Course, Neshanic Valley Golf Course and more than 2,800 other municipal courses matter to the communities supporting them. And the people maintaining these courses demonstrate the ingenuity, adaptability and devotion required to provide meaningful escapes for the masses. Their stories offer a temporary escape from feeds and screens filled with fright.

Two courses profiled in this issue, West Seattle GC and Seneca, were part of the Works Progress Administration, a labor program created in response to the Great Depression. Tough times produce enduring work. Remember this as you attempt to find clarity in 2020. GCI



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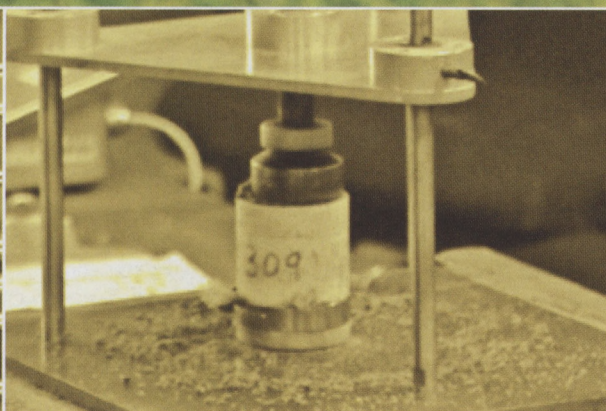
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NOTEBOOK



THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY

Anthony L. Williams, CGCS, CGM, has experience plenty in his career. But he's never experienced anything like COVID-19. He reveals the intangibles needed to handle an unprecedented situation.

There are seasons in our lives and careers that seem to define us. They force us to evolve and craft a different way of living and working. We are certainly going through an epic season of change in 2020. COVID-19 and the resulting pandemic has forever altered our lives and now we find ourselves facing a multitude of change and challenges.

The GCSAA has gathered a lot of information that can help you manage your golf facility and answer general questions about the current pandemic and the constantly changing rules,

regulations and suggestions. You can access this information at www.gcsaa.org/resources/covid-19-pandemic-resources. I want to share with you some new wisdom with old roots that can help you and our industry navigate safely in this new world.

I have been in the golf management industry for many years, and I have worked in multiple markets and climates. I have survived economic downturns, Y2K, droughts, floods, fires, labor shortages, language barriers, *Pythium Volutum* and prep for five televised golf tournaments. Collectively, all these events added together are small compared to the

Covid-19 pandemic. My grandfather used to say when times were tough, "There is always a way. It may be difficult, it may seem unlikely, or even impossible, but there is always a way." From growing up on a family farm in Indian Creek, Georgia, to managing one of Texas's most famous golf resorts, I have observed with each problem, no matter how complex it is, there's always a solution and way to succeed. Three things are critical to finding the way through problems whether they are ordinary (broken irrigation line) or epic (COVID-19):

1. Control your emotions

The shock of how fast our lives changed with the pandemic was staggering. Superintendents were operating normally one minute. They were then notified by authorities that their club must close at midnight.

When this happens, superintendents must create full contingency plans and an immediate response to all stakeholders. There is no Google answer to this situation and the clock is

ticking. Generally, when given these parameters, you would be mad and confused. Unfortunately, you have just arrived at the first of many decisions that will shape the future of your staff, your property and yourself.

Personally, I had to lay off 15 staff members and reduce the remaining staff to 20 hours per week during our closure, but at least we can execute essential maintenance. Your first actions should be professional, kind and full of emotional control. Your attitude and words will become your legacy while fueling the response of your team. Be positive and do the job at the highest level possible with the given resources.

2. Display the will to succeed

Heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali said, "You have to have the will before you can gain the skills." This is true of any endeavor. Right now, you may only have some of the skills needed to rise to the top of our profession during these trying times, but the will to succeed will inspire you to improve, learn new skills and persevere.

COVID-19 is a serious threat and we have not yet seen the deep impact it will have. We cannot stop believing that this, too, shall pass. We can make a difference. Everyone has a breaking point. I know from personal experience that what we think is our breaking point is far from our actual breaking point. In Karate, we have a saying: Everyone wants to be a champion until they get hit in the face. It is a matter of choice.

Success is truly a ratio of your desire to succeed vs. your willingness to quit. I have chosen to do everything I can to help my property and staff weather the pandemic storm. I am learning new skills and perfecting old ones. I never thought I would have to take the temperature of every staff member before and after every shift or that my 9th degree black belt would make me a great security guard during the course closure. My advice to you is to take care of your mind, body and spirit, and commit 100 percent to building a better

golf industry and career. Be the example for your property and, by force of will, overcome the current trials and be a hero in our most dire season.

3. Blend tradition with innovation

The core best management practices that have stood the test of time must still be employed and mastered, with the missing ingredient being the skill to innovate and master your craft under new expectations. The difference in knowing how to do something and why you do something requires a dose of reverse engineering. Starting where we are today, glance into the future and project where you want to be. You must develop people, projects and processes to move from our current reality to the brighter future.

You may need better agronomics or, perhaps, a blending of agronomy and finance. Labor and team-building will be in high demand. There will be individuals and organizations that will see a better way where everyone else sees only obstacles. Do you have some ideas that fit this synergy? Do you have the courage in these most challenging of times to put them into action? It's time for our generation to prove its worth. I look forward to seeing the results.

We have never seen a challenge as great as the 2020 pandemic. I hope that you can use these words of encouragement to improve your personal and professional situation. Please follow the latest recommendations to be safe. Follow the posted rules for shelter in place or other directives from designated authorities and above all be kind to everyone you encounter (including yourself). My thoughts and prayers are with the golf course industry and may we all find our way through this difficult time.

Anthony L. Williams, CGCS, CGM, is the director of golf course maintenance and landscaping at the Four Seasons Resort Club Dallas at Las Colinas in Irving, Texas, and a frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.



Tartan Talks No. 45

The work existence of golf course architects includes various technical stages. Yet, there's also an emotional side to a business featuring powerful memories.

We visited Toledo, Ohio, to record a Tartan Talks episode with **Steve Forrest** and **Shawn Smith**

of Hills • Forrest • Smith about the spirit of golf course architecture. Forrest and Smith recently conducted an estate sale as they prepared to move from their long-time Bancroft Street headquarters to home offices. The pair spent eight months clearing sketches, books, scorecards, clubs, equipment and other memorabilia from a trio of buildings. At its peak, the firm established by Arthur Hills employed 11 golf course architects at the location.

"As you clear things out, you keep getting more and more memories," Forrest says. "You see plans and you think of the people, you think of the site, you think of the circumstances of the project. There's some sadness, but also thankfulness and blessedness for having the opportunities I have had over the last 42 years."

The memories will continue as Forrest and Smith are still involved in a slew of projects, including renovations at multiple Naples, Florida, courses designed by the firm during the Sunshine State golf boom. "We are as busy now as we have been in 10 years," Smith says.

Enter bit.ly/ForrestSmithPodcast into your web browser to hear the podcast.



▲ Smith



▲ Forrest

What about UP? there?

One works inside the Seattle city limits. One works just north of the city. A pair of superintendents offer a Pacific Northwest perspective on municipal golf.

By **Ron Furlong**

Priate golf course superintendents and superintendents at privately owned public courses have a lot of stress to deal with in managing their golf courses, including revolving board members, unrealistic expectations and finicky owners. Municipal golf course superintendents certainly have more than a handful of challenges unique to their operations, as well.

I checked in with a couple of superintendents in my neck of the woods here in western Washington to see what it's like heading a municipal operation these days — the challenges certainly, but also the joys and satisfactions that can be had producing a product for the masses.

Rocky Tharp is the superintendent at West Seattle Golf Club in the Emerald City. He's been the superintendent at the municipal course for three years, although he's been working for Seattle for more than 15 years. He knows the ins and outs of navigating the nuisances of working for a city-owned facility.

West Seattle GC opened in 1940 as part of the Works Progress Administration. It was designed by two-time United States Amateur champion H. Chandler Egan. Like the other municipal courses inside the city, it provides

a valuable greenspace of 160 acres.

It is one of 11 municipal courses in the region managed by Premier Golf Center LLC. "Premier Golf runs the pro shop operations," Tharp says. "But I work directly with the Parks Department for the city of Seattle."

As far as a city-wide structure for Seattle's municipal golf courses, West Seattle GC is intertwined with other municipal courses in the city, including Jackson Park Golf Course, Jefferson Park Golf Course and Interbay Golf Center. "Basically," Tharp says, "we all answer to the director of golf, who reports to the division director, who reports to the parks'





▲ Matt Waggenhoffer ▲ Rocky Tharp

superintendent, who, in turn, essentially reports to the mayor.”

RED TAPE

One of the challenges associated with working for a city is a bit of red tape that can be involved for larger purchases, things that come up during a season above and beyond items previously budgeted for.

About a half-hour north of Seattle, in Marysville, lies another Premier-operated municipal course, Cedarcrest Golf Course. Matt Waggenhoffer has been the superintendent at Cedarcrest, which opened in 1927,

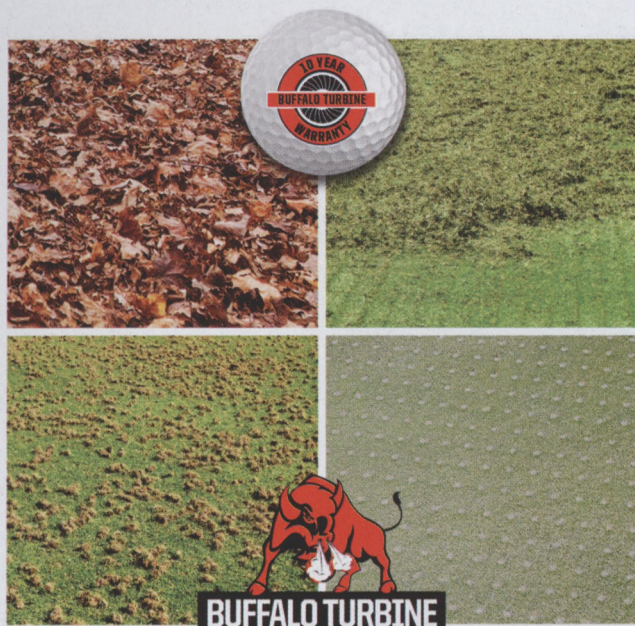
since summer 2016, and he says buying a piece of equipment mid-season can be one of the biggest challenges for a municipal golf course.

“It’s a process for sure,” Waggenhoffer says. “If we have a mower go down and we need it replaced, first we have to talk to the parks department. Once they OK it, then they have to go

to the city council. The city council tends to be all about cost, so they’ll ask for the obligatory three separate bids. It’s frustrating because I’ll know exactly what piece of equipment I want, but we have to go through this three-bid process, which can add another month to the process.”

For Waggenhoffer, going straight to the mayor can be a time-saver, if they can convince the mayor that cutting through the red tape is a smart move for the golf course and thus the city. “We took advantage of this once with a topdresser purchase,” he says. “The mayor himself was playing golf and asking why the course was so

▲ U.S. Amateur champion H. Chandler Egan designed West Seattle Golf Course.



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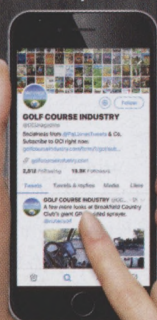


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MAINTENANCE FOR THE MASSES

wet. We were able to tell him we needed to start a topdressing program on the fairways, and we were able to get it in no time."

Waggenhoffer, by the way, says the topdressing program is definitely helping dry out the fairways at Cedarcrest. "I'd say the last couple years alone, we've put out about 450 tons of sand onto the fairways," he says. "Although it's a process that will take time, we are already seeing improvements."

At West Seattle GC, Tharp mentions \$5,000 as a threshold for having to jump a few hurdles when it comes to sudden and large purchases for maintenance equipment, although even a simple purchase can present challenges unique to municipal courses. "If we need to buy a new mower," Tharp says, "you first have to actually receive the mower before the city will cut a check for it. This can make it challenging to say the least."

LABOR

I asked both Tharp and Waggenhoffer about the labor and hiring situations at their courses.

"We have to hire through the city human resources department," Tharp says. "This can be a real cumbersome hiring process. There's a lot of steps bringing a new hire on. It can actually take anywhere between 60 and 90 days from the beginning of the process to the time you actually see that worker walk through the door. Another problem with that is along those 90 days you can and do lose a lot of qualified applicants."

Another challenge is keeping newer employees for the

long term.

"Our wages for the golf course are kind of at the low end of the scale compared with the rest of the parks department," Tharp says. "So a lot of people come here to the golf course side, work here for six months or a year or so and then go ahead and take another job somewhere else in the parks department that can pay them a higher wage. This can be a bit challenging as well, to say the least."

West Seattle GC has a staff of about 10 during the spring, summer and fall, and five in the winter, which includes Tharp and his mechanic.

Up at Cedarcrest, Waggenhoffer mentions one of the labor challenges he faced recently was a big minimum wage increase in the state. Cedarcrest is on a two-year budget cycle, so anticipating things like minimum wage increases can pose its own kind of challenge.

"Back in 2018, we just got the 2019 and 2020 budget approved," he says, "and then the state passed a big minimum wage increase and we had to go back and try and add about 11 percent more to the budget, which, let me tell you, wasn't easy to get approved."

ROUNDS AND GOLFERS

Annually, West Seattle GC receives between 50,000 and 60,000 rounds. This is nearly double the average of what many of the privately-owned public courses support in and around Seattle, and anywhere between double and triple the rounds played on private golf clubs in the city.

"One of our challenges is our rates are so low," Tharp says, "which increases our



▲ West Seattle Golf Course provides 160 acres of valuable greenspace within a major urban area.

rounds but also has an impact on what we can put into the capital budget. Kind of a catch-22."

Tharp is in the unique situation of working in a city that has multiple municipalities. "One thing is we can sort of operate all four municipal courses in Seattle (West Seattle, Jefferson, Jackson and Interbay) as one entity," he says. "This can be an advantage in getting golfers out to the right course in the city year-round. For instance, our course is a little wetter in the winter, so a lot of time Premier is directing golf over to Jefferson in the winter as they are a bit drier. We also mix up our aerification schedules amongst the courses so golfers can go to one of the other courses if our course is aerifying greens, or vice versa."

All in all, the golfers who play West Seattle GC are out to have a good time and seem to enjoy the experience. "We have a pretty solid men's and women's club, most of whom have played here a long time," Tharp says. "They're all real supportive of course conditions and tend to be really understanding. It makes for a very nice work environment."

At Cedarcrest, though not as high as inside the city of

Seattle, annual rounds have hit the 40,000 mark the last couple years. Golfers who play Cedarcrest tend to be a little less demanding than the private-club situation where Waggenhoffer started out.

"They are definitely more relaxed from what I remember when working the private club situation" says Waggenhoffer, who worked with me at Everett Golf and Country Club, a private club north of Seattle, about 20 years ago. "That can be refreshing. We also have a mostly older group of gentlemen that play in the mornings who are almost always positive and in good spirits. Golfers who smile at you and give you a wave goes a long ways."

In these uncertain times we're entering here in early 2020, both Tharp and Waggenhoffer are glad they can provide an escapable and enjoyable distraction to the masses in the Seattle area. Public, affordable golf, maybe now more than ever, is crucial to the community. **GCI**

Ron Furlong is the superintendent at Avalon Golf Links in Burlington, Washington, and a frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.



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LESSONS FROM A LIFETIME IN MUNICIPAL GOLF

Like a lot of folks in the golf industry, I grew up in municipal golf. This was New York City in the 1960s, back in the days when the conditions presented to everyday golfers were anything but pristine. Just to get to Kissena Park in the center of Queens was a journey of its own – two bus rides and a half-mile walk with my golf bag over the Long Island Expressway, up a hill, to a classic beat-up layout where I learned that, in order to get my tee into the ground, I needed to include a little water bottle and hammer in my golf bag because the tees were nothing but hard-packed dirt.

We played high school matches on a succession of courses in that borough. Along with Kissena, there were Forest Park, Douglaston and Clearview. We didn't worry about Stimpmeter speeds or complain about the greens being too small, too bumpy or inconsistent with original design intent. We were just thankful for a place to play.

Fast forward a full half century and the whole culture and concern about golf is entirely different. Back then there were no chances to chat about golf courses on social media; no painstaking dissection of golf holes, course conditions or calls for tree management and restoration. Nor did management of municipal courses back then extend beyond anything but a basic model of Parks and Recreation Department oversight.

The term "oversight" is an apt one because the contradictory ambivalence of the term fully expresses how seriously golf was taken within the government's portfolio. Parks Departments "oversaw" the golf, but they did so by virtue of an "oversight" – by neglect.

We've seen a resurgence of municipal golf of late, following suc-

cessful major championships at municipal facilities on both coasts and increased attention in major golf publications and websites. Such attention is needed in an era of major public budget cutbacks, tax shortfalls and agonizing debates about how to maintain public services. Those concerns are likely to be exacerbated in the wake of the recent Coronavirus-mandated temporary shutdowns of golf courses across the country.

What can be done to protect this treasured sector of the golf environment? Here are seven basic steps to undertake:

- Do not treat golf operations as just another municipal function. Respect its distinctiveness and place its operation within an arm of the Parks and Recreation Department. Better yet, create a quasi-independent Enterprise Fund so that golf revenues and expenses are treated as a self-contained entity rather than as a feeder – or drain – from the public budget.
- While a strong case can be made for seeking independent, private-sector management of the operation, always preserve a measure of public input and control through a golf committee, working with the management firm. Do not be afraid to write specifications into the management contract such as mandating a certain rate structure and maintenance standards.
- In searching for a management company, do not rely upon "lowest-bidder" standard of selection. Issue a detailed Request for Qualifications instead of (or before) going to a standard Request for Proposals in order to weed out inexperienced or financially challenged potential bidders.
- Create incentives in the management contract for performance – such as bonus fees for exceeding a certain level of revenue above operating expenses.
- Carefully document the condition of the golf operation and of course maintenance and equipment upon the start date of the management contract. Get it in written, photographic and video form. Use that as a baseline for periodic review of performance. Use third-party consultants to provide an objective assessment beyond the management firm's own internal agronomic expertise when it comes to the start and end of a contract.
- Don't just hand over operations to a management firm. Whether the arrangement entails a lease or monthly/annual fee by an operator, create a mechanism of consultation and input through a citizen committee or town council sub-committee to meet periodically and review performance and provide citizen input.
- Finally, don't try to compete with private clubs in terms of service, conditioning or extent of facilities. They meet the needs of a certain sector of the golf world. So does the municipal sector. Don't mistake that role by trying to be all things to all people. **GCI**



BRADLEY S. KLEIN, PH.D. (political science), former PGA Tour caddie, is a veteran golf journalist, book author ("*Discovering Donald Ross*," among others) and golf course consultant. Follow him on Twitter (@BradleySKlein).

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Unless one grew up playing the likes of Torrey Pines, Bethpage Black or, for today's millennial generation, Chambers Bay, chances are strong that the traditional municipal golf property that reared your game was, in no particular order: accessible, affordable and with a course routing apparent.

For today's younger set, chances are even stronger, believe it or not, that a government-owned golf property played a crucial role in paving your golf future. According to the National Golf Foundation's 2019 "Golf Facilities Report," a record number of domestic, muni facilities (2,515 golf properties accounting for approximately 2,800 courses) tallied about 17 percent of the total course count across the country.

Yup, the municipal is as relevant as ever in the United States, though it's probable that the most recent muni round for many players was a day endeavored within proximity of one's home — and, to borrow verbiage from that millennial set, it's likely that twentysomethings may say of said course's routing, adornments and dining: "Ya' basic."

Amid one of America's more sought-after golf pockets, however, there's little that's considered basic.

A two-hour drive east from L.A., and stretching just about 40 miles long, the golf-rich Coachella Valley (or the "Palm Springs area" to some) sports 120 courses, is host to an annual PGA Tour stop, plays home to golf's first major championship of the season and is the seasonal, winter oasis to some of the world's more affluent golf snowbirds.

In addition, if not moreover, the desert spread lays claim to what may be viewed as the most unique and potent coalescence of municipal golf the globe over.

Across a mountain-framed, palm-lined spread of just 10 miles, the valley boasts a trio of unique, muni properties (five courses all told) that can respectively lay claim to being a former PGA Tour host; a one-time Skins Game home and setting for The Golf Channel's "Big Break"; and the first golf property to ever grace the cover of *Smithsonian Magazine*.

Welcome to the Super Munis.

DESERT NEXUS

Conceived and constructed at the height of the domestic golf boom and set in the heart of a premier golf getaway destination, the Coachella Valley's triple play of all-star municipal properties has collectively redefined government-owned golf.

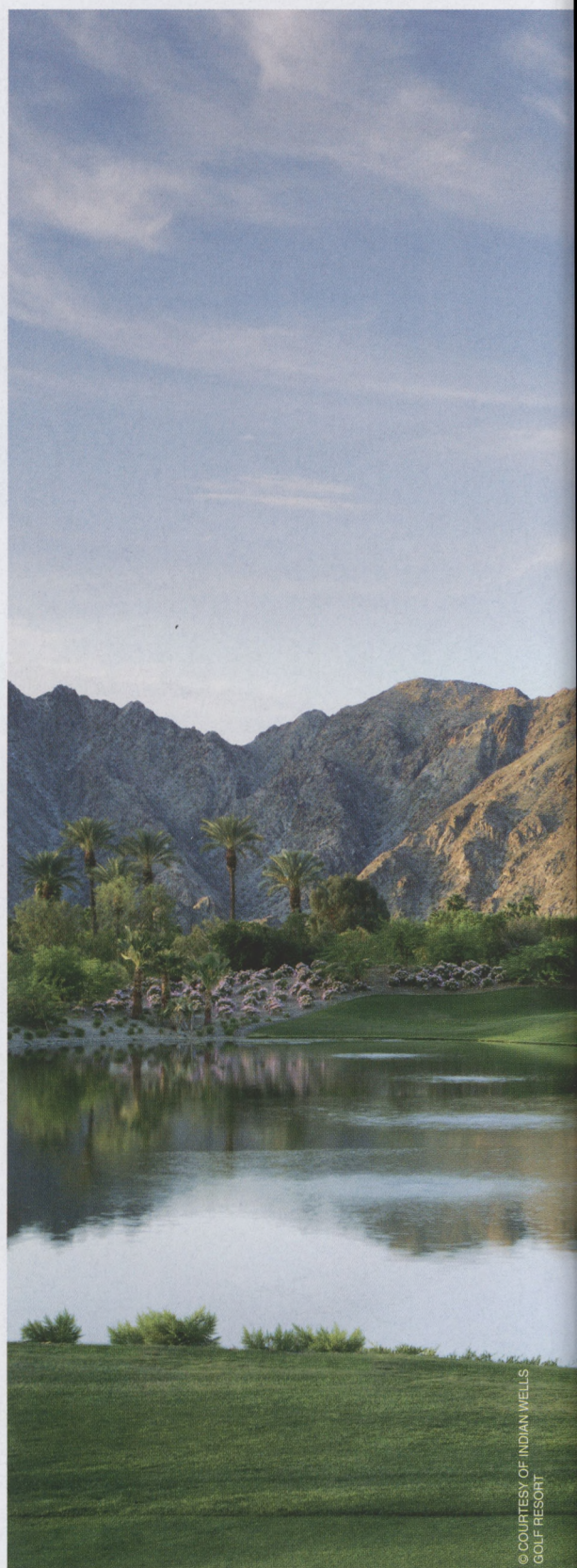
Opened in 1997, the 36-hole Desert Willow Golf Resort in Palm Desert, California, debuted to instant applause, and fast became regarded among the top city-owned properties in the nation. Revered for its environmentally-sensitive design (cue the *Smithsonian* nod) and manicured desert routing, the creation from the former architectural tandem of Dr. Michael Hurdzan and Dana Fry (working in consult with 11-time PGA Tour winner John Cook) is more popular than ever as its 25th anniversary swings closer.

Between Desert Willow's Firecliff and Mountain View Courses, the property is coming off two consecutive years of record revenues.

"I think we may be the most utilized 36-hole property in this desert. We did over 92,000 rounds last year," says Jared Stanek, the former head superintendent at Desert Willow who, in February, was hired as director or agronomy at Toscana Country Club in nearby Indian Wells.

Ardent course support from both the city and Desert Willow's management company have been crucial to maintaining the property's high-end aesthetic.

"Yeah, it's a challenge to provide world-class playing conditions under that much stress on the courses, and it's all cart traffic," Stanek continues. "But between our management company,



© COURTESY OF INDIAN WELLS GOLF RESORT

Super MUNIS

Valet parking and televised golf résumés. A look at three Coachella Valley facilities unlike other city-owned facilities.

By **Judd Spicer**

Kemper Sports, and the city, they recognize this and they've been very generous with great equipment I get to use and maintain the product to meet the high investment and high expectations. So I don't feel like I'm the rubber band being pulled between that investment and that expectation."



▲ Jared Stanek

Complementing its courses, Desert Willow's amenities set high said expectations: Valet service greets guests as a segue to a gorgeous clubhouse, which includes outdoor patio dining overlooking the golf grounds. The on-site Palm Desert Golf Academy tracks as one of the region's more respected instructional schools, and the property proves popular for meetings, events and weddings.



▲ Jonas Conlan

Fifteen minutes away, the City of La Quinta-owned SilverRock Golf Resort is an Arnold Palmer Signature design that debuted in 2005 and quickly entered the rotation for the PGA Tour's annual American Express from 2008 to 2011.

"The municipals out here are not your traditional muni courses," SilverRock head superintendent Scott Werline says with a smile.



▲ Scott Werline

Idyllically set adjacent to the Santa Rosa Mountains, it's little wonder the city has had a long-time master vision to match the course with a full-on destination spread. After better than a decade of planning, SilverRock is now well in the works of a \$420 million renovation that includes adding two hotels, a conference center, resort village and city arts park. The plan, which resulted in a re-work and re-route of the golf course in 2017, is pacing to debut in 2021.

While the desert's muni courses are vying for crucial vacation business, the still-compact community continues to subscribe to the philosophy that what serves one, serves all.

"There's a healthy competition out

here; everybody wants to look the best," Werline adds. "But through our Hi-Lo Desert Chapter of the GCSAA, we do get together a lot and people are close out here. We do share a lot of ideas. Basically, any guy out here, you can walk across the street with, 'Hey, how do you get your greens looking so good?'"

Once a more modest golf property, the Indian Wells Golf Resort enjoyed a complete overhaul after the turn of the millennium, resulting in the unveiling of the Clive Clark-designed Celebrity Course in 2006 and the John Fought-drawn Players Course a year later.

From 2007 to 2008, the Celebrity was host to the final two playings of the Skins Game and, in 2011, the property was home of The Golf Channel's "The Big Break" series.

"It's pretty unique to have three properties of this level in close proximity," Jonas Conlan, director of agronomy at Indian Wells Golf Resort, says of the desert's muni scene.

Akin to Stanek's agronomy backdrop, Conlan cut his teeth at a more traditional municipal property.

"I grew up working on a municipal golf course back in Michigan, when I was in college. And, yeah, a lot of municipal courses can be straightforward, basic and easier from a maintenance vantage," Conlan continues. "Whereas, at our municipal property, we've got two championship-level, challenging courses with high-level conditions. From a maintenance standpoint, there are challenges, but it's fun to maintain two courses of this magnitude."

NOT BAD FOR CITY WORK

Balancing rounds and respective bottom lines between city resident play and desert guests is one thing; working amid a seasonal environment that sees the heft of revenues come during a five-month window is another.

While each property has a sturdy, annual maintenance budget in the neighborhood of \$1.6 million per course, and each is armed with

grounds staffs ranging from about 30 to 43 employees, learning the ropes of maintaining premier conditions while working with city governments is still a study for superintendents when it comes to spending, supplies and schedules.

In his previous superintendent experiences, Conlan worked at resort, public and community courses across the desert.

"The unique thing with municipalities is, typically, they have a management company and, for us, fortunately, we have Troon to manage the contract with the city," says Conlan, whose grounds saw more than 76,000 rounds in 2019.

Key differences in course oversight can be keeping homeowners happy versus keeping vacationers and city residents happy.

"When you're at a resort or community property, those are generally overseen by a greens committee or a board of directors. They are, of course, living on-site and on-property daily. So, the challenges can be not just upkeeping their golf course but also their property values," Conlan continues. "Here at Indian Wells Golf Resort, we're working with resident golfers, the hotel industry and our (adjacent) hotel campus and trying to garner those return golfers to come back here every year."

Adds Stanek: "It's a bit different in working with two different entities. There's the city of Palm Desert and that's an interesting dynamic, one you don't have at a private club, where things can be more nimble and decisions can come a little quicker on occasion. But at the same time, the city of Palm Desert is very supportive of Desert Willow, and what it means to the citizens of the city. They're a great partner and they want this property to be one of the finest golf resort facilities that players will ever come across."

Werline's career included agronomy work at community club and public courses before taking the head

super role at Landmark Golf-managed SilverRock, which saw about 45,000 rounds in 2019.

"There's more hands in the cookie jar calling the shots, but it doesn't change a whole lot what we're trying to produce from a conditions standpoint," Werline says about the contrast of city-owned golf and alternate ownership parameters. "From a private or community course, a pump goes out and you're dealing with an owner or a manager. With a municipal, you have to get three quotes if a project is a certain price point, then have the city approve. It kinda slows the process. But I can say that we certainly don't fall short on our equipment here — we've got a great equipment package that the city has always kept up."

Werline's desert colleagues empathize with the need for patience and planning.

"In a private club setting, I'd present a proposal, the members and ownership would look at it and then we go. A bit more straightforward," Stanek says. "Here, I've learned that if I have a need, it better be something I need two months down the line, because you need to be ahead and allow the city the courtesy of the time it needs to get everything stamped and signed. It's a matter of taking initiative and planning ahead early. I've learned that I need to be a little bit more patient. They're great, they want to support us, but it is a city process."

Conlan notes more similarities than differences between munis and resorts or homeowner properties, but adds that a long purview is also key to his plans.

"Things do have to get approved and, for larger projects, it can take a bit longer for such approvals, as it requires a city council vote," Conlan says. "It can be a bit slower process at times to get something cleared and schedule that around the city's monthly meetings. But our city does have reserve or capital funds set aside for potential projects, whether



it's anything from irrigation to new equipment."

Hiring out for contract work for munis may involve a competitive salary wage union bidding process, while particular project price points further denote the city-owned process of assessing levels of spending scrutiny.

"Take, say, purchasing fertilizer," Stanek says. "We overseeded Firecliff in September, and I needed to fertilize the second week of October. So, first there's a required public posting. Then I needed to secure competitive bids from three different vendors, and lots of forms there. It can take a month or two before securing the funding from the city manager before making the purchase."

For muni courses, spending requires validation.

"You do have to ensure that a project makes sense, to draw out that a project will have returns," adds Stanek. "But in trying to achieve our high-quality conditions that take a certain labor force or particular equipment, it's just a matter of presenting that to the city and hopefully doing a good enough job of justifying the project. If you're not proving yourself, that can create doubt, but if you're producing, then things fall into place naturally."

On occasion, appearances at city hall meetings are necessary to justify a project.

"Generally, attending a city council meeting falls under the purview of our GM," Stanek says. "But when there's a big project coming down the line, that would require me to attend and present the project as a maintenance expert to address any technical questions."

Werline has also been called upon to appear at city meetings a few times a year. "If they need a technical breakdown, then, yeah, they'll bring me in every once in a while," he says.

From the minutes of a city meeting to maintenance of unique city-owned properties, keepers of the Coachella Valley's Super Munis are simpatico in authoring a new era of government golf.

"I'd like to think that if you go play a nice private club, or one of the top publics, that we're able to compete with them and hold our own with the best of the best," says Conlan, echoing the same sentiments of his desert colleagues. "It goes back to working to keep those visiting golfers coming back year after year. I tell my guys that our goal is to consistently be one of the top resort properties in Southern California." **GCI**

▲ The Firecliff Course at Desert Willow is one of the "super munis" of the Coachella Valley.



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An example of damage caused by white grubs.

Expert opinions on ABW, white grubs

Steve McDonald and Ben McGraw share their perspective on what you might be able to expect from pests in 2020.

By Matt LaWell

Temperatures are starting to jump across the country and all sorts of pests are warming up for their perpetual return. Prepare yourself.

Bayer is still awaiting EPA approval for its new insecticide with the active ingredient Tetraniliprole — the company expects the green light later this year — but a number of industry experts have been testing it for years. We talked with two of them —

Steve McDonald and Dr. Ben McGraw — for their perspectives on the latest addition to the diamide insecticide field and, more generally, about what they have found in their recent annual bluegrass weevil and white grubs research.

McDonald is no stranger to golf courses, visiting more than 200 annually as the owner and operator of Turfgrass Disease Solutions. His current research focus is the

practical management of problematic disease, insects and weeds in highly maintained turfgrass. He teaches in the professional golf turf management program at Rutgers University.



Steve McDonald

McGraw is an associate professor of turfgrass science at Penn State University, where his areas of expertise include turfgrass entomology, biological control, cultural and mechanical control, and, key for this discussion, insect behavior, insect ecology and insecticide resistance.



Ben McGraw

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What recent developments in ABW and white grub research are key for golf course superintendents to at least know about, if not also implement?

Steve McDonald: The big one that Ben and I would probably agree on is resistance within the bluegrass weevils and various classes. New tools like Tetraniliprole are critical, and also making sure that you're rotating in other diamides properly in resistance management is key. The products are so effective that the tendency is to overuse products like Tetraniliprole, but superintendents should be encouraged to make sure they're timing their insecticides properly and considering rotation where and when possible. For white grubs, one of the keys we're seeing is more consistent control in thatchier turf where the older chemistries hadn't been working as well.

Ben McGraw: The loss of some products is potentially coming down the pipeline. Our lab is heavily invested in annual bluegrass weevils, so our focus is mostly there. Other colleagues across the country might focus a little more on white grubs, and so I would defer to them on new developments with grubs. I would say most of the changes in turf insect management are changes in chemical management. And environmental challenges have made it difficult for pest control the last couple of years — extreme weather affecting control or allowing insect populations to get really large. Those are the latest developments.

Among superintendents and other turfheads you talk with, what are the most common complaints about ABW and white grubs?

McDonald: The biggest issue about controlling annual bluegrass weevils is, particularly in the Mid-Atlantic region, they can damage turf from May through November, so it's a very long season. The biggest complaints are the costs and that potential for pest damage over such a long window. Materials like Tetraniliprole that provide 21 days of control in trials, and sometimes more — and timing those products properly — are the critical things.

McGraw: The complaints from the last couple of years for ABW, I would say what is different, is we do seem to have a lot more

damage that occurs in the summertime. Traditionally, it's really worse in the spring generation — in our area, that's May or early June — and usually if you can get things under control during that generation, then it's rare that we have widespread damage in the summer months. What we've had a lot of reports of is more damage occurring in the summertime and that can be due to additional stresses, but also populations seem to be hanging around later in the year.

What new processes or tools for controlling them have performed best?

McGraw: Tetraniliprole is part of the anthranilic diamide family. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how you want to look at it, all of the major products in that family work against larvae. They're all newer-generation insecticides, they're all softer chemistries, they're all very effective and they all have subtle nuances in the timing or the application of the product.

McDonald: With a lot of these newer chemistries like Tetraniliprole, they appear to be very systemic in the plant, meaning they penetrate plant tissue rapidly and they move to points where insects are feeding. Golf course superintendents would historically try to limit water to the golf course only when they need to and a lot of these new chemistries have the ability to move rapidly. Products like Tetraniliprole, when we tested this, did very well when watered in 24 hours after application and the turf is not mown. My general rule of thumb on new processes and tools would be to definitely water it in lightly — one-tenth of an inch — before you mow it.

You're spending a significant amount of money on these plant protection materials and you really want to optimize your delivery. These weevil and grub insecticides, you really want to consider the placement so it's covering all the pests you're trying to control.

Bayer has been testing its Tetraniliprole for more than half a decade and started promoting it at the Golf Industry Show in January. How might that new active ingredient affect ABW and white grub control?

McGraw: It's an anthranilic diamide that appears to have very good residual activity, so it can be applied preventively and last

for some time in the environment where it controls the insects without fear of missing a population or things emerging too early or too late, so it gives a little more flexibility as to when it can be applied relative to the insect stage. Along those lines, what appears to be different in our testing is that it does seem to have some curative activity, which is unusual for an anthranilic diamide, so it does appear to have quite a bit of flexibility in timing — not just preventive timing but also in the curative control.

I still want to see this product in testing, especially because the curative activity is rather unique and I'd like to see if that's a real phenomenon. That was one of the most interesting trials we did last year. Still trying to figure out the timing of it, because that would be a big one if it could be used in a rescue treatment.

McDonald: It definitely has a fit as far as new options for programs to include Tetraniliprole into a programmatic approach for annual bluegrass weevil and white grub control. Any time you can have a new active ingredient that fits into a program — especially when they consider what I call the whole insect-pest complex, not just annual bluegrass weevils — (it can provide another option).

What other perspective — general or specific — about this corner of the research sector would you absolutely want to share with turfheads? What do they need to know?

McDonald: Now that there are three diamides in the turf market, making sure they are properly rotating through the diamide class, that they consider it an alternative insecticide, that would be the absolutely critical thing with Tetraniliprole, just that they're rotating. We've tested Tetraniliprole for going on three years, we've done various insect pest control tests and we're going to look at it again in 2020, which is great.

McGraw: I think rotation is good. It's important to know that this is a tool and we want all of our tools to work effectively for as long as they can. Even when a new product comes out with some interesting activity or provides a high level of control against our target pests, we still want to be conscious of rotating these products, rotating active ingredients. ●



BREAKING DOWN MUNI MISCONCEPTIONS

The profile of the typical municipal course golfer isn't flattering: outfit from Goodwill, handicap (if he has one) well into double figures and frugal to a fault, especially when it comes to green fees.

To use a term made popular by former vice president Joe Biden, conventional wisdom is a "bunch of malarkey" — at least the part that paints the muni golfer willing to play any available goat track as long as it's cheap.

"Loyal muni golfers will surprise you," says Derek Johnston, a fellow partner at Global Golf Advisors Partners, who oversaw a research project our firm conducted for the city and county of Los Angeles. "Our research showed that municipal golfers can be not only extremely proud of the courses they play, but also extremely loyal."

The common thinking among public course administrators and operators is that keeping prices low is the key to golfer satisfaction, loyalty and engagement. However, the GGA Partners study of several thousand L.A.-area municipal course golfers revealed that most are not as price-conscious as their reputation suggests. In fact, most say they would pay a higher green fee if certain important criteria are achieved.

The first of those criteria is course conditioning. Specifically, golfers referenced improved putting surfaces — more consistent roll and green speed — and teeing areas. Whether their home course was one of the premier muni courses within the city and county system or one of the more modest, these golfers cited golf course conditions as a top priority and worthy of a few more bucks.

But what do they consider "higher prices?" Seventy percent of

those surveyed said they would be willing to pay a 5 percent to 15 percent higher green fee for improved course conditions.

"For most of these courses, a 10 percent increase on average in green fee revenue is significant, given the high volume of rounds played," Johnston says. "Revenue growth of this proportion recommends serious consideration for investing the resources required to produce improved playing surfaces."

The second surprising finding from GGA Partners' research in Los Angeles was the importance golfers placed on pace of play in relation to the value they received for their green fee. Fifty-five percent of muni course golfers expressed a willingness to pay more per round for improved pace of play. "Teaming with USGA analysts, who conducted on-site golfer tests, we learned that pace of play and the sense of 'getting one's money's worth' were closely aligned," Johnston says.

GGA Partners' research of L.A.-area muni golf courses identified solutions that are available to administrators and operators of muni courses nationwide. While some of these findings fly in the face of conventional wisdom, they bring focus to several important demographic facts that should be considered when putting together a strategic plan and again during the budgeting process.

- Muni golfers are a mixed socioeconomic bag. Many muni course players are not "belongers" and have little interest in joining a private club. In many cases, they are

part of an increasingly mobile workforce and are reluctant to establish roots within a club community because they don't want financial obligations limiting or influencing their next career move.

- Muni golfers are not necessarily "cheap" and unwilling to pay for an enjoyable round of golf. In fact, many are like most golfers in that they will pay more for aspects of their round that they feel provide value and enjoyment.
- Capacity for more golf rounds exists at many muni courses, which gives avid golfers opportunities to play more rounds in less-congested conditions.
- The fastest growing segments of new golfers — women and kids — have easy access with very little friction, as in no joining fees or monthly dues, when playing at muni golf courses.

The potential for increased revenues when pace of play and course conditions are improved is a business model that deserves careful evaluation in most markets today. We certainly know that golf course superintendents at most municipal facilities could provide improved conditions given an increase in their agronomy and maintenance budgets. But what is the potential in your market for increased participation in incremental green fees? The best way to know the answer to that question is to ask your golfers. Their answers might be a pleasant surprise. **GCI**



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

Listen to **YOUR** land and community

How the Cleveland Metroparks are
modernizing a facility originally constructed
in response to the Great Depression.

By **Lee Carr**

President Franklin Roosevelt prioritized the public when he signed Executive Order 7034 in 1935 and created the Works Progress Administration. Through the WPA, people sustained themselves on infrastructure projects and other initiatives, including building and renovating public and private golf courses coast to coast. Located just south of Cleveland, Ohio, Seneca Golf Course was built with WPA funds and opened with nine holes in 1940. Crafted by hands in need of work and created for people in need of a local public course, those nine holes grew to 36 and were named Course A and Course B.

Owned by the city of Cleveland, the land is now on a \$1-per-year lease to the Cleveland Metroparks for 99 years, starting in 2010. Sleepy Hollow, another Metroparks course, is three miles from Seneca and some people questioned why the Metroparks would want to add a course in such close proximity to their robust portfolio of properties.

"We did it because it is a large tract of land with 400 acres of green space right on our parkway," says Sean McHugh, CGCS and executive director of golf operations for the Metroparks since 1997. Thousands of year-round step counters, runners, hand-holding toddlers, furry companions and more constantly enjoy this lengthy, accessible pathway. "It was a no-brainer for us to be the stewards of this land," McHugh adds.

Cleveland requested that the Metroparks maintain the golf course and improve it. The Metroparks agreed to invest \$4 million and they have fulfilled that commitment already with a new design and a new irrigation system. Though more changes are in the works, there is time to carefully consider those options and people are enjoying every step forward.

COURSE RENOVATIONS

Altogether the Metroparks has eight courses with 30 miles separating those on the west side – Big Met, Little Met and Mastick Woods – from the course farthest east, Donald Ross-designed Manakiki. The southern courses include Seneca, Sleepy Hollow and Shawnee Hills with Washington, an executive course, in the middle. These courses offer a variety of difficulty and the parks are collectively referred to as the "Emerald Necklace" because of the way they surround Cleveland with green spaces. Every facility has its own crew except for the three western courses, which combine for 36 holes, are

within a mile of each other and can easily share staff.

Seneca was once a well-known course, hosting The Carling Open Invitational, a PGA Tour event, in 1959. It was won by Dow Finsterwald, and Arnold Palmer referred to Seneca as "a good testing course." When it began to lose popularity and became neglected, Cleveland started losing money on the property and something needed to change. Enter the Metroparks.

In 2014, the Metroparks worked with Terry Baller of Sustainable Sports Solutions LLC to create Furnace Run, Chippewa and Baldwin, the three nines in the new 27-hole design. The course isn't meant to be

overly difficult. "We wanted it to be enjoyable and Baller made that vision work. Everyone is very happy with it," McHugh says.

With Baldwin nestled in a horseshoe-shaped Chippewa, and Chippewa nestled within a horseshoe-shaped Furnace Run, this layout has every nine start and finish at the clubhouse which is creating lots of possibilities. The management can mix nines for people and it can track how long those nines are taking. The routing is easy to follow, adding to the enjoyment of playing, and short distances between greens and the next tee keep everybody moving.

Named for one of the three headwaters on the property, mass excavation started on Furnace Run in January 2015 and it opened for play Memorial Day weekend 2016. Chippewa took just 14 months to renovate, opening in September 2017 and the Baldwin renovations began in April 2018. That course, now open, brings this part of the project to a close. One big challenge was maintaining greens and fairways for

▲ Seneca Golf Course is one of eight courses operated by Cleveland Metroparks.

◆ A new irrigation system is part of \$4 million in improvements at Seneca Golf Course outside Cleveland.



holes that had to be watered (using a water truck) before the irrigation came online. It was imperative for the course to remain open while work was being done to ensure people could continue to play.

In every phase of renovation, the Metroparks team followed the same steps: mass excavation (rough shaping; moving material; digging ponds); drainage; shaping bunkers; spreading topsoil; irrigation; green extensions; bunker drainage and bunker sand; cart paths; finish grade; seed prep; seeding; straw mulch and hydroseed. Though guests have been curious about the work, seeing the grass grow is when people start to get excited.

"Tees and fairways are a mix of low-mow bluegrass varieties. They have decent color and are more drought- and disease-resistant, which helps with conservation," says David Donner, golf course manager for Seneca. Tees and fairways can be mowed down to half an inch without any problems and bluegrass surrounds

the bunkers. The greens are pure bentgrass now, eliminating any of the bluegrass that was there previously.

Besides the changes in turf, the design lengthened the course in some places but also strategically provided more club and shot selections for golfers of different abilities. New irrigation was a massive part of the changes and Tony Altum from A.S. Altum & Associates created the irrigation plan in 2014. Throughout the renovation, this plan was executed in-house by McHugh, Donner and the team.

The irrigation was changed from the steel lines laid in the 1940s and '50s to being high-density polyethylene pipe (HDPE). With the new system comes longevity but also new skills, as several maintenance employees were trained and certified in the installation and care for this material.

The Metroparks excel at employee development, and McHugh has created an in-house construction crew that works across the proper-

ties, not just for irrigation projects but for whatever needs doing. The Metroparks golf properties combine for about 300,000 nine-hole rounds a year and golf is financially self-sustaining.

Staff are (happily!) adjusting to the new two-wire Rain Bird system that conserves water in multiple ways. The irrigation is mostly single row, with double row being installed in only a few places near the landing areas on the fairways. "We do have ins and outs on the greens with heads that water the greens and heads that water the rough so we are not over-watering either area," Donner says. "We have more options to control what we are putting out."

Water conservation is an added benefit of the new no-mow areas too, incorporated to create pockets of wildlife habitat. The no-mow areas have been the most difficult change for the guests and are still being shaped as several balls (and some stray colorful phrases) have landed there. It's important to get the balance of the improvements right and the Seneca team recognizes the value of listening as well as doing.

Geoff Koller, Seneca's clubhouse manager and PGA golf professional, helps immensely with this and he educates guests daily. Koller is friendly, attentive and sure to explain big changes as well as regular maintenance, such as aerating and topdressing. Signage in the clubhouse and throughout the course is also helping people.

Another course improvement is the tee schematics. Shifting away from the traditional red, white and blue, the tees from back to front are purple, black, gold, white and orange. The purple tees are reserved for select tournaments and the course championship, while the orange tees are for families. Koller encourages people to "consider the skill level they possess and to play from the tees that match the experience they want to have." McHugh acknowledges the

▼ The Furnace Run course was the first revamped nine to open at Cleveland Metroparks-operated Seneca Golf Course.



problem with pace of play at all the properties and changing the colors “invites people to think differently.”

DAILY RECREATION

In acquiring Seneca, “the Metroparks aimed for renovations and improvements that would enhance the course and enable the land to be used 365 days a year,” says McHugh. This meant some extra initiatives.

For instance, cross-country skiing is possible and the trails are clearly marked. When it snows, tracks can be seen adjacent to the fairways and if someone accidentally crosses the greens, the turf damage is light and grows out quickly in the spring. People snowshoe here. Nesting boxes are being added and a local scout troop is helping with a bluebird trail. The

parking lot is sloped so water flows into a retention area where it is filtered before it again becomes part of the water cycle. Donner describes himself as a “beekeeper who is learning,” but the fresh honey butter served at The Back Nine Grille, the clubhouse snack bar, is evidence of what he already knows.

Solorider carts have been at the courses for years and see use on at least a monthly basis. At Seneca, golf is accessible for everyone and the solorider carts can drive right onto the greens. Some people use them to play and others simply ride and spend time with friends and family while they play.

Plans for the future include a state-of-the-art driving range. Also being considered are a par-3 course,

a short-game practice area and a sledding hill. The course was closed for only 85 days in 2019, but when golf is not possible, the property can be used for other adventures.

Another improvement is that the maintenance facility now has a wood-burning boiler. Trees line the fairways at Seneca and are in abundance throughout the Metroparks so there is no shortage of wood. Standing in the middle of Baldwin, you can’t see the maintenance facility but you can smell the fire burning. It’s smoky, earthy and wonderful. Who doesn’t love that smell, particularly on days that are cold and damp? Over the years a number of beech trees have had



▲ Dave Donner



▲ Geoff Koller

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MAINTENANCE FOR THE MASSES

to be removed and the beech is given to the animals at another Metroparks property, the Zoo, where it is used for browse. Nothing is wasted.

Koller shares that one of the most rewarding parts of his job is hearing stories, like when people say they have played the course for decades. Working with people to help them enjoy golf not only as a sport, but as entertainment, he challenges himself to “recover discouraged golfers” and to help others improve. “It’s a pretty good split between people who just want to play and people who want to learn,” not just to golf better, but about everything that has to do with the property – from agronomic principles to plant identification.

“We couldn’t accomplish what we do without the great volunteers who work here,” says Donner, who is one of four full-time maintenance employees. Volunteers usually work two eight-hour shifts per week and have playing privileges at every Metroparks course. Donner enjoys and is exceptional at his job for many reasons, not the least of which is bonding with the seasonal employees (about 25) and volunteers with whom he gets to work. They possess a variety of backgrounds, occupations and ages, and are just another way that this is truly a course for everyone.

The Metroparks are treasured by Clevelanders and the public has been supportive, particularly after seeing the high-quality product produced by the first renovation. Funded 80 years ago by the WPA for golfers, in 2020 there is something at Seneca for everyone. Authentic and joyfully blooming, constant activity is the new heartbeat of this outstanding municipal course. Sounds of the renovation are fading, bees are buzzing and bluebirds will soon be singing. Is your management interested in improving conservation and encouraging wildlife? How about adding activities and areas that are naturally thrilling? Maybe. Listen to your land, see it from the eyes of the people and determine how your property can work for all walks of life. **GCI**

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BE NICE!

BE NICE OR LEAVE: EMBRACING PUBLIC GOLF

Last Thanksgiving, before the lavish spread was out on the table, I played Pacific Grove Municipal Golf Links – aptly dubbed “the poor man’s Pebble” – with my father-in-law and nephew. It was some of the most fun I had on a course all year. Daily greens fee: \$51. Juniors: \$20. The layout: world class. The club, owned by the city, considers itself a community service rather than revenue generator.

Grassroots golf is the best kind of golf.

The foundation of my career is public golf from Myrtle Beach to Miami Beach – and to this day, I am very comfortable working with and playing public courses. I can sum up the ethos of public golf with one example. At Raven Nest Golf Club in Huntsville, Texas, there’s a sign posted on the wall of the golf shop that offers just one simple rule: “Be Nice or Leave.” That perfectly conveys the attitude I’ve come to expect of the public golf experience.

So, what is it I love about public golf and why is it good for golfers, especially right now?

First, the people who work at public golf courses are always happy to see me – or at least they give the impression that my business is appreciated. They make a sincere effort to make me feel welcome, to truly enjoy the course and enjoy the day.

Second, I like the informality, that the only rules I have to

follow are the most basic Rules of Golf. The experience is what I make it, not dependent on too many flower beds, too many hands touching my golf bag and too many forced smiles.

Third, public courses understand that when I’m showing up it means I have a little time to spare and they’re not going to waste it with frills and unnecessary niceties.

Fourth, flexibility. I can walk in and play 9 or 18 holes, walk or ride, join up with another golfer or play solo. And if the course isn’t too crowded, I can play a second ball and practice on the course without worrying about someone yelling at me.

I can change my shoes in the parking lot and not worry about getting a letter from the board. I can keep my hat on in the snack bar (although I prefer not to just because I was brought up that way), and there’s no silly dress code and notes on the locker room bulletin board about collars or sneakers. Less stress is a good thing.

Again, I’m not for throwing etiquette out the window; one of golf’s charms is its unwritten rules of decorum. But, c’mon. We’d all benefit from a softer set of requirements for a game that is played outdoors. And that’s exactly what you find at most public courses.

Use your cell phone without the threat of expulsion. Just don’t disturb other players.

Same with music. If I want to, I can listen – on the range or in the cart – to The Doors or sing my way down the fairway. Never know, you might even meet another fan.

And one more thing. While there are conditioning expectations, particularly at some of the upper-tier public courses, you’re never going to find the over-the-top, overly manicured playing features so often demanded by members of private clubs.

Golfers know what to expect at public golf courses. While they may ooh and aah when they see Augusta on TV, they’re savvy enough to know that their local muni has neither the staff nor the budget to get near that.

I also love how my fellow superintendents – especially those of you lucky enough to work at a high-level private course – understand the plight of our public-course brethren, many of whom are achieving unbelievable results with a crew of summer high-schoolers and less money than most top-100 courses spend in a month.

There’s amazingly little look-down-our-noses in this business, as I found when I was working at a ritzy private course a few months ago and asked the talented superintendent what he thought of the public course across the street. “Isn’t it amazing what Charlie is doing with what he’s got?” he asked me. “We’re pretty friendly and I talk to him all the time.”

Talk about the real heroes in our business. We should be giving out awards for those guys who do the most with the least. That’s accomplishing something.

The public-course spirit: Be nice or leave. How about if we bring that feeling to the rest of our lives, too. **GCI**



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

Template for fulfillment

A day at a busy New Jersey facility
begins with headlamps. It ends with
tremendous satisfaction.

By **Rick Woelfel**



Neshanic Valley Golf Course epitomizes what municipal golf can be. Located in Neshanic Station, New Jersey, 25 miles north of Trenton and 50 miles west of midtown Manhattan, it's considered one of the finest municipal golf facilities in America and the crown jewel of the Somerset County assortment of five golf courses. The property features 27 championship holes plus a 9-hole academy course and expansive practice facilities.

The club was the site of the 2012 U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links, the last ever held, and regularly hosts state and regional championship events. Last year, it hosted the 118th New Jersey State Golf Association's Amateur Championship.

Andrew Hojnowski oversees it all in his role as manager of golf course maintenance. In the 13 years he's been at Neshanic Valley, Hojnowski, who graduated from Penn State in 2001, has developed a knack for making the most of his resources, such as the dollars in his budget and his inventory of chemicals, and utilizing his staff (28 in-season including himself) to full effectiveness, with the goal of providing the best possible conditions for the 40,000-plus golfers who tee it up at the club each year.

"Our strategy is to use every year and build on our experiences over previous years as we go," Hojnowski says. "We have a template that we go off for my course and the other four courses have slightly different ones. We all follow our templates that we've worked on for the last 15 to 18 years and have been improving year upon year. We keep it simple to keep the cost down."

Hojnowski, who reports to Darrell Marcinek, the county's director of golf maintenance, must keep an especially close eye on his budget, which is allocated at the county level on a calendar-year basis.

"Our budgets are set in the beginning of the year," he says, "and we have to stick to them. Money is only given out at certain times of the year. We don't have access to it all at once if we have a major problem. We can't always get the money we need to fix things right away like some other courses are able to or replace a piece of equipment if it goes down. We have to make do with what we can get our hands on from the other four courses if we need to at times."

Hojnowski has developed a set of strategies to help his team complete jobs efficiently and provide quality conditions while minimizing intrusions on play. On summer weekends, for instance, play starts at 6 a.m. but his crew is on the course an hour before then.

"We start our day pretty early compared to a few other operations I've been at," he says. "Everybody's got a headlamp here. Every machine I have has headlights on it. You don't find that at every golf course."

The golf complex spans some 350 acres (with 70 additional acres set aside for future parkland use) but Hojnowski notes that he and his team have mastered the art of getting from one point to another as expeditiously as possible. "Knowing the property is a huge advantage for me and my staff," he says, "and knowing what routes to take to get jobs done as quickly as possible and how to get things done quickly without impeding golf."

Hojnowski says that over the years some tasks have been streamlined or even eliminated in the name of efficiency.

"It's what's worked in the past and seeing what we can get away with without losing quality," he says. "We're always trying to improve our resources and have better equipment to work with to make things go quicker."

"We've had to stop doing things like walk mowing greens but don't believe the quality of our putting surfaces is any worse than it was when we did walk mow all the greens. We've cut that from six people down to three guys on

a weekend morning. It's things like that that we've had to adjust to over the years, but we don't want to lose our quality. We've changed our programs around quite a bit to get there."

Hojnowski is a minimalist when it comes to inputs such as fungicides and herbicides. "I don't apply chemicals as much as private clubs do, or other courses where I've worked," he says. "We stick to our program and keep it as simple as we can."

"We are on a preventative program, which is a better way to manage turf in my opinion, because you're not trying to play catch-up all the time and spray heavier amounts of chemicals to get caught up."

"Obviously, we use the weather to our advantage every chance we get. We change our schedules often to match the weather. You've got to be flexible in this business and you have to be able to change quickly and roll with the punches when it comes to managing anything on the golf course."

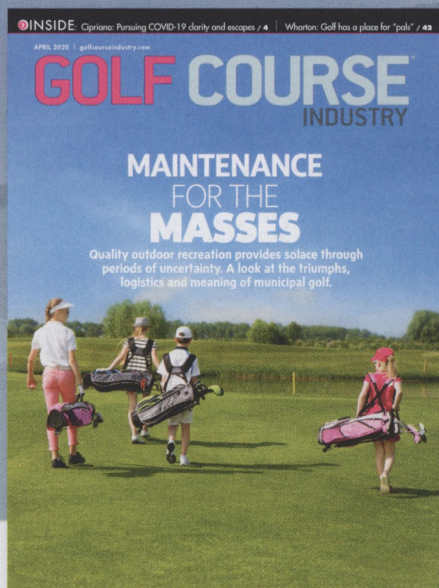
To further decrease inputs, Hojnowski recently reduced fairway area by a little over an acre, converting it from bentgrass fairway to bluegrass rough. Additional areas have been identified for future conversions. "We're always trying to improve the place to make maintenance easier and reduce those maintenance inputs: gas fuel, labor, chemicals, water, everything," he says.

Hojnowski is also a minimalist when it comes to water usage. He has allocated 57 million gallons annually for the entire property. Only once, early in his tenure at the course, did he come close to exceeding that allocation. His watering schedule changes day to day depending on circumstances.

"I look at the course," Hojnowski says. "What does it need, what does it not need? We don't have very many high electronics like some of the other places do with soil moisture meters everywhere telling you what the course needs. We do it the best we

◀ Neshanic Valley Golf Course features 27 regulation holes, a 9-hole academy course and spacious practice facilities.

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MAINTENANCE FOR THE MASSES

can by eye and feel and we've learned what we can get away with without hurting the turf to the point where it's going to die, which is a lot more than people realize.

"You can really cut back on a lot of water in a lot of places and still have good turf quality. Golfers understand that

things are a little bit browner, but they're still playable."

Neshanic Valley is open year-round and the 2019-20 winter was particularly challenging because there was virtually no measurable snow — and, consequently, a high volume of play. Hojnowski is extremely protec-



The natural side

Visitors to Neshanic Valley Golf Course find themselves immersed in nature. Andrew Hojnowski, whose title is director of golf course maintenance, is as committed to safeguarding the environment as he is to providing quality playing conditions.

"I don't know a superintendent that doesn't care about the environment and doesn't do everything they can to make their golf course as environmentally friendly as possible," he says.

For the past decade, Audubon International has designated Neshanic Valley as a Certified Cooperative Sanctuary and wildlife, including deer, foxes and coyotes, is abundant — on the golf course proper, on the adjacent open space that is part of the property and in the river that flows through the site, the latter much to the delight of Hojnowski, an avid trout fisherman.

"(Becoming Audubon certified) took a lot of work, but I really enjoy enhancing the environment for everything," Hojnowski says. "For the wildlife, for the water, for the plant life, for the bees, the pollinators."

There are no beehives on the property, but the insects are frequent and welcome visitors. "I don't know if we will ever have them on this property," Hojnowski says, "but at least three of our neighbors have them right adjacent to the property."

Concern for the environment is a top priority at Neshanic Valley, as it is at most golf facilities. If that means postponing an application of fertilizer or fungicide because rain is in the forecast, so be it.

"You look at the weather and only spray your chemicals on days when it's not going to rain for the next 24 hours, and things like that," Hojnowski says. "You don't apply fertilizer before an inch of rain is about to fall or you don't apply fertilizers in the winter because they run off. It seems like such a simple concept, but most people don't know what we go through to make these places as good for the environment as we do."

tive of Neshanic Valley's turf. He aerifies twice a year, customarily in late March and usually the last week of August. The heavy traffic this winter, however, called for additional steps, including sometimes moving cart stakes twice per day.

Hojnowski takes pride in his team's work ethic. "Everyone here understands if they have an extra fairway to mow or an extra green to finish or a few extra bunkers to rake and it's getting close to their typical break time, these guys will go ahead and finish their job," he says. "Or, if they're mowing fairways and they know it's going to take an hour longer than their normal break time, they're just going to go ahead and finish and take a later break time. They're very flexible and everybody that comes

here understands that for this place to operate efficiently, and for the golf to work out, they've got to be a little flexible too, and my staff has been really good about that."

The work of Hojnowski's team does not go unnoticed by the golfers, a circumstance that gives Hojnowski immense pleasure.

"The golfers here appreciate what we do," he says. "Just about everybody on my staff, at some point, has come up to me and said, 'This guy just came up to me and said what an awesome job we're doing and all I was doing was raking bunkers.' And that's great. I want the golfers to tell that to my staff. I don't need to hear that, I want them to hear that. They're the ones out there working their butts off. It builds them up and

gives them purpose. It makes them feel good about doing their job. I love that, when the golfers compliment my staff."

After nearly two decades in his chosen profession, Hojnowski remains passionate about his work. And the golfers who visit Neshanic Valley are the beneficiaries of that passion.

"You see the results of your work right away," he says. "It's right there in your face. You cut a fairway and stripe up the fairway and see how good it looks. That's why a lot of us do this. That and being outdoors is another big reason that I'm in this business, that I wanted to get into this. I love the outdoors. I can't imagine being behind a desk all day. I'd lose my mind." **GCI**

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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT

FUNGICIDES



Q&A WITH BRIAN AYNARDI, Ph.D

Northeast Research Scientist for PBI-Gordon

Brian Aynardi, Ph.D., shares the newest fungicide innovation from PBI-Gordon. Aynardi is the Northeast Research Scientist for PBI-Gordon, and leads the fungicide development effort at PBI-Gordon. He can be reached at baynardi@pbigordon.com for more information.

Union™ Fungicide SC and its active ingredients, cyazofamid and azoxystrobin.

Union™ is premix fungicide of cyazofamid and azoxystrobin available as an SC (suspension concentrate) formulation. Cyazofamid, formulated and distributed as Segway® Fungicide SC by PBI-Gordon Corporation, was first discovered in 1987 by ISK (Ishihara Sangyo Kaisha, Ltd.). Cyazofamid belongs to the QiI (quinone inside inhibitor) group of fungicides (FRAC group 21), which disrupt the electron transport chain at the inside binding site of complex III of the cytochrome B. Cyazofamid is the only fungicide from the cyano-imidazole group registered for use in the United States on turf and ornamentals.

The second active ingredient in Union fungicide is azoxystrobin, which was the first of the strobilurin fungicides to be registered for turf in the United

States, in 1997. Strobilurins, or QoI (quinone outside inhibitor) fungicides (FRAC group 11) are very similar to QiI fungicides in that they disrupt the electron transport chain at complex III of the cytochrome B, but they do so at the outside binding site.

1 What diseases does Union effectively control?

Union fungicide is the ultimate premix product for control of the pathogens inciting Pythium diseases. Cyazofamid (Segway® Fungicide SC, PBI-Gordon Corp.) has been the premier active ingredient of choice for control of the various Pythium species affecting turfgrass, most notably those causing Pythium root rot, Pythium blight, and Pythium root dysfunction. The addition of azoxystrobin to cyazofamid offers a second mode of action for control of the various pathogens causing Pythium diseases commonly found in the turf industry.

Cyazofamid (Segway®) only controls diseases caused by oomycete fungi. Therefore, control of the other pathogens listed on the Union label can be attributed to azoxystrobin. Turfgrass managers can expect excellent control of the following diseases, provided resistant populations of the pathogens causing these diseases are not present: anthrac-

nose, brown patch, fairy ring, large patch, leaf spot (*Drechslera* and *Bipolaris* spp.), gray leaf spot, and summer patch.

Union fungicide is labeled for use on golf courses, athletic fields, commercial and residential lawns, sod farms, and parks.

2 Where will Union best fit into fungicide programs?

Union has a unique fit to turfgrass managers' spray programs, particularly as it relates to what diseases are most prevalent on their respective use sites. For example, for those who struggle with Pythium root rot, Union is an excellent preventive application once soil temperatures at the 2" depth are in excess of 65°F. These are the same temperatures other soil-borne fungi become (or are already) active, such as the pathogens causing summer patch and fairy ring.

Among the most problematic diseases on commercial and residential lawns comprised of cool-season turfgrass are leaf spots, Pythium blight and brown patch. Union provides control of the pathogens causing these diseases. Likewise, diseases of warm-season turf such as large patch, Pythium blight, and leaf spots are also controlled with preventive applications of Union.

Union is ideal for superinten-

dents managing ultradwarf bermudagrass greens, where heavy rains associated with cooler weather result in Pythium blight and leaf spot concerns. Union is a premix product that controls both pathogens and the subsequent disease as a single product. An application of Union fungicide gives superintendents peace of mind, knowing control of both diseases is covered in the event of misdiagnosis.

3 How do we minimize the risk of developing resistance with Union?

Rotation is very important when using site-specific modes of action. Make sure not to apply more than two consecutive applications of Union, and no more than two consecutive applications of any QoI (FRAC group 11) or QiI (FRAC group 21). For example, Union should not be applied twice and preceded or succeeded with an application of Segway, nor should Union be applied more than once if a strobilurin fungicide is applied in the spray immediately before or after a Union application. Remember to always look at premix products being applied before or after Union to verify if they contain a strobilurin; just because it is part of a premix product does not mean it does not count as a FRAC group 11 application.

What if a Pythium Product Did More?



Introducing **Union™ Fungicide SC:**

Dual mode-of-action control of all Pythium diseases and 17 other diseases in a single product.

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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT

TURF FITNESS



Q&A WITH STEVE LOVEDAY

Product Development Manager, Target Specialty Products

Have you ever wondered why a disease like dollar spot appears slowly and then spreads over time vs advancing more quickly? Plants, including your turf, are a rich food source for multiple organisms and insects however over the years have evolved to create an elaborate system of detection and defense against would be attackers.

1 How does a plant recognize a threat?

Plants have sophisticated detection systems to discern between a stress like drought vs pathogen attack. This is key as the plant will use different strategies to defend against each. Drought stress may require an adjustment in metabolism and hormone composition where pathogen attack will likely require responses leading to immunity. Any damage to a plant's cell wall is quickly detected and is the trigger that initiates a wellness response and cascade of defense/recovery actions.

2 What are plant defense systems?

Dependent upon what type of stress is present the plant will initiate either the jasmonic acid pathway or the salicylic acid pathway to defend itself. Often-times as one system is initiated



the other is inhibited in an act of resource conservation however it has been proven that in certain situations the plant will use all weapons available and both systems will be called upon for defense.

3 How do these defense systems work?

Once a threat is detected, be it drought, a pathogen, a chewing insect, or a "trigger" from a product, the plant will initiate the appropriate line of defense to match the attacker. It is generally believed the plant will initiate the salicylic acid (SA) pathway for biotrophic threats like rust, powdery mildew and abiotic stresses like high temperature, mechanical injury, drought, etc. The jasmonic acid (JA) pathway is reserved for necrotrophic threats like chewing insects, fusarium, dollar spot, pythium, etc.

4 What happens once a plant defense system is activated?

A genetic response begins the

fight against an attacker or threat. This results in the production of PR (pathogenesis related) proteins. These materials can be antimicrobial, attacking the cell walls of bacteria and fungi. The plant will use nutrients to spread the word that an attack is underway. Next the plant will use highly reactive oxygen molecules to damage attacker cell walls and expedite the thickening of plant cell walls. As the plant thickens cell walls it will fill the space in between cells with callose to make it more difficult for the pathogen to invade. A more dramatic next step is called the hypersensitive response (HR). During the HR response the plant will commit cellular suicide at the site of the attack to create somewhat of a firewall, impeding the progress of the attacker. If the attacker is a

chewing insect the plant will likely produce and release VOCs or volatile organic compounds to repel or even poison the attacker.

5 How can a turf manager utilize some of the latest plant defense activation technology?

For the past 9 years the Turf Fuel research team has developed multiple plant defense system activation compounds. These materials have been university proven to trigger a wellness response in turf under stress and prolong decline. We've coupled the most potent compounds with large amounts of sugars and amino acids to "keep the motor running" as turf fights back. We call this technology Nutrifense™ and it can be found in three of our nutritional products, Photo Fuel™, Respo Fuel™ and Element 6™. Like the diet of a professional athlete, these products were strategically designed to provide turf with the nutrients and supplements needed for performance under extreme stress. To learn more about the Nutrifense™ powered product trio visit www.turffuel.com.



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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT

FUNGICIDES



Q&A WITH LANE TREDWAY

Technical Services Manager for Syngenta

1 What does the new label for Briskway® fungicide mean for superintendents?

The single use and annual maximum rates for Briskway fungicide have both increased with the amended label. The maximum single use rate increased from 0.725 fl. oz./1,000 ft² to 1.2 fl. oz./1,000 ft², and the annual maximum rate went from 1.5 fl. oz./1,000 ft² to 3.6 fl. oz./1,000 ft² for all labeled diseases. Additionally, superintendents can now use Briskway for up to seven applications per year at 0.5 fl. oz./1,000 ft². This rate allows for even greater efficacy for curative apps for diseases like fairy ring, and increased intervals as well. Superintendents now have the flexibility to use Briskway beyond summer applications throughout the season. The amended label also includes bermudagrass decline/take-all root rot.

2 Beyond the obvious, what are the benefits of a DMI with no heat restrictions?

The DMI fungicides are extremely valuable tools, but their use is often limited by their potential to injure turf under stress. But with a cooling DMI like Briskway, which has been proven in the turf market since 2012, superintendents have the

comfort of knowing they can use maximum rates under high-stress conditions without concerns about phytotoxicity or growth regulation. Most other DMI-containing products have label restrictions about applying during heat or other stress,

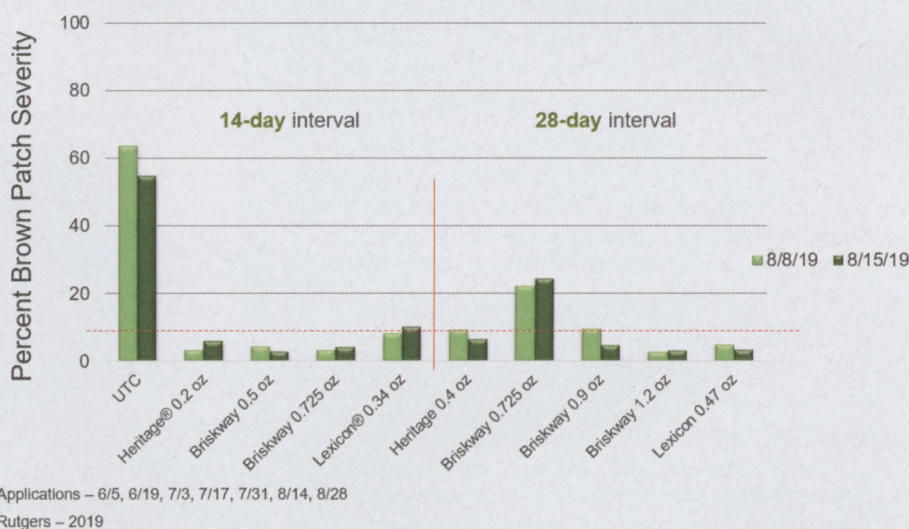
but Briskway does not.

3 What benefits does azoxystrobin offer superintendents?

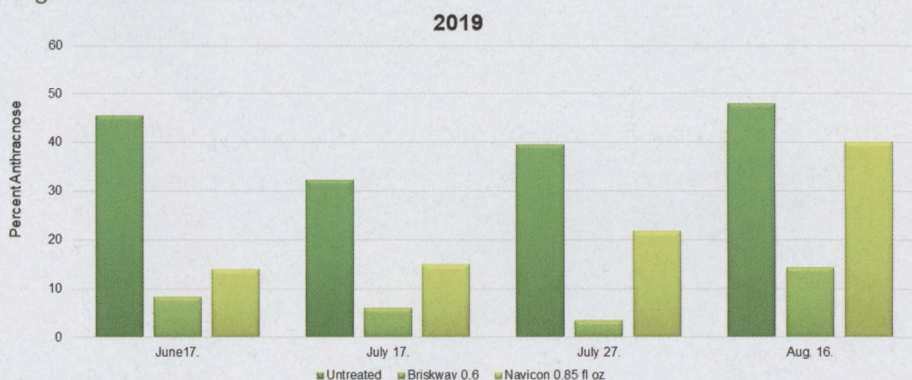
The primary benefit is industry-leading, broad-spectrum control. In addition, azoxystrobin is ab-

sorbed through leaf blades and roots, which provides long-lasting systemic protection. It has shown to increase plant performance by improving leaf color and retention, enhancing photosynthesis and root development, and improving plant vig-

Extended Control of Brown Patch on *Poa annua*



Rutgers Anthracnose Data



or and turf quality. The additional benefits are due to positive effects on plant physiology, which can vary according to plant species and growing environment.

4 What are the leading benefits for Briskway in cool-season turf?

With these rate increases, superintendents can now rely on Briskway more frequently through hot, stressful summer conditions when they need safe and effective disease control. With its broad-spectrum activity on key cool-season turf diseases like anthracnose, brown patch, summer patch, fairy ring, and dollar spot, Briskway can now be a core component of a preventive program. It can also be

used for curative applications as needed.

5 What are the leading benefits for Briskway in warm-season turf?

Briskway is a great option for bermudagrass putting greens, which can be very sensitive to growth-regulating DMIs during certain times of year. Briskway provides excellent control of mini-ring (*Rhizoctonia zeae*) and fairy ring, so is used most often during the summer to prevent these diseases. Increased rates of Briskway also bring enhanced control of take-all root rot, and faster curative fairy ring activ-

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- Penn A-4 creeping bentgrass turf
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- Rate response with Briskway
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Dollar Spot Incidence



ity, adding a much needed option to help combat these chronic disease.

Learn more about Briskway at GreenCastOnline.com/Briskway.

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- Greater control with no heat restrictions or growth regulation
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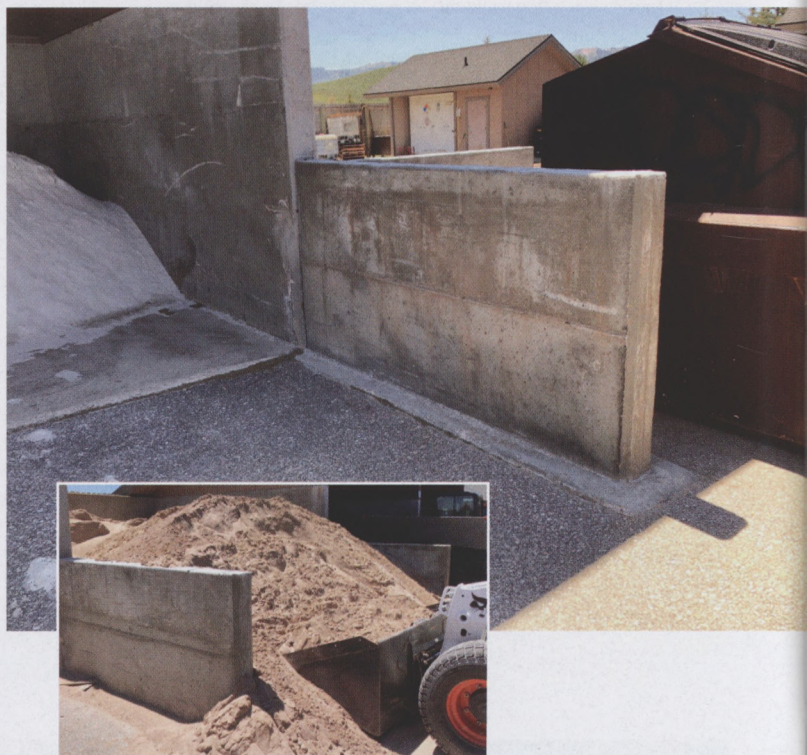
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Globetrotting consulting agronomist **Terry Buchen** visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He shares helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits — as well as a few ideas of his own — with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.

STORAGE BIN ENLARGING

There are four soil storage bins, two that are covered, at the Glenwild Golf Club and Spa in Park City, Utah. Each bin measures 20 feet by 20 feet. Sand was frequently falling out in front of the bins, mixing with the other sands, so adding wing-walls to each one was the perfect solution. They all were enlarged by installing 8-foot-long, 4-foot-high and 8-inch-thick solid concrete wing-wall extensions, using 12-inch-thick steel-reinforced footers measuring 2 feet by 8 feet for structural integrity. 4,000 PSI concrete was used with steel-reinforced rebar installed vertically and horizontally, also for the tie-ins into the existing walls. The installation was contracted out to a small local company with a lot of concrete experience. It took about two weeks of methodical work for this well-built project to be completed. Greens topdressing and bunker sand is stored in the covered bins, tee and fairway topdressing sand in another, with future fairway topdressing sand being installed in the two uncovered bins. It cost about \$8,975 for the contractor's portion and another \$500 for in-house labor assistance. Michael J. Valiant, CGCS, director of agronomy, and his key employees, Jose Plancarte and Daniel Amador, are a formidable team.



THE CLAW

Keeping undesirable water plants from overtaking the ponds while keeping the lake banks clean and tidy at the Bayou Vista Golf Course in Gulfport, Mississippi, is extremely efficient with this in-house constructed implement. Recycled metal roof trusses (from a demolished office trailer), angle iron and flat bar steel for the cross-members make up the framework. The trapezoidal framework is 9 feet long, measuring 30 inches by 30 inches closest to the loader, tapering down to 18 inches by 14 inches. The claw portion is made from cutting-off the "teeth" from the lower portion of the $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch-thick flat steel and then welding each piece onto the opposite sides. The 2017 John Deere 3038E Tractor, with a JD D160 Loader, uses a Frontier Forklift Attachment. The framework slides over the forks and is held in place with a heavy duty 2-inch galvanized chain. It has a 10-foot reach and, coupled with the articulation of the loader/forks, it can reach, grab, drag and lift all the water plants out of the pond. It took two rainy days to build and materials cost about \$50. Denny Kerr, superintendent (a retired Navy Seabee), Julian Wells, grounds crew member, and Brad Thompson, managing partner/owner, created and built this great idea.



Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 51-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at 757-561-7777 or terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

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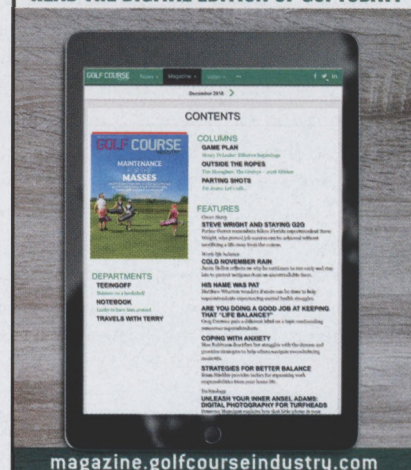


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HELLO, PAL!

You've read many things in this issue touting the good and wholesome attributes of municipal golf. And although I have not worked at a true municipal facility, I have worked in the public golf sector. More important, I've enjoyed many rounds on several municipal golf courses.

Although not my first, Blacksburg Municipal Golf Course (aka The Hill) reigns supreme in my muni experiences. It's a nine-hole course overlooking Blacksburg, Virginia. In fact, the second green sits on the highest point in the town limits and the course is the original site of Blacksburg Country Club. The town purchased the course from the club in 1971 when the club decided to build an 18-hole course in the valley. The townsfolk won access to a great course originally designed by Ferdinand Garbin that day, and just a few years ago The Hill was renovated by Lester George.

During my undergraduate and graduate school days at Virginia Tech, we were also blessed with an 18-hole course on campus, Virginia Tech Golf Course (it's since been reduced to 9 holes due to university expansion). This too was a true municipal course, only it was owned and operated by the university as opposed to a town or city. Truth is, the university is a small town. With your student ID, it cost \$5 or \$6 to walk. For a student studying turf, life was good with 18 holes on campus and 9 more less than 10 miles away.

I grew up in rural southwestern Virginia playing golf mostly where I worked, Lake Bonaventure Country Club. But just about every other round I played with friends was at local municipal courses. I have many fond memories of the no-frills golf I experienced in those days, and now that I'm much older I'm saddened to learn many of those charming 9-hole courses have

closed or no longer exist.

My favorite municipal course in the United States is Coronado Golf Course on the island of Coronado, across the bay from San Diego. I first experienced this course in 2013 while attending the Golf Industry Show and loved it so much my wife and I played it again in 2016 despite all the other options and golf opportunities in the area. We even booked a round there last year, but, unfortunately, had to return home sooner than planned and were not able to enjoy its beauty once more.

I believe Coronado does approximately 60,000 rounds annually. I can't even begin to fathom that number. At Carolina Golf Club, we accommodate a little more than one-third that total. When I was assistant superintendent at Augustine Golf Club in Stafford, Virginia, we boasted nearly 40,000 rounds annually and it was a major hurdle and challenge to get work accomplished. I can't begin to explain the respect I have for Phil Fitzgerald and his team at Coronado. I have no idea how they manage to keep that gem of a golf course in such fine shape considering the turnstiles are always turning!

In some respects, municipal golf courses are the most important golf courses in the world. They serve as valuable green spaces, natural habitats and places of recreation for tenants. Communities congregate and escape the stresses and/or distractions of daily life at municipal golf courses.

Plus, they serve as great learning centers, introducing the next generation of golfers to this grand game.

Just minutes from my office door sits the Dr. Charles L. Sifford Golf Course at Revolution Park, a 9-hole course that is also home to The First Tee of Charlotte. Although it's owned and operated by Ratcliffe Golf Services, Inc. as opposed to the city, its purpose to the community and role in the game is no different. Did you know the late Charlie Sifford won the GCSAA's Old Tom Morris Award in 2007? And he caddied at Carolina Golf Club when he was a teenager.

Winter Park Golf Course may be the most talked about municipal course of late. Just a few minutes northeast of downtown Orlando, the 9-hole course has been renovated and subsequently revitalized a community. It's a model for what is achievable when folks with good intentions put their mind to something. I had hoped to experience it during the recent Golf Industry Show, but my busy schedule didn't jive with their busy tee sheet (a good problem for them), so I'll have to wait until next time.

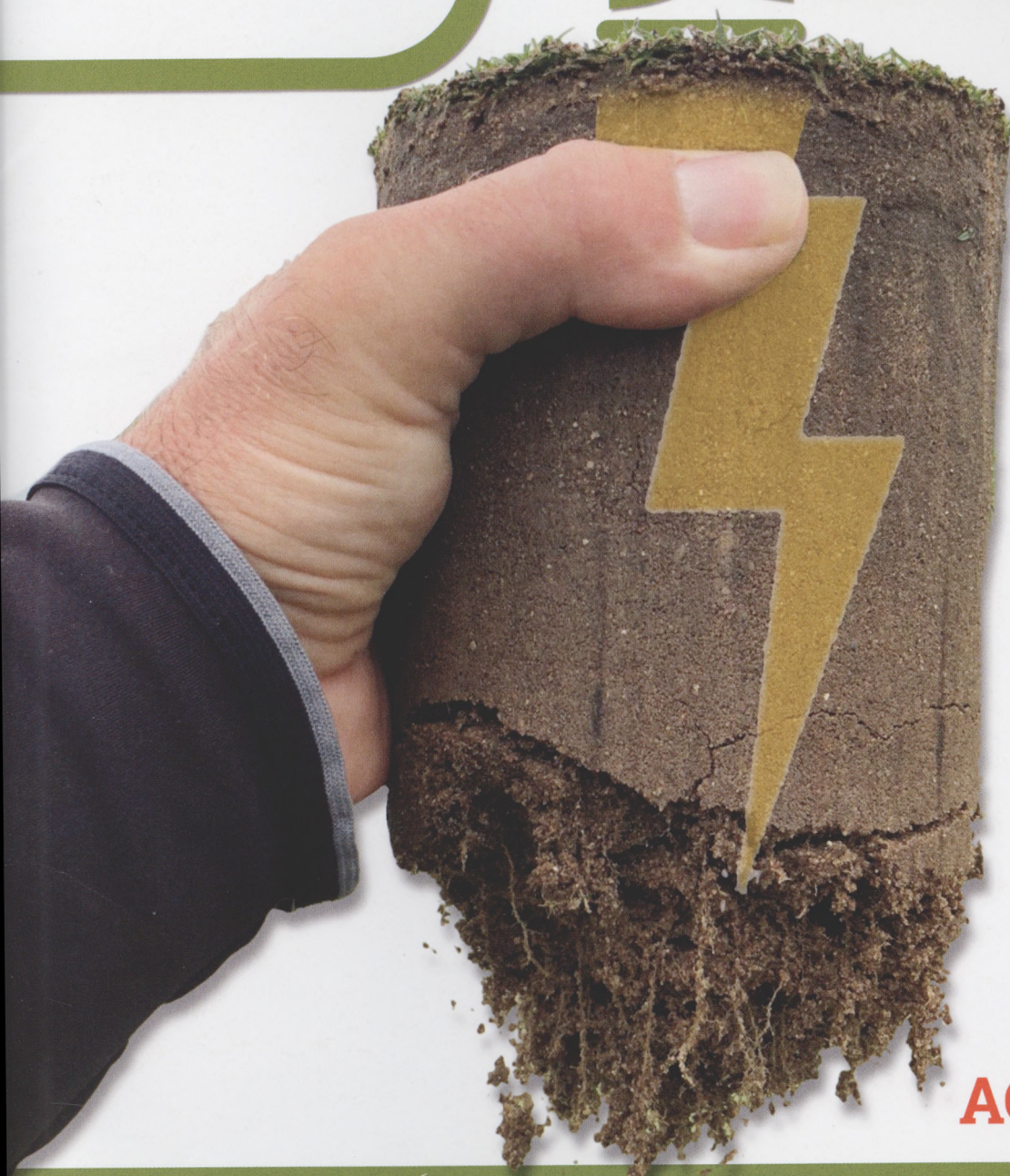
Do you remember back in elementary school trying to learn the difference between principle and principal? My English teacher said a principal is your pal. Well, I think municipal golf courses are pals to golf, and the game always has room for more pals. **GCI**



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