


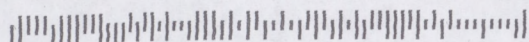
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# GOLF COURSE<sup>®</sup> INDUSTRY

## A SPRING OF SACRIFICE AND SOLIDARITY



Making the case,  
lending a hand,  
working solo and  
taking the office home.  
The stories behind the  
incredible effort to  
keep golf going.



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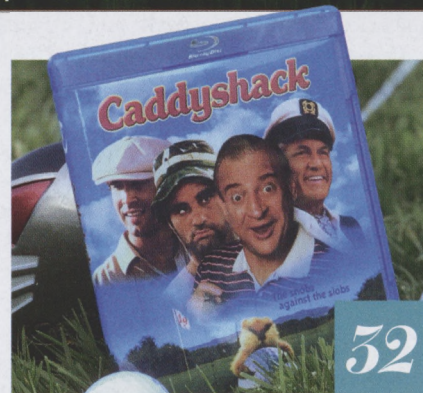
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Forty years after "Caddyshack" first entered public (if not total) consciousness, we have to ask: Is Carl Spackler good for the industry? Is he good at his job? And, uh, would you hire him?.





# GOLF'S GREATEST MOMENT?

**G**olf played on. It played on as a pandemic interrupted every facet of American life. By the time the National Golf Foundation released its ninth COVID-19 report, 97 percent of our glorious courses were open. Even decision-makers who sought every reason, using anything but reason, to keep golf courses closed had relented.

The golf might have been different – no handshakes, bunker rakes or opportunities to gather at the 19th hole – and offered less revenue-generating opportunities. But safe and responsible golf was being played in all 50 states by mid-May.

This month's cover story by managing editor Matt LaWell describes what the industry has achieved since COVID-19 started affecting lives and businesses. The stories are remarkable.

From superintendents working solo to keep prized acreage viable to leaders making calculated cases for golf in states laced with political pitfalls, the industry coalesced and adapted to ensure enthusiasts and newbies had somewhere to go when they needed it the most. Adapt is what the people who maintain golf courses do best. Along the way, they implemented a slew of innovative practices.

Pros, general managers and members hopped on intimidating mowers to help short-staffed turf teams. Association leaders communicated more than ever, creating safety guidelines and programs to support workers. Small and big companies manufactured safety products and offered assistance to the communities they serve. Researchers and partners solved problems for superintendents from afar.

Without the coordination, cooperation and consideration, golf courses would have remained empty, like playgrounds, fitness centers and ballfields. Instead, open courses were packed, as golfers quickly marched from the parking lots to tees. Spacing reigned over congestion. Lingering will eventually return. For at least one spring, golfers were urged to avoid locker rooms, pro shops, dining rooms, patios and practice areas. The overwhelming majority complied. Golf escaped serious social media shaming.

Course openings dipped to 44 percent the week of April 5. They surged to 79 percent by the week of May 3. Safe sights and sound decisions reopened courses in states where golf faced political tussles. Fortunately, maintenance continued in those states, minus a short stretch in Minnesota. Unfortunately, many superintendents were forced to trim personnel and budgets.

Work-life balance and attracting new talent dominated the industry discourse when 2020 commenced. Keeping employees and customers properly spaced and courses maintained amid a global pandemic never factored into the plan.

Stories from the spring of 2020 will resonate for years and define careers. Our cover story represents a small sampling of the industry sacrifice and solidarity. Expect to read similar stories in the back nine of this year and beyond.

Unlike natural disasters, which are devastatingly regionalized occurrences, issues and uncertainty stemming from COVID-19 affect the entire industry. They will continue to imperil operations. Courses will close; jobs will be lost. Dedicated employees are already emotionally and physically drained.

The sacrifice and solidarity, though, has provided hope and a safe release for millions. On two consecutive spring Sundays, golf raised \$25 million for COVID-19 relief efforts via a pair of televised events. The industry will raise millions more whenever charity outings resume.

Competitors such as Tiger, Phil, Rory and DJ, participants in those televised events, are typically associated with golf's greatest moments. When somebody reflects on 2020, they will remember how golf responded to a pandemic. This spring transcended any shot or victory. The roars are silent. The results are miraculous.

Good luck finding a greater golf moment. **GCI**



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## GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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# NOTEBOOK



## FUND ESTABLISHED TO HELP INDUSTRY WORKERS EXPERIENCES HIGH DEMAND

**I**n response to overwhelming need from workers across the golf industry suffering hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Golf Emergency Relief Fund has awarded more than \$4 million to more than 3,300 individuals seeking assistance during Phase 1 of the initiative. Registration limits were reached within 24 hours after the fund was opened. Phase 1 financial assistance included \$500 in basic need grants and up to \$1,500 for critical needs grants.

The Golf Emergency Relief Fund is managed by E4E Relief, an independent, third-party nonprofit, and was initiated by the PGA of America through a lead pledge of \$5 million and

a matching fund for gifts by third parties of up to \$2.5 million.

The fund is providing grants to certain industry workers, including golf association members, employees of local and state golf associations, caddies and certain professionals playing on developmental tours to help offset COVID-19 related financial hardships such as living and medical expenses.

Starting May 27, eligible workers could apply for Phase 2 grants of up to \$3,500. Individuals receiving grants through the first phase are eligible to apply for grants in the second phase but the maximum amount an individual can receive in aggregate from the first and second phase is \$3,500. The

second phase will have a longer application process and distribute grants as reviewed and approved by E4E Relief on a rolling basis.

“As evidenced by the incredible demand, the need is critical,” PGA of America CEO Seth Waugh said. “We will continue to turn to our friends both in and outside of golf who love the game for their generous and immediate financial support.”

The effort is also being supported in various ways by numerous industry organizations, including the GCSAA, the PGA Tour, the LPGA, the USGA, the National Golf Course Owners Association and the Association of Golf Merchandisers.



# MELROSE REMEMBERED

**Ken Melrose**, the legendary former chairman and CEO of The Toro Company, died last month at 79.

Melrose joined Toro in 1970 and served in multiple leadership roles with increasing responsibility over the course of the following decade. In 1981, as the company faced extremely challenging times, he was named president.

Melrose stabilized Toro and retired as CEO in March of 2005. During his tenure, company sales increased from \$247 million to \$1.7 billion. He was also a strong advocate in Toro's philanthropic and industry support, and played an instrumental role in forming the company's partnership with The First Tee in 1998.

"Ken was a great man, and the epitome of an exceptional leader," Toro chairman and CEO Rick Olson said. "The culture he instilled continues as a positive influence and will guide The Toro Company long into the future. Ken was passionate about supporting the industries we serve and helping our customers succeed. The impact of his generous philanthropic initiatives will continue to positively affect many in our industry and our communities."



## INDUSTRY buzz

**Troon Country Club's** Jay Morrish- and Tom Weiskopf-designed golf course is currently undergoing a \$4.6 million renovation. Weiskopf and design consultant Phil Smith are overseeing the Arizona project while Heritage Links golf course construction company is the contractor. The project launched April 20 and is expected to be completed by Dec. 1. As part of the renovation, greens will be resurfaced with A-4 bentgrass, tees will be leveled and several new forward tees added. Tee boxes, fairways and rough will be re-grassed with Tifway 419 Bermudagrass.

**LINNE Industries**, maker of the PondHawk solar-powered pond aeration system, announced that the U.S. Patent Office issued a patent for its protective screens. The protective screens simultaneously cover the back of PondHawk's solar panel, integrate it into the pump and controller enclosure, and protect the equipment from tampering. They also provide passive cooling to the solar panel.

**Gamble Sands in Brewster**, Washington, recently broke ground on its second course – dubbed Quicksands – a 14-hole routing designed by David McLay Kidd. Quicksands is the first short course designed by McLay Kidd and will be the first of its kind in Washington state. The course is expected to be completed and open for limited preview rounds this fall.



## Tartan Talks No. 47

One architect believes equipment players never touch has advanced golf more than anything sold in a pro shop.



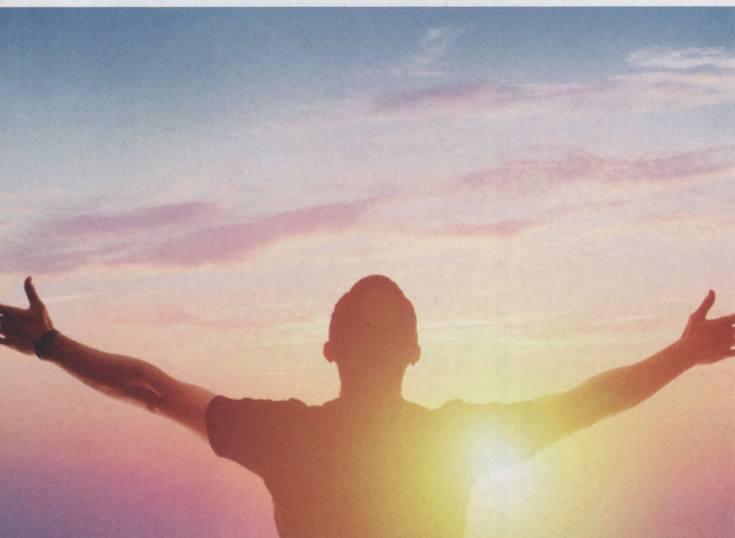
"Gary Player made this statement and I completely agree with it," **Steve Smyers** says on the Tartan Talks podcast. "Everybody talks about equipment, the titanium drivers, the evolution of the ball and everything like that. The biggest change in the game of golf is the mower and how we're maintaining golf courses."

Smyers brings a unique perspective to conversations involving the intersection of agronomy and architecture. He served as the chair of the USGA Green Section committee from 2008 to 2012. "I was the chair, but I was really the head listener," he says. "I have added a lot of what I have learned to my designs."

That knowledge helped Smyers complete one of his more recent projects: The Pfau Course at Indiana University. The home of the Hoosiers features zoysiagrass fairways in the northern boundary of the Transition Zone.

Enter [bit.ly/SteveSmyers](https://bit.ly/SteveSmyers) into your web browser to hear the podcast.





## YOUR TIME TO SHINE

**C** OVID-19 has forced many modifications to our daily lives and schedules. At work, you're likely doing more with less – be it labor, budget, access to chemicals and fertilizers, or all that and more.

But despite what the online chatter and pundits may say, the conditioning of your golf course does not have to suffer. Superintendents have been doing more with less for years.

Not that anyone should try to take advantage of the pandemic, but it presents a rare opportunity to remind the golf world that the superintendent is the important cog in the machine. To show that you know what you are doing and that the condition of the golf course — and the people responsible for it — are at the top of the golf ladder. *You* are the star of the show and it's time to shine.

With people anxious to get back to playing and business booming at municipal, daily-fee and private facilities, they'll all be looking to you – the superintendent – to get their favorite course in playing shape as soon as possible. Don't be surprised if our profession garners more respect than ever as hungry golfers seek out the pleasure and appreciation they get from the sport.

I'm hopeful that, at long last, we'll get back to what makes the game great: not slavishly following the Rules of Golf or demanding unrealistic conditioning (maybe there was an upside to Augusta National not showing up on TV this spring), but being outdoors and playing the game in its simplest form.

There is both good and bad to golf being a topic of national conversation. Attention was properly put on courses and making it so golfers can play the game safely. But I also heard about anti-golf

factions hiding in the woods, secretly videotaping golfers standing less than two club lengths from one another or, gasp, removing a flagstick. I'm pretty sure those are the same people who have no idea the great lengths we go to conserve the environment or how much golf contributes to charity, and I find them easy to dismiss.

I think we'll learn some lessons from the pandemic that we can use going forward. For example, one of my mentors, Dr. James Beard, always said to focus our efforts where 50 percent of the game is contested – on the putting greens. Golfers will put up with a lot if the greens are good, so direct your labor and emphasis there. I liked where we were before the pandemic happened, leaving the flagsticks in. Maybe wrapping them with pool noodles is something to keep because it speeds up the game.

Times like these, with limited budget, equipment and people, call for creativity and innovation. As always, superintendents answered the call. I bet you'll see more and more “best practices from the pandemic” staying in place for a while.

Rough not mowed on a regular basis? Greens a bit slower than normal? No rakes in the bunkers? I'm not saying these changes should stay in place forever (maybe slower greens!), but don't be too quick to force a return to pre-pandemic conditions if you don't have the staff and budget to do so. Almost every one of the changes is good for the golfer

and good for the game.

Something else I hope doesn't return are governing bodies and other entities telling us what to do and how to do it. What these organizations should do is talk with golfers, telling them what to expect in this new world of golf, how to behave on the golf course, and making sure they know how lucky they are to even be playing golf.

Golfers should be grateful to be outside, absorbing some Vitamin D and playing a game where it's easy to keep their distance. And I think they will be. They'll also be fine putting The Rules in the backseat for a bit. Most of us are still trying to figure out the new rules anyway (and the rest never bothered with rules to begin with).

As superintendents, it's our nature to keep our heads down and do our jobs. That's fine, but don't miss the opportunity these times offer to communicate, telling people who you are, what you do and why you do it. Golfers will be happy to be outside and playing, and maybe more inclined to learn what you're doing to return their course to them.

Keep six feet away and thank them for coming out, ask if they have any questions, let them know what you and your crew have been doing. Get out on the course an hour or so every day and interact with players. Give them a little education, make them feel special, maybe even turn some past critics into fans.

You're a superintendent. It's your time to shine. **GCI**



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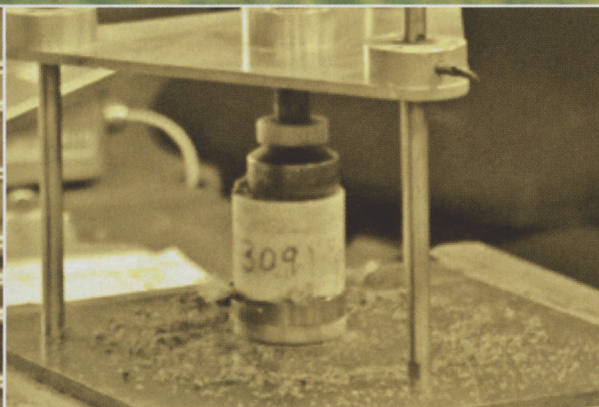
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# A SPRING OF SACRIFICE AND SOLIDARITY

**Making the case, lending a hand, working solo and taking the office home. The stories behind the incredible effort to keep golf going.**

By **Matt LaWell**

**M**ore than half of all golf courses across the country were still closed when March turned into April. So many governors were still relaying updates during daily news conferences back then. Feels almost like another life.

Now, though, with May having ceded the calendar floor to June, an astounding 97 percent of courses are open — at least in some modified capacity — according to the National Golf Foundation. Tee times are staggered, cups are lined with pool noodles or some other novel solution, and carts are more likely than not limited to a single golfer. “Nobody cares,” says Scott Thayer, superintendent at Legends Golf Club in Prior Lake, Minnesota, about 30 minutes southeast of downtown Minneapolis. “Everybody just wants to get out of their homes.”

We will tell the stories of this spring (and perhaps this summer, fall, winter and maybe even next spring) for the rest of our lives. Here in the pages of *Golf Course Industry*, the pandemic will probably pop up again and again for years. For now, though, we look back at the early days, when we were all figuring out everything together, and celebrate great work.



## THE CASE FOR GOLF

**F**or better and worse, we are a nation that loves our sports. Not all of us, of course, but more than enough to sustain no shortage of professional leagues and collegiate associations, our weekends filled with team colors, televisions and tickets. But what happened when all those leagues shuttered, suddenly providing far more free time? Many of us went outside for a walk, and some of us carried our clubs with us.

Golf seemed to receive more attention this spring — most of it good, a small percentage of it not — and more superintendents were probably interviewed by local newspapers and camera crews than ever before. We were (and still are) a nation without many of our sports, and we still want them.

Many of those stories focused on the challenges tackled by all sorts of courses. How did California superintendents handle the largest statewide shutdown in the country? How did those in Illinois deal with what sure looked like government micromanagement? Why was New Hampshire, of all spots, the last state to open? And how did Minnesota become the only state where even basic maintenance was banned?

The easy answer to that last question is that Governor Tim Walz issued a statewide stay at home executive order on March 25, with only essential workers permitted at their workplaces and offices — and course maintenance was not considered essential. Everybody needed to be off the property by midnight two days later.

“A lot of things race through your head,” Thayer says. “Am I not going to see this place for a while? What’s going to happen to it with nobody here?”

Thayer is also the current president of the Minnesota GCSA and after Legends Golf Club closed

its doors, he immediately transformed into a lobbyist, working with executive director Jack MacKenzie “to put up a fight for maintenance.” His days were filled with conference calls, reaching out to state senators and legislators — and, of course, teaching his three children, ages 8, 9 and 9, alongside

his wife, Rosalyn. “Everything was happening so fast,” he says, “our heads were spinning.”

Thayer says he hoped to be back on the course inside two weeks. The maintenance ban lasted less than 12 days. “It was such a relief,” Thayer says. “It felt like everything we did to talk with our legislation worked. It felt like we were heard.”

Courses closed in Michigan, but at least Governor Gretchen Whitmer never brushed aside maintenance at the state level. Plenty of challenges remained, most notably the interpretation of an executive order that limited superintendents and crews to “minimum basic operations.”

“What are minimum basic operations?” Michigan GCSA executive director Adam Ikamas says. “Only doing what you have to do? That’s implying that superintendents have been doing things they don’t need to be doing, which just isn’t the case. Golf course superintendents aren’t known for wasting time, money, staff, opportunity. So how do you define what you can cut out of that?”

Much like Thayer, Ikamas lived on his laptop and his phone — so much so that for a while, he measured how busy his days were by how many times his phone battery died.



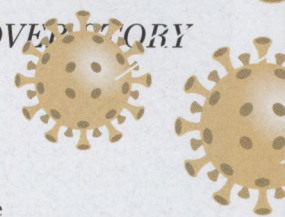
▲ Officials in Minnesota, whose state capitol is pictured above, temporarily halted golf course maintenance.

(The record was three.) Ikamas and his Michigan Golf Alliance counterparts talked often enough that they scheduled a permanent virtual meeting — first on GoToMeeting before switching to Zoom — turning on their cameras and unmuting their microphones whenever they needed to relay information or ask questions. One of the more frequent questions, especially near Detroit, an early COVID-19 hot point, was whether playing golf and operating the course was safe.

“I started asking them, ‘Would you right now go play golf with someone you knew had COVID-19? Or would you play golf behind a group with someone who had a confirmed asymptomatic case?’” Ikamas says. “If you say yes to that, that you’re comfortable, OK, go for it. But if you can’t say yes to that, I’m not sure how you can say the golf course should be open.”

Even when courses were opened in the state, architects like Chris Wilczynski were prohibited from overseeing construction. Golf course architecture was lumped with construction, which was shut down, rather than with landscaping, which was not. Wilczynski still traveled regularly two hours north to Alma,





outside Lansing, where he was tasked with developing a master plan (he drove and walked the course alone), but he missed a renovation opening in Florida and was in limbo for weeks on a renovation project at Blythefield Country Club in Belmont, just outside Grand Rapids and a regular stop on the PGA Tour.

The Tour had postponed the Meijer LPGA Classic, held at Blythefield since 2014 — which would have compressed loads of work into late fall and early spring — before ultimately cancelling the event. Now “this is probably the perfect summer to get this project done and have it all ready for the tournament and the membership next year,” Wilczynski says. “If there’s ever a year to go in and destroy a golf course and rebuild it, this is it.”

There are far greater challenges than renovating a course or lobbying elected officials — for starters, Ikamas and Wilczynski also helped teach their children, ages 3 and 7, and 12 and 17, respectively — but they handled the challenges that faced them, and they prevailed. Lots of people in this industry did.

Plenty of challenges remain, but amid a landscape devoid of so many of tentpole events, golf has answered the first call — raising tens of millions of dollars for various COVID-19 funds has helped — and shined.

## LENDING A HAND

**M**ore than 40 million people filed for unemployment this spring, a staggering number that crept into every industry. But wherever superintendents found themselves shorthanded, they normally also found themselves with ever-growing groups of folks willing to chip in. Club presidents and club pros, at least one PGA Tour pro (and maybe more) and plenty of members — some of them septuagenarians and older — all showed off their maintenance chops this season.

At Bluejack National in Montgomery, Texas, about an hour northwest of Houston, director of agronomy Eric Bauer relied on his new president and general manager, Brett Schoenfield, more than he ever imagined he would.

“Crazy,” Bauer says, “he just shows up in February and then COVID-19 hits. What a challenge. But we’re here to support him and he turns around and supports all of us department heads. He just said, ‘Eric, what can I do?’”

“Well, Brett, what do you know how to do?”

“I used to mow when I was younger.”

“OK, man, you only have to ask once.”

“Some guys might be resistant to that, but I looked at it as an opportunity to show somebody who makes a lot of the decisions that I’ll need to get approved, pay raises or staffing or things like that, why we might need things.”

Bauer has paid that drive forward for years, long before he arrived at Bluejack in 2014, sometimes starting his day as early as 4:30 a.m. when his project list is long enough.

“If I have to get on a mower and mow, I’m mowing,” Bauer says.

“These guys come in at 6:30 and see me here for two hours, they’re like, ‘OK, I’m ready to work.’”

At the Country Club of Lexington in South Carolina, superintendent Christopher DeVane received plenty of help from head pro Steven Hartwig in orchestrating a pair of Member Maintenance Mondays, an event normally scheduled once or twice every year but bumped up to consecutive weeks in late April because of need. More than 40 people signed up for the first Monday. Nearly 60 actually showed up — many with their own equipment and trucks.

“Whatever they needed, they brought it,” DeVane says. “These guys are all in their 60s to 80s, and they’ve been very helpful.”


Assistant pros Chris Miller and Ryan Murphy helped out, as did Sam Cheatham, a former Clemson University extension agent who leads the senior group that normally tees off three days each week and is so engrained in the area that his name is among those on the Midlands Turfgrass Association annual scholarship. PGA Tour player Wesley Bryan was out, too, “and pretty excited about doing some underbrushing,” DeVane says. “He and his brother George have been having a lot of matches out

▼ Member volunteers are contributing to the maintenance of Kitsap Golf and Country Club.





# IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SPRING DEAD SPOT AND DOLLAR SPOT...



## COVER STORY

here. He's a local guy, a South Carolina graduate, who moved back in the last few years. He plays and practices out here.

Not something you see every day, a PGA Tour player coming out, right in there trying to clear out some brush. I had to tell him specifically he was not getting a chainsaw — and he wanted one, he was so bummed out. "Your agent will thank me for not giving you a chainsaw."

In Bremerton, Washington, across Elliott Bay from downtown Seattle, Kitsap Golf and Country Club has enjoyed similar work party programs ever since superintendent Jason Krogman arrived more than three years ago — and attendance has surged in recent months. The biggest factor is a severe reduction in crew hours, just 480 for May, which Krogman budgets to out about 14 per day.

"We're leaning on our volunteers to get some stuff done, some of the smaller stuff, the non-technical work that needs to get done on the golf course," Krogman says. "We'll get 25, 30, 40 members and just go to town, whether it's weed-eating, going in and doing brush clearing, cutting down some trees, chipping branches, pulling weeds, reconstructing flower beds, all that kind of stuff." The volunteer hours are at least matching, if not exceeding, the crew hours.

"That's what this club is," Krogman says. "They tend to pride themselves on not being one of the big clubs, not being one of the big swanky players. I've been in this business for 23 years, and you never really

see what I see here."

Krogman shared an image of 76-year-old member Tom Danaher showing up one Saturday with his own mower, string trimmer and gasoline. The tweet has more than 2,300 likes and has granted Danaher, the son of a superintendent, some moderate fame. "He's been one of my biggest advocates, one of my biggest supporters," Krogman says, "because he understands the work that goes into what we do and why we do it." Janie Finifrock is younger than Danaher and has similarly taken charge of all the flower and landscape beds.

"People just want to help," Krogman says.

If you're lucky enough to have some extra volunteers this season, perhaps heed at least one bit of advice: "You have to have a list of projects that you want to get completed," DeVane says, "because we found out the first day we had to rein some folks in who brought their own chainsaws. I'm an advocate of removing a lot of trees from a golf course, but I also don't think we need to clear-cut the place. Just have a list of projects you want to get done and set up crew leaders with what they need. They're energetic and gung-ho about doing this stuff. They get a big kick, a big charge out of doing this, a big feel-good."

## WORKING SOLO

**N**othing can be accomplished without solitude.

Pablo Picasso said that, in Spanish at least, nearly 90 years ago, and the translation still rings true. Ben Ellis quoted the artist on his Facebook





▲ Superintendent Ben Ellis has worked in solitude for extended stretches at Fort Belvoir Golf Club.

page in late March, when he was starting a stretch of nearly three weeks without a crew on the two courses and more than 350 acres of Fort Belvoir Golf Club in northern Virginia, about 20 minutes southwest of the White House. He had no idea how long he would be alone, just that he would be. "Everyone is so unsure of everything," he says. "We're just trying to take it one day at a time."

Fort Belvoir is the flagship golf course of the U.S. Army. Neither Ellis nor any of his crew members are active military or funded by taxpayers, but they were slated to be paid whether or not they worked. Ellis says they all wanted to continue, but safety measures prompted him to mow solo, working as many as 80 hours per week. He received some help from his general manager, Tim Coolican, and the fort fire chief, Shane Crutcher, both of whom were cleared to work on the grounds.

"You can do your job and be in your own world," he says. "It's not that bad as long as you can keep up with it, but the second you get a warm spell and the grass starts popping, especially coming out of

the winter months, it starts to get a little tough. I haven't had the opportunity to take a day off." Days start with a 4:30 a.m. pot of coffee, followed by runs on a greens mower, fairway mower or sprayer.

Fort Belvoir is a special place for Ellis, who grew up on the grounds while his father, Lee, served in the Army and eventually retired with the rank of sergeant first class. The golf course provided him with his first industry job, and he was "fortunate enough to come back 15 years later," he says. "Some of the guys who trained me are still here on the staff." Seeing it empty — it closed March 21 — is "odd."

"The wildlife is almost taking back over," Ellis says. "Nobody is bothering the foxes all day long. You're almost afraid to bring your dog because the foxes want to play."

Even with his crew back, challenges remain for Ellis. Fort Belvoir is still in the midst of a hiring freeze, which means summer crew members won't start until the first week of July at the earliest. The ride home, too, is back to at least an hour after being trimmed to 40 minutes without as much traffic.

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Richard Buckley brought his Rutgers University lab equipment home to continue serving the turf industry.

Andrew Tenholder and Chris Salek experienced similar issues of social distance.

Salek is the superintendent at Wandering Creek Golf Club in Marshalltown, Iowa, 50 miles northeast of Des Moines, and also worked solo earlier this season. "Lord help me!" he wrote. "One day at a time, seven days a week, and all the while thankful for being able to work."

Tenholder, meanwhile, is the second assistant superintendent at The Ridge at Castle Pines, about 20 miles southeast of downtown Denver. He found himself working alongside only the club mechanic for a few weeks earlier this season.

"At that time, we were in the initial stages of spring cleanup and had not had a mow on anything yet," he says, adding that his days normally stretch from 4:30 a.m. past 5 p.m. "This is still my first season in the management role and it's been weird because of a limited staff and budget. I'm constantly learning and pushing every day to become a superintendent ultimately down the road for myself."

Odds are he accomplished plenty by himself to keep reaching for that goal.

## NEW OFFICE HOURS

**R**ichard Buckley has worked in various states of solitude during his decades as the director of the Plant Diagnostic Lab and Nematode Detection Service at Rutgers University. Turn on some Grateful Dead and tune out the rest of the world.

Since the university shut down its physical campuses in April, though, Buckley has worked in total solitude, studying submitted samples in a satellite lab he set up in his extra bedroom. Yes, his extra bedroom.

Buckley and his assistant, Sabrina Tirpak, worked around various restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 1, but they were still permitted on campus until



April 10. After that, "we were kicked out," Buckley says. "They closed down all the research, everybody. No one could come on campus unless you had something critical."

Buckley and Tirpak discussed applying for an agronomy exemption, "but both of my bosses up the chain are plant virologists and they were, like, 'No way,'" Buckley says. "They're concerned about the whole situation."

Early spring is a slower season for Buckley and Tirpak, but they wanted to continue to provide support for the industry, "so as soon as the deans started talking about closing us," Buckley says, "we were scrambling for ideas." Their best option, like so many other Americans, was to just work from home.

Buckley packed a dissecting microscope, a compound microscope and an inverted microscope he uses for nematode counts, along with various slides, beakers and other various equipment, and carted it home. It now shares space with a queen bed in a room about one-tenth the size of his lab.

Challenges emerged during the first week of remote work. How would Buckley and Tirpak exchange samples and enter information into the database — especially with Tirpak set up with a centrifuge and nematode-washing equipment in her garage about 30 miles away? The duo texts images of submission forms and sends email attachments of various letters, and will

likely be in near-constant contact as the busy season starts up in late June or early July.

And how would superintendents and other industry professionals submit samples when the lab is not only closed but access to the grounds is prohibited? "All of the mail that would come to our lab has been transferred to the central post office on campus, and they let us come pick that up," Buckley says. "We got some samples that way, but we've also had golf course superintendents contact us directly. Our emails are on the website." One superintendent mailed samples to Tirpak at her home and another dropped off some on Buckley's porch. "That's an option, too," Buckley says with a laugh. "If they contact us directly, we can work with them to meet whatever needs they have."

Rutgers has already canceled all classes and events on its campuses into August, and Buckley is prepared to work from his unique home office for the long haul. He leaves his home maybe once a week for groceries and other supplies, and more frequently for his solo bike rides. He picks up samples from the central post office. Outside of those activities, "I'm keeping my head down," he says. "I heard a guy say, 'You can't get sick if the virus can't find you.'"

Finding his lab equipment will be far easier. **GCI**





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## RETHINKING GOLF CARTS

If golf carts aren't the worst thing to happen to the game, they are certainly the most consequential. Golf has not been the same since motorized vehicles – buggies, in European parlance – became commonplace in the 1960s. It took a decade for them to gain a foothold following their introduction after World War II. At first, their deployment was limited, with clubs only having a handful and limiting their availability to medical cases. Golfers walked. Caddies accompanied them. Or players toted their own bag, sometimes on their shoulder, otherwise via an unobtrusive cart.

It's now common for facilities to have a fleet of 60 or 80 carts. Caddies have virtually disappeared. In order to adapt to the proliferation of carts, clubs laid 8- or 10-foot wide paved paths throughout their grounds. Architects got spoiled by the ability to rely on carts in solving their routing deficiencies. Or they simply used carts as a convenience in stretching out golf holes to maximize lot frontage.

The biggest myth of cart use is that it contributes to increased pace of play. This is nonsense. Golfers who regularly walk play fast. We have seen a dramatic uptick in pace of play the last few months when many golfers were walking. Carts breed bad golf habits, including being out of position and wasting time.

Carts have also allowed some seniors and others less capable of sustained walking to enjoy the game as a lifetime endeavor. But there's been considerable cost that often goes unstated when facility managers tout the financial upside of cart revenue. My own sense is that the money flowing into the clubhouse coffers does not adequately take into account the costs to the golf course borne by the maintenance shop. The wear and tear take a considerable toll that simply gets chalked up against the superintendent's budget.

Then there's the recklessness of some drivers. The worst is the practice of fourball groups with four carts because "it's quicker" or the way in which carts, even when doubled up, divert from designated paths. The stop-start action of wheels has a terrible grinding impact on turfgrass. Despite the best (and admirable) efforts of cart manufacturers to reduce PSI, they end up doing serious damage to the grounds.

There's hope, however. After decades of listening to one-sided, distorted odes to the business virtues and necessity of golf carts, courses were filled with walkers over this last few months. Private clubs let folks carry their own golf bags or pull/push them around on two- or three-wheeled carts.

It wasn't just an ideal spring season of weather that helped courses across the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast and Midwest to come back from winter looking better than ever. The virtual absence of golf carts enabled many courses to look – and play – great. With golf back in some form in all 50 states and across North America (and more cautiously, across Europe), we are seeing a new pattern. More people are walking.

Let's not lose that momentum. Now, more than ever, superintendents can help define reasonable cart use policies. While more folks are walking, there is also the simultaneous threat of more cart traffic than ever. Running solo carts isn't nearly as profitable as running carts that are doubled up. There are much-heightened maintenance

costs such as disinfecting, storing and recharging. There's the additional burden of traffic impact on turf. Clubs that seek to meet demand for carts by leasing or buying more vehicles are, by definition, taking on more expense and debt.

Here are some alternative policies moving forward:

- Raise rates on cart users
- Limit cart use to certain periods of time after the first two to three hours of tee times when turf is drier and cart damage is less likely
- Private clubs can limit cart use to medically-certified members
- Public facilities should have a separate rate for cart use rather than one, all-inclusive fee that folds in the (optional) use of cart
- Where continuous cart paths exist, limit cart use to that path, with exceptions granted only upon presentation of a medical certificate
- Place limits on two solo carts per group, with option for (additional) bags to be carried on the cart but only the one rider allowed and all social distancing rules in place for the cart throughout the round
- Facilities should make pull/push carts available to golfers at low or no cost

Some of this will prove unpopular. As we have learned from the last few months, many more golfers will walk than had originally self-reported. Pace of play does not suffer when people walk. When people walk, the course gains. Golfers gain. The whole game gains. **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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## Q&A WITH THE EXPERT

### HERBICIDES



# Q&A WITH KYLE MILLER

Senior Technical Specialist – BASF Turf & Ornamental Products

**P**ylex® Herbicide is a versatile product from BASF that offers best-in-class control of even the toughest weeds in cool-season turf. We spoke with Kyle Miller, Senior Technical Specialist – Turf and Ornamental Products at BASF, to learn more about what Pylex herbicide brings to turf management and why they've coined it the Swiss army knife of herbicides.

**1** What key benefits can Pylex herbicide bring to a lawn care program? What about a golf course program?

We can go into cool-season lawns or golf course turf and make multiple applications of Pylex herbicide and control what's in there so that you don't have to kill areas and then reseed them. It's very good on Bermudagrass, crabgrass and a number of other grassy weeds, like nimblewill and dallisgrass.

Goosegrass is a weed that we didn't have a lot of options to control effectively. It happens to be one of those weeds that is very sensitive to Pylex herbicide, so we can control it fairly easily.

**2** Pylex herbicide has best-in-class control of goosegrass. What other key weeds is Pylex herbi-

cide excellent at controlling?

Crabgrass, barnyard grass, foxtails, many broadleaf weeds like speedwells, dandelions, clovers, oxalis — it's got a nice balance of grassy and broadleaf weeds that it controls, so that comes in handy on the golf course and in lawn care situations.

**3** Pylex herbicide has very low use rates. Tell us about the rates needed for various program types, such as removal of Bermudagrass, goosegrass and other key weeds.

We use this at rates of 1-1.5 ounces per acre, whereas a lot of the herbicides we use in our market are 1-1.5 ounces per thousand square feet. We basically have 43 times lower rates than many of the herbicides we use, which is pretty neat.

**4** When spraying a lawn, do you recommend a tank-mix with Pylex herbicide since it is a "bleaching"-type mode of action?

Plenty of superintendents and lawn care operators don't



weeds, so we can get away with reduced rates of both products and have a consistent, sound herbicide for both grassy weeds and broadleaf weeds.

**5** What are three things about Pylex herbicide that are helpful for a golf course superintendent or lawn care operator to know?

Be mindful of these very low use rates. A lot of people think it's 1-1.5 ounces per thousand square feet and they need to recognize that it's per acre.

Always use a methylated seed oil (MSO) or crop oil concentrate (COC) or some kind of high-quality surfactant to improve foliar uptake.

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mind bleaching the weeds that they're targeting because people will see that they're out there trying to control the problem. If I'm a homeowner, I like to see that things are working, so if I have some weeds that are bleached out a little bit, I don't mind that.

The recommended tank-mix would be Pylex herbicide plus Drive® XLR8 herbicide because it gives us the best of both worlds. It gives us more consistent, broader spectrum weed control.

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# THE COACH APPROACH

ABOVE ALL ELSE,  
SUPERINTENDENTS  
ARE LEADERS. LEARN  
FROM A TRIO WITH  
PROVEN PLAYBOOKS  
ON - AND OFF - THE  
COURSE.

BY LEE CARR

**T**he smell of popcorn. Finding your seat. Dripping, sweaty athletes. Cheering fans. Anticipation. Epic mistakes. Slow-motion heroics. Who's the best? It's competition. It's sports. It's thrilling. And beside the athletes, the coaches stand.


There is a spectrum of personalities and team philosophies, levels of ability, equipment and resources. Leaders shoulder the blame for what goes wrong and rarely receive recognition for what goes right. Countless hours are spent on team development. Challenges jockey for position against the drive to make everything better. There are moments of fulfillment, satisfaction and joy. Be it coaching or being a superintendent, there are comparisons worthy of airtime. Missing live action? Style this as your favorite sports broadcast and let's goooooo!

Commentary comes via three golf maintenance all-stars who combine for decades of playing and

coaching experience in several sports. Welcome Ken Nice, director of agronomy at Bandon Dunes, who played four years of college hoops at Willamette University and since 1999 has seen roles from assistant to construction superintendent. Bandon Dunes is a resort known for its stunning views and multiple courses on the Oregon Coast. Sheep Ranch, which opened this month, is designed by Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw and is the latest 18-hole addition. Nice coached basketball at Bandon High for 16 years and retired with some big accomplishments and very special memories.

Say hello to Chad Mark, superintendent at Muirfield Village Golf Club, the Jack Nicklaus-designed course where every year, the PGA Tour plays the Memorial Tournament in Dublin, Ohio. In an exciting development, Muirfield Village starts a major renovation this summer. Mark played football, basketball, track and golf. He also has coached football and basketball and helped teams as a scout.



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a piece of pink chalk, drawing a circle with a diagonal line through it on a dark chalkboard. The chalkboard is covered with various other chalk drawings, including a large circle, a triangle, and some lines. The hand is positioned in the upper right corner of the frame, and the chalk is in the process of drawing the circle. The background is dark and out of focus.

Starting with maintenance and grow-in experience during summer jobs in high school, Mark's resume is the envy of many and his strengths include a no-quit attitude, drive, and ability to read people and situations. He's an asset to any team.

Rounding out our crew is Craig Cahalane, superintendent at Pole Creek Golf Course in Tabernash, Colorado. This popular, public 27-hole property has three full-time maintenance employees and is home to mountain views, moose, elk, bright purple honey-scented lupins, and even winter full-moon snowshoe events. Hosting more than 25,000 rounds per season (which is only about six months long), Cahalane's business degree and ability to keep everything in perspective is put to good use. Cahalane's late father spent 30 years in the turf industry and Cahalane's two brothers are also superintendents, so he's a natural. Cahalane has designed mogul courses and one skier he coached qualified for the Junior World Championships in



Italy. Impressive!

The clock is ticking. Let's get started. Here are the top 10 powerful parallels, in ascending order of importance, between coaches and turf leaders worthy of the hall of fame.

## 10. READ THE ROOM

Some days are better than others. The best leaders know when to push and when to settle for working the fundamentals and completing essential tasks. Understand the team through spending time together. Ask questions and have a sense for situations. "We have crew-only golf tournaments throughout the year and barbecues," Cahalane says. The events ensure he spends time with his staff and everyone gets to know each other. "We bond and keep it light," Cahalane adds. "I'm the boss, but I encourage everyone to talk to me. I want to know what's going on and I want everyone to enjoy themselves."

## 9. RESPECT EXPERIENCE

There are many ways to get in the zone. When it's game time and decisions must be made, experience is hard to beat. "Basketball is something I love and something I know how to teach well, whether it's a skill demonstration or running a practice," Nice says. "I have put a lot of time into studying how to be a good coach and learning about it and developing my own system." The philosophy applies to everything he has learned in the turf industry, too. Experience is how you turn a loss into a win. It turns a problem, like the pesky nematodes at Bandon Dunes that weren't problematic two years ago, into an opportunity to learn, educate and grow together. Honoring experience cultivates a system of mentors and mentees, and sharing skills and techniques makes everybody stronger.

## 8. UNDERSTAND THE BIG PICTURE

Mark, Cahalane and Nice all see

value in balancing business and agronomy, but more important, they prioritize being part of the community. There are several employees at Bandon Dunes who also work as coaches in town, creating familiarity between the school and the resort. Nice notes that Bandon Dunes has transformed the town, and after coaching, "he is part of the fabric of the community" instead of someone who moved for a job. Cahalane learns a lot by playing in the men's league at Pole Creek, both talking and listening. And when Mark was at a previous property, he coached basketball at the local school. "It was a real blessing because it made me a better superintendent," Mark says. "I learned a lot from the people that I coached with." Coaching eventually helped Mark recruit high school athletes for summer work. Being involved in the community is good for inside information about where you live, what's important locally and easing community communication. Additional benefits are counter-bal-

Lessons from ► experiences as a ski coach help superintendent Craig Cahalane manage and motivate the team at Pole Creek Golf Club.



© COURTESY OF CRAIG CAHALANE



ancing your full-time job, being an ambassador for your property and recruiting labor. Big win.

## 7. COMPETE BOLDLY

With an older brother who taught him to ski freestyle at a young age and then later as he was designing mogul courses, being bold was essential for Cahalane. At Pole Creek, the team “sets some goals at the beginning of the season to produce a good product,” he says. “The staff take pride in that.” At 9,000 feet, the golf season is short and they have to be dynamic. It’s about being ready for whatever the season offers. It might be drought, wildfires, a bad winter or something more unexpected. Whatever it is, the crew does what it takes to make the course a place that people love to come and play. “We want to give everyone a platform for confidence and success,” Cahalane says. The goals shift from season to season and staff compete to make it the best season yet. Staff also compete fiercely when they play each other, but that competitive fire is positively channeled to get the course dialed in.

## 6. VALUE TEAMWORK

No matter the size, teams united by an overall vision stay more focused, are more loyal and achieve better results. With up to

110 agronomy employees during the peak season, workers clearly know and uphold the identity of Bandon Dunes. Every course has its own crew and superintendent, though there is some crossover with chemical applicators and irrigation technicians. Everyone is working under the same construct, with nuances in execution. “Good teams have a way of knowing what they do,” Nice says. “They understand who they are. At Bandon Dunes, we understand that we are about links golf and we are trying to be as traditional as we can to the ground game.” Nice led the 2016 boys basketball team at Bandon High to the state semifinals, defeating the No. 3 seed to get there. “That was a team that really knew who they were,” he says, “and they played together phenomenally well.” Teams who work for each other supersede their individual talents. They have something extra, intangible, and they take chances together to find a way to win.

## 5. THRIVE ON PRESSURE

The difficulties of leading a team against constantly shifting circumstances don’t need reiterating. Worth noting is how the finest superintendents and coaches embrace the challenge. The best athletes thrive on pressure and push themselves to overcome any obstacle. They will



## Be a team player

It’s clear that great coaches and great superintendents have a lot in common. But what will win an athlete the MVP award? Here are some ways to be a terrific team player:

- Be present. Show up every day, physically and mentally.
- Work hard. Achieve the long-term vision with short-term determination.
- Think. Understand how and why you are doing your work.
- Be enthusiastic. Be positive and make it clear that you care.
- Pay attention. Eliminate mistakes, be reliable and offer constructive suggestions.
- Put the team first. Remember you will accomplish more together than by yourself.
- Be grateful. Appreciate your job, your managers and the opportunity to learn.

step on whatever gives them a fair leg up. They think critically, make the most of the situation they’re in and crave opportunities to excel. At Muirfield Village, hosting a PGA Tour event at the start of the peak Midwest golf season means conditions must be flawless from the very beginning. There is no easing into the season and Mark and his crew plan (and plan some more) and then grind (and grind some more) to execute immaculately. “We have to staff a little different because of that and we have to peak the weekend of the Memorial,” Mark says. “We have to be perfect. A week later we open for our members and we want it to be great. All summer, we want everyone to enjoy being here.” Mark’s team faces a new challenge this year as the Memorial Tournament has moved from June 4-7 to July 16-19.

◀ Emphasizing teamwork and empowering employees has made Bandon Dunes one of the elite golf resorts in the world.

## 4. DEVELOP TALENT

“We have a captain-based system in place all year,” Mark says. “We put a lot of trust in the people we





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## **MANAGEMENT**



▲ In addition to leading more than 100 employees at Bandon Dunes, Ken Nice is a successful basketball coach.

employ and we have tremendous respect for their talents. We train them, encourage them and expect them to lead their crew. They don't have to be motivated from the top." They also work hard to cross-train. If a squad lacks depth, one or two players can derail the entire game strategy. At Muirfield Village they provide variety to keep new recruits motivated, improve their skills and keep them engaged. "It's important for the operation to have versatility," Mark says. "We take chances. There will be times when an assistant suggests someone is not capable and I say, 'Well, let's give it a shot.'" Scout to hire great people and then discover and develop their talents. Nice agrees. "Not everyone is the top scorer. Find some way for each individual to be successful to develop a stronger group." From huddle to hustle, help everyone embrace their role and expand it when possible.

**3. KNOW THE PLAYERS** Connections matter and Mark has people from all over the world working at

Muirfield Village. The international influence makes for a lively maintenance facility and he seeks bright, dedicated staff and tries to hire athletes. "A lot of our high school and college recruits have athletic backgrounds," he says. "People usually have more dedication and discipline if they are serious athletes. One reason I like our business is because it's a lot like playing sports. We work hard together. We're a team." Cahalane also cares about his crew, many of whom work the ski slopes in the winter. "With all kinds of personalities, you can bring them together through fun and it's amazing to see the results on course," he says. Nice called Mike Doherty, his old high school coach, when he was leading his own team to the state tournament. Doherty is in the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame and still has the most all-time wins in Oregon. During the chat, Doherty mentioned to Nice "how much he learned from his players," Nice says. "It's cyclical if you are doing it right."



## 2. COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

You must be understood up and down the organization. Whether working with managers or coaching players, it is crucial to communicate as effectively as possible. How many times have you seen a coach stop a drill shortly after it starts? "This is what we're after," they say. "Start again." If your team doesn't understand the vision the first time, repeat it. Be positive and keep everyone moving forward. At Muirfield Village, there are Tuesday meetings for the tournament and Thursday meetings for the renovation and course maintenance. "We go action item after action item,"

Mark says. The meetings last an hour or less. You must keep everyone talking openly to one another and ensure comprehension, but efficiency is also critical. Every chance you get, articulate, have the patience for questions and don't underestimate the strong messages sent through leading by example.

## 1. POSSESS PASSION

No team has achieved greatness and no course will see ultimate playability without the sincere interest of those leading the way. Passion (of the quiet and steely determined variety, ranging to that of a yelling, gesticulating tactician) is essential for the work and helping others.

And now our panelists, politely, have so very much to say. Nice, Mark and Cahalane provide example after example of how involved and close they were (and are) with those who coached them, those they coached with and those they have coached. Pride and joy are everywhere, like confetti, and it's glorious. These leaders want to see their athletes and staff succeed and grow as individuals in sports and at work. They love their properties and their jobs and what they share is heartwarming. Passion – and compassion – make the difference.

Closing thoughts? "You can't control the refs or the other team," Nice says. "It is one of

my preaching points. You can control your attitude." From the top, coaches and leaders in turf maintenance know how to read the room, respect experience, understand the big picture, compete boldly, value teamwork, thrive on pressure, develop talent, know the players, communicate clearly and they all possess passion.

As with every defining sports moment – and every top 10 – there is room for debate. Where does raw talent factor in? What about resources? Have at it and enjoy. **GCI**

*Lee Carr is an Independence, Ohio-based writer and frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.*

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## NOT THE TIME TO WAIT

**W**hen asked what steps they are taking to prepare their business for the post-COVID-19 environment, many small- and medium-sized business owners and managers say they're taking a "wait-and-see" approach. While that attitude is understandable, with conditions and health and safety guidelines changing by the day, it's also not advisable. The more effective strategy is the one that many other businesses are taking to navigate the crisis in creative and productive ways: Anticipating and preparing for a post-COVID-19 business, whenever that may come and whatever it might resemble.

In a wide range of businesses, preemptive leaders are driving revenue through new marketing tactics and sales channels, putting new incentives in place to spur immediate purchasing and capture pent-up demand, moving more of their in-person interactions online, pivoting their business to address new needs and developing new products to position their business when customer demand returns to normal. Others are enhancing their digital presence by sprucing up their website with new content or fixing online issues for a better customer experience. And many businesses are strategizing by mapping out potential scenarios for the future.

Three important points to consider when ramping up club operations:

**1. UPDATE THE CLUB'S FINANCIAL PLAN.** The business interruption and financial impacts will be profound and may even threaten the club's existence. The board must reset the club's financial plan by evaluating the current in-flow of dues revenue and the realistic projection of pending banquet and catering activity. Refer

to the club's historic reference points for revenue as the key component in ramping up successfully. Balance revenue projections with the probable attrition rate caused by members who will leave the club for health and financial reasons.

Look realistically at the club's expenses and prepare yourself – they will be discouraging. Plan to restart programs and services in a phased manner that focuses on the most popular and engaging programs in the eyes of your members. It's important to remember that members may have different priorities in a post-recession world. Knowing what those are through surveys and focus groups is far more advisable than assuming the old normal is also the new normal. Keep in mind that the club may not be able to restart at a level and pace that meets members' expectations without what may be significant investments.

In a financial sense, the club is starting over financially. This can be good for clubs overloaded with expensive debt since it gives them incentive to renegotiate their debt structure. Interest rates are at historic lows and will remain so for some time. This makes it a good time to restructure the club's financial plan to remove historic flaws, such as membership-optional communities and outdated governance practices.

### 2. STRENGTHEN YOUR TEAM.

Every club in your area is being affected differently by the pandemic. Some will retain staff with little change. Others will be forced to reduce operations,

programs and staff. Some of your own employees will decide not to return or may be unavailable. Be prepared and recruit aggressively to fill and strengthen key positions on your team. It's also a good time to review and update personnel records, roles and benefits.

### 3. INTRODUCE NEW SOCIAL PROGRAMS.

As leaders hit the reset button, remember that private clubs enjoy an emotional relationship with their members far more than a transactional one. When evaluating and creating programs, consider the following:

- Members will want to see one another and be seen. There will be a great opportunity for friends to be reunited and reminded that their club is a safe haven for their families and friends.
- Look at events that are either successive – where one event sets the stage for the next – or part of a series of similar events. Give members the sense of ongoing relationships rather than one-off types of events.
- Host member information exchanges. As members anticipate their clubs reopening, they will have lots of questions, which can be boiled down to "What's changed – and what hasn't?" Assemble a team of staff members who constitute the Answers Team.

Get ahead of questions by anticipating as many as you can and communicating the answers widely through email, newsletters and social media. **GCI**



**HENRY DELOZIER** is a partner at GGA Partners, trusted advisors and thought leaders. He is currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of Audubon International.



# EXPENSIVE PROBLEMS

**NO TURF DISEASE RECEIVES MORE ATTENTION THAN DOLLAR SPOT.**

**HERE'S THE LATEST IN WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!**

**A**s dollar spot outbreaks seem to be increasing in severity and duration, controlling this common disease becomes more challenging.

“Outside of the fungicide resistance issues,” says Dr. Richard Latin, the longtime professor of plant pathology at Purdue University. “I think the increase in dollar spot severity may be more of a reflection of changes in turf management than the evolution of a more aggressive pathogen. We have these current demands for increased greens speeds and tighter fairways, and in order to achieve those, we’ve reduced the height of cut and the amount of applied nitrogen over the past 20 years. The mechanical and nutritional stress makes turf a little bit more prone to infection. And, when infection does occur, the

plants are going to be slow to outgrow the damage.”

Perhaps no turf disease is discussed more frequently and with more frustration and disdain than dollar spot. Latin is an expert on dollar spot — as much as anybody can be an expert on an ever-evolving disease — with recent research projects focused on factors that affect fungicide performance, fungicide-resistant pathogen strains, the epidemiology of dollar spot on creeping bentgrass, and weather-based systems for scheduling fungicide applications.

We know the basics, of course, like the fact that dollar spot “mostly affects stems and leaves,” Latin says. “It generally does not kill the plants, although it can cause some very awful damage, turf tends to recover at the end of the year. Also, the pathogen can be active during the entire growing season. As long as favorable temperature and moisture conditions persist, the pathogen will grow and disease will occur.”

“All disease issues are population

issues. Disease becomes a problem when populations increase rapidly,” Latin adds. “I like to think about the pathogen population as an iceberg and only the tip is visible. Those are the symptoms you see on the turf. But, like an iceberg, there’s this greater mass down below, this population that has built up beneath turf surfaces, in the thatch and soil. We need to manage populations hidden in the turf profile, before disease symptoms become evident on the surface. That’s the basis for a preventative approach to disease management.”

On the large majority of golf courses in the northeast quadrant of the United States, fungicides offer the most reliable solution to tackle the infectious problem. “I think that on most bentgrass or *Poa* courses, whether it be greens or fairways or tee boxes, fungicides are essential,” Latin says. “Dollar spot is a season-long threat. The pathogen is always present in the turf profile, and will cause cosmetic and structural damage under favorable

▲ Dollar spot remains one of the most researched diseases in turf management.





environmental conditions. It needs the attention of fungicides in order to avoid outbreaks or mitigate turf damage.”

Latin uses Xzemplar® and Maxtima® fungicides, both from BASF, in a variety of research projects and describes them as being “at the top of their respective classes.” Maxtima® fungicide, a DMI, “has an added benefit in that it has a safety factor,” Latin says. “It doesn’t have a PGR effect or any phytotoxicity issues even when it’s applied during the heat of the summer, so you achieve good disease control without negative effects on turf quality.”

Cultural practices can contribute to dollar spot control as well, among them providing turf with adequate nutrition and shortening the length of the wet period by dragging fairways and mowing greens in the morning. “These practices can truncate the period for a successful infection and help reduce disease pressure,” Latin says. “Lightweight rolling also has been shown to reduce the severity of dollar spot outbreaks. These are some things we can do to reduce disease pressure and keep populations low from a non-chemical standpoint.”

Avoiding a damage-based approach, where treatment is delayed until symptoms are expressed on the

surface, is also key. “I think that’s very risky,” Latin says, “allowing the pathogen population to build up to the point of a visible outbreak will increase disease pressure and reduce the overall effectiveness of a fungicide treatment.” Superintendents that have experienced that scenario usually had difficulty fighting the disease all season long. Latin suggests “a well-developed, calendar-based fungicide program where superintendents consider all diseases that threaten the course and when their pathogens become active, and then schedule fungicide applications very strategically into the program so they can keep populations low, maintain good disease control, and reduce the likelihood of resistance issues.”

Research relevant to dollar spot control pops up in the published literature almost every month. Much of the current research in plant pathology is focused on fungicide resistance. “The same fungicides we use on turf often are used against crop pathogens, and we are learning a lot about managing disease where resistance occurs within and across fungicide classes. This is an area where new information is being generated all the time, and I suspect that we’ll have so much more insight next season.”

Latin’s research has always focused on fungicides and factors that affect

their performance. He and his team of graduate students showed evidence that Maxtima fungicide was more effective than older generation DMI fungicides against dollar spot strains that were trending towards insensitivity to the DMI class. “This opens the door to reintroducing a DMI fungicide into rotations for dollar spot control, especially on fairways.”

Another project focused on the influence of water pH on the efficacy of fungicides. He wanted to know if water quality, especially in terms of pH, was affecting how well the fungicides were able to perform to control disease. And what did he find after four runs of field tests and multiple laboratory tests? “With modern fungicides, we really don’t have to worry about the effects of alkaline hydrolysis in the spray tank,” he says. “Mostly, it has to do with the amounts of fungicide we’re using in the tank, the fact that there are so many buffering and stabilizer agents inside fungicide formulations, and the fact that fungicides are not very soluble and just don’t break down that quickly.” In short, spray water pH is not going to affect the efficacy of any particular modern fungicide.

The dollar spot fungus is a simple pathogen—and yet controlling the disease continues to be a complicated challenge. Fortunately, its simplicity lends itself to a variety of experimental approaches to manage the disease and reduce the incidence and severity of dollar spot outbreaks.

An effective ► fungicide rotation is a proven way to control dollar spot on playing surfaces.



## ■ BASF

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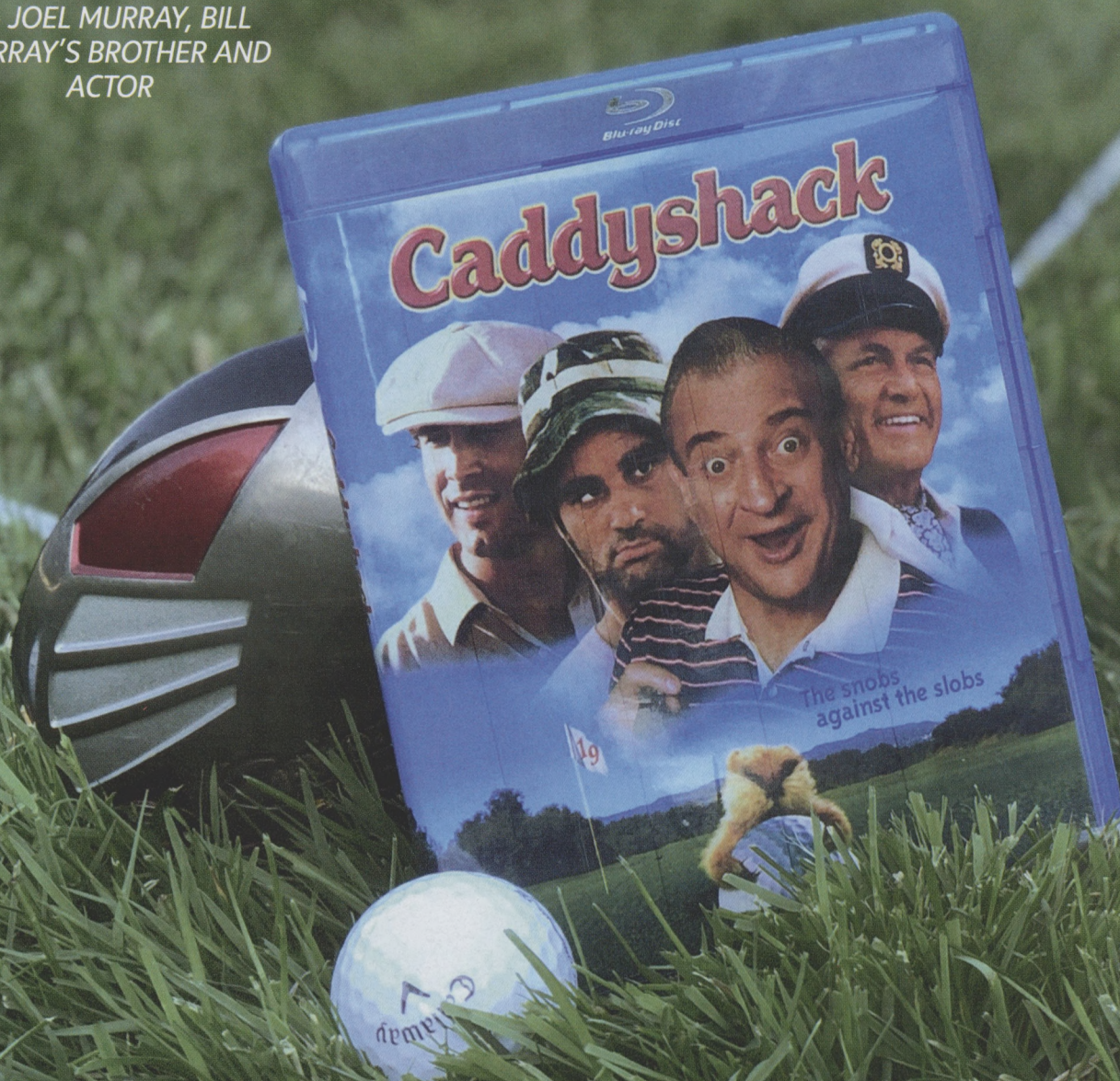
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**"BILLY WAS ACTUALLY AN ASSISTANT GREENSKEEPER AT A MUNI COURSE BY OUR HOUSE, NOW IT'S CALLED CANAL SHORES, BUT HE ACTUALLY MOWED AND DID STUFF."**

— JOEL MURRAY, BILL MURRAY'S BROTHER AND ACTOR







# The Carl quandary

**FORTY YEARS AFTER "CADDYSHACK"  
FIRST ENTERED PUBLIC (IF NOT TOTAL)  
CONSCIOUSNESS, WE HAVE TO ASK:  
IS CARL SPACKLER GOOD FOR THE INDUSTRY? IS  
HE GOOD AT HIS JOB? AND, UH,  
WOULD YOU HIRE HIM?**

**By Matt LaWell**

**C**arl Spackler needs no introduction.

He is, of course, the most famous fictional turf professional, a character so iconic and so perfectly imperfect that even now, almost four full decades after he first popped in and out of "Caddyshack," no other director or writer or screen star has tried to improve upon his agronomic absurdity. It is fair to say that his words are quoted on golf courses every day, by golfers and grounds crew members alike, and when regular folks ask superintendents what they do, more than a few admit that they refer-

ence Spackler in their response.

As "Caddyshack" approaches its 40th anniversary in July and Bill Murray nears his 70th birthday in September, Carl Spackler only seems to be picking up pop culture steam. If you are so disposed, you can purchase Carl Spackler shirts and caps, prints and posters, cups and towels and vinyl figures and, this is true, prayer candles. William Murray Golf, the burgeoning apparel company that promotes not only Spackler's portrayer but also his five golfing brothers, sells a Carl Spackler bucket hat. He is as familiar to older Baby Boomers as he is to older Gen Z'ers.

So he's got all that goin' for him, which is nice, but what do real



The ►  
“Caddyshack”  
crew really  
did blow up  
Grande Oaks  
Golf Club  
(formerly  
Rolling Hills  
Golf & Tennis  
Club) in Fort  
Lauderdale,  
Florida, where  
the movie was  
filmed in the  
summer of  
1979.

superintendents think about the character? Is Carl Spackler good for the golf course maintenance industry? Was he all that good at his job? And, serious question, could he land a spot on a crew today?

### GOOD OR BAD FOR THE PROFESSION?

“To us in the industry, from the inside looking out, we get all the jokes and they’re spot on, they’re right on the money,” says Ryan McClannon, superintendent at Reynolds Park Golf Course in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

McClannon respects Spackler and appreciates Murray at least as much as Murray appreciates superintendents. He was born three months before “Caddyshack” arrived in theaters and was 8 when he watched the movie for the first time — sneaking a peek from the stairs while his dad watched a rental copy on the family’s new VCR. At the Carolinas GCSA Conference and Show last fall, he attended some more casual evening functions wearing a shirt with Murray’s visage.



respect to Bill Murray, the man’s a legend, we’re still fighting the stigma of Carl Spackler. He raises awareness, not always in a good way. He is our greatest blessing and our biggest curse.”

Jeff Jones is a little more blunt.

“I love Bill Murray, but I feel personally he may have set our industry back a little bit,” says Jones, superintendent at Frenchman’s Reserve in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

“We manage water and fertility, we do all these other things, and there is a science behind what we do.” And still, during probably 75 percent of conversations with folks who work in another industry, Jones is told “Oh, I thought you just put the flag in the ground and cut the grass.”

“I have a hard time wrapping my

head around why he’s so revered,” Jones says of Spackler. “I’m sure there are a lot of people like me out there who just don’t want to put anything against the grain.”

The concern is warranted. No one wants to see their profession

portrayed by ... well, Spackler is not necessarily a moron — a term coined by the psychologist and eugenicist Henry Goddard more than a century ago to describe an adult with the mental acuity of a 7- to 10-year old — but he is most definitely not all there. He destroyed a large chunk of the Bushwood Country Club course, after all, turning to plastic explosives in an effort to kill his targeted gopher when wire traps would have probably sufficed. He also teed off on mums and looped for the Bishop in a lightning storm, leaving the clergyman for dead after the Good Lord disrupted the best game of his life.

“I remember early on—I’ve been doing this now for about 20 years—the debate seemed to be more about respect and a lot of back and forth about it’s really disrespectful and we need to be seen as the professionals that we are, a lot of chest thumping,” says Jared Stanek, director of agronomy at Toscana Country Club in Indian Wells, California. “I had a mentor, Mike Pigg. At the time he was the superintendent of Riverton Country Club in Riverton, Wyoming, and he and I were talking about this. He was like, ‘Sometimes, these guys just take themselves too seriously. We are blue-collar guys.’ That stuck with me, so when I look at Carl Spackler’s portrayal, it’s

**“I LOVE BILL MURRAY, BUT I FEEL PERSONALLY HE MAY HAVE SET OUR INDUSTRY BACK A LITTLE BIT. WE MANAGE WATER AND FERTILITY, WE DO ALL THESE OTHER THINGS, AND THERE IS A SCIENCE BEHIND WHAT WE DO.”**

**— JEFF JONES,  
FRENCHMAN’S RESERVE**

He also has a rather nuanced opinion about Spackler.

“The pros look at Carl Spackler and they go, ‘Well, that’s all it is.’ And it’s not,” McClannon says. “That’s why the image campaign is such a big deal. Because no dis-





obviously hilarious and a little over the top — or a lot over the top — but it has a cord of truth. It seems genuine.”

And it probably is. Murray grew up in Wilmette, Illinois, a north side suburb of Chicago, and regularly hit balls around a 400-acre convent across the street from his family home. Like all of his brothers, he caddied at Indian Hill Club — his oldest brother, Ed, received the Chick Evans Caddie Scholarship in 1963 to attend Northwestern University — and later worked at a few other courses.

“Billy was actually an assistant greenskeeper at a muni course by our house, now it’s called Canal Shores, but he actually mowed and did stuff,” says Joel Murray, the youngest of the nine Murray siblings and a talented actor himself. “He also ran the snack shack for a year, maybe more than a year, and he liked to show up when it was a little warmer out, maybe 11 or 12 o’clock. The early golfers, they got nothing to eat. I used to ride my bike over and see if Billy was there yet. Nope.”

By the time his brother Brian Doyle-Murray co-wrote “Caddyshack” with Harold Ramis and Doug Kenney, Murray was near his first comedic peak, able to create Spackler from literally nothing after the character was mentioned exactly zero times in the original 200-page script.

“I was wired into what I was talking about,” Murray told Chris Nashawaty in a 2010 interview for a *Sports Illustrated* story later expanded into a 2018 book about the movie. “Improvising about golf was easy for me. And it was fun. It wasn’t difficult to come up with stuff.”

“I think why I’m not offended is that Bill Murray actually understands how hard our job is every day and the effort we put into it,” says Michelle Maltais, the superintendent at a private golf course in

Massachusetts who once received thanks from Murray for her work when she was an assistant at Vineyard Golf Club. “He can poke fun at it because he understands it.”

“Think about what Bill has done over the years to promote golf, being almost that character — and people love it,” says Thad Thompson, superintendent at Terry Hills Golf Course in Batavia, New York, who, like Spackler, lived on property in an apartment during his years at Turkey Run Golf Course in Arcade, New York, moving out only after getting married. “This is life, this isn’t rocket science. You’ve got to laugh at yourself once in a while. So he made fun of what we do. Big deal. I grow grass for a living!”

#### WOULD YOU HIRE HIM?

“Would you hire Carl Spackler?” asks Brandon Barrett. Barrett is the president and co-founder of William Murray Golf, consulting regularly with the Murray brothers on what golfers might like to wear on the course. He is a movie buff, but still, this is not the kind of question he normally fields. “You kind of have to think how he was hired in the movie, right? What kind of interview process did he go through? What did he bring to the table? Did he become like that when he was on the job? Or was he like that when he came?”

For all his faults, Spackler was an incredibly hard worker. He jabbed back at his boss, Bushwood greenskeeper Sandy McFiddish, but handled most assignments well, even diving into the pool to retrieve what turned out to be a Baby Ruth. He developed a new strain of turfgrass — an incredible “cross of Kentucky bluegrass, featherbed bench and Northern California sinsemilla.” He was passionate and dedicated, if nothing else.

“If you give me an assistant who’s passionate and dedicated,” McClannon says, “I can show you a turf pro-

fessional with a future.”

Though not unanimous, far more turf pros than not say they would hire Spackler, fried neurons and all, largely because of those traits.

“I would give him a shot on the crew,” says Ryan Boudreau, assistant superintendent at Framingham Country Club in Framingham, Massachusetts, who watched “Caddyshack” every day during an inspired six-week stretch in college. “I think anybody deserves an opportunity. But if he starts throwing dynamite in the ground, it would probably be a short-lived tenure because, obviously, we’re not trying to not blow up golfers.”

“I probably would,” says Kurtis Wolford, superintendent at Woodbridge Golf & Country Club in Woodbridge, California, who has encountered Spackleresque characters at every course he has worked at — and can still rattle off their names. “I can teach you how to do anything on the golf course, but when I bring somebody in, his personality has to meld with the personalities on the crew. He has to be a team player. A stick in the mud who doesn’t see the humor in life



**“THE PROS LOOK AT CARL SPACKLER AND THEY GO, ‘WELL, THAT’S ALL IT IS.’ AND IT’S NOT. THAT’S WHY THE IMAGE CAMPAIGN IS SUCH A BIG DEAL. BECAUSE NO DISRESPECT TO BILL MURRAY, THE MAN’S A LEGEND, WE’RE STILL FIGHTING THE STIGMA OF CARL SPACKLER. HE RAISES AWARENESS, NOT ALWAYS IN A GOOD WAY. HE IS OUR GREATEST BLESSING AND OUR BIGGEST CURSE.”**

**— RYAN MCCLANNON,  
REYNOLDS PARK GOLF  
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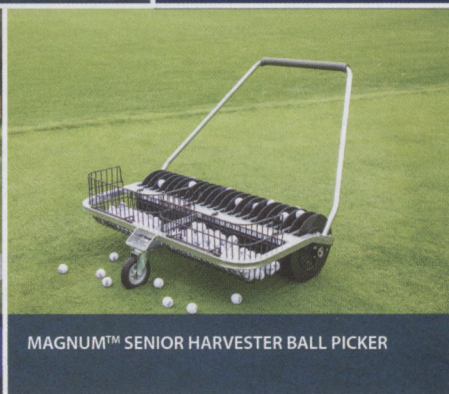
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## SPOTLIGHT

probably isn't going to be a good fit."

"I still think there are a lot of people like that, that have a strong desire to learn, may not have that full ability, but they're there, they're dedicated," says Alex Stuedemann, director of golf course maintenance at TPC Deere Run in Moline, Illinois. "I look at that wall of Milorganite that he was building those bombs behind. We still use Milorganite! It's a great product!"

Even Jones says he would probably hire Spackler if he applied for a position. "Just as a crew man, sure," he says. "He'd probably keep things light — if he could pass a drug test."

So, 40 years on, is Spackler a net positive or negative for the industry? Stuedemann says the movie "shows how far we've come" from the "dirt floors and junk shops" that were still prevalent when he was starting out. Maltais says that "in a hilarious way, it helped shed some light on the things we do." Stanek says that decades of support from so many corners — industry publications and partners, The PGA of America, the GCSAA — have all helped superintendents receive deserved respect and ease the old proverbial shoulder chip.

"The golf industry is better for having it, but from a turf standpoint, we're always going to fight that battle," says McClannon, who has twice received a handshake from Murray for his work on the course. "And the best thing to do, sometimes, is to just run with it, just embrace it, because in a lot of aspects, that stigma has given us a free pass on things, if you think about it. When there are club functions you really don't want to attend, you say, 'I don't have a suit pressed or anything like that.' We have a built-in excuse because they all go, 'Oh, well, yeah, he's a superintendent.'"

"There's so much truth to that movie, but sometimes you just shake your fist at the clouds: Bill Murray!" GCI

Matt LaWell is Golf Course Industry's managing editor. He has watched every Bill Murray movie at least once.



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.

## SOIL STORAGE PRACTICALITY

**F**orty-six leftover used concrete blocks, acquired from a local concrete company about 12 years ago, were placed on top of a custom-built concrete pad. The blocks were loaded onto a sod delivery truck and were unloaded and placed with a John Deere 7820 front-end loader tractor using a chain/strap placed through a piece of rebar in the top of each block. The back-concrete wall portion was reinforced with soil placed on the opposite side to keep the blocks in place when loading topdressing sand near the end of the storage area. Each bin measures approximately 50 feet long, 12 feet wide and 6 feet high on the sides and back. The pad/blocks were placed on the east side of a building to protect it from the prevailing winds. Used grass seed bags were placed between some of the blocks to control seepage of the sand. Each block cost about \$40. The concrete pad cost less than \$2,000. Former USGA senior agronomist Matt Nelson, co-owner, and Pat Borchard, co-owner, of Magic Valley Bentgrass/Magic Valley Turfgrass in Filer, Idaho, near Twin Falls, are very inventive.



## SOCIAL DISTANCE DIVIDERS

**T**he seasonal maintenance staff came back to work for the summer months at the Kinsale Golf and Fitness Club in Powell, Ohio, where Rob Fisher is the superintendent. Fisher realized he did not have enough turf vehicles for one crew member per vehicle per social distancing guidelines, so he improvised unique cart dividers. He purchased 6-gauge clear plastic for 71-inch by 71-inch shower curtains at Target for \$6 each. Golf cart control ropes were placed through the curtain holes and three small set screws mounted the curtains to the tops with ease. Two crew members can now ride together safely divided by also closing the folding windshield. Total installation time took about 20 minutes per vehicle.



**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](mailto:terrybuchen@earthlink.net).





# New approach to old diseases:

## A YEAR WITH ZIO

### PART 2: THE HOW

*Editor's note: Golf Course Industry is working with SePRO to tell the story of Zio Fungicide's implementation into disease control programs. The three-part series will explore the reasons superintendents are turning to Zio, how they are using it and what the results are during the most trying moments of the 2020 season.*

**By Guy Cipriano**

**B**all marks can be nuisances, symbols of activity and sources of disruption to golf course maintenance routines. For Bill Irving, they can define the agronomic season.

Irving, the director of agronomy at Wolf Creek in suburban Kansas City, spends significant time in July and August observing the shot-induced alterations to the private club's bentgrass greens. The methodology behind carefully constructed programs and practices becomes validated upon the impact of objects weighing 1.62 ounces or less.

Day after day, sweltering summer week after week, Irving and his team receive geometry lessons in turfgrass management.



## NEW APPROACH TO OLD DISEASES

Sponsored by SePRO



The Club at Carlton Woods has started working Zio Fungicide into a *Pythium* control program on its Nicklaus Course.

The bigger and deeper the ball marks, the more susceptible the turf becomes to myriad issues, including perplexing root *Pythium*, a major threat in the unforgiving Transition Zone environment where the Wolf Creek team operates.

"I have been saying this for years, me personally, I don't manage greens for speed," Irving says. "We manage them for firmness and smoothness first ... and speed is typically a byproduct of that philosophy. The increase of ball mark size during the season tells me a lot. As you get softer and you get weaker roots, your ball marks become bigger and more explosive. When I watch balls hit into par 3s or wedge shots into par 4s and 5s, I watch how the ball reacts and what the size of that ball mark is. If our greens are relatively

firm and smooth and react the way they should based on our inputs, to me, that's success."

Establishing roots sturdy enough to withstand the summer flight-and-land barrage is a year-round process that intensifies in the spring when annual spray programs commence. Superintendents tweak programs based on current, projected and historical weather, past successes and shortcomings, and collaboration with assistants, colleagues, researchers and partners. When soil temperatures and golfer activity increases, the industry begins learning how superintendents are incorporating new products into existing programs.

Wolf Creek made its first 2020 preventative *Pythium* application in late March. Irving is incorporating SePRO's Zio Fungicide, an Organic Materials Review Institute-listed product labeled for *Pythium*, brown patch and anthracnose control, into sprays. *Pythium* and nematodes are Wolf Creek's biggest disease and pest challenges. Both can lead to dimpled and discolored greens.

Using two products labeled for *Pythium* control in each spray and rotating active ingredients helped produce smooth and firm greens throughout the past two summers. Irving is keeping the rotation intact while adding a third active ingredient, *Pseudomonas chlororaphis* strain AFS009 found in Zio, to root *Pythium* applications. Since placing the winning bid on a 20-pound case of Zio donated by SePRO for the 2020 Golf Industry Show silent auction benefitting the GCSAA's Environmental Institute for Golf, Irving has ordered additional cases of the fungicide in preparation for regular usage. "I feel like the peace of mind I get with not just having two active ingredients but a third one in our mix makes me more comfortable that we are doing the right thing," he says.

The bentgrass/*Poa annua* greens at the Vineyard Golf Club in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, entered May void of ball marks. Massachusetts didn't permit the return of golf until May 7, although the spring months are typically sleepy at the Vineyard, where the

bulk of the membership waits until summer to enjoy the private course setting.

The Vineyard agreed to a local ordinance prior to its 2002 opening restricting pesticide use on new development. With the nearby Atlantic Ocean and soils beneath playing surfaces slow to warm, the Vineyard's bentgrass remained slumbered, thus delaying the start of an unconventional spray program. Zio adds an option for brown patch and anthracnose control to a limited portfolio of products available to superintendent Kevin Banks.

"Not only do I live and work on an island, but I kind of have my own little work bubble," says Banks, alluding to the geographic separation between Martha's Vineyard and the Massachusetts mainland and the pesticide restrictions at the Vineyard. "I'm constantly on my laptop doing research. So much can occur overnight with what can happen or what you think can happen. You have to be on your toes at 5 a.m. when you see spores or fungus – and you have to act accordingly."

Acting accordingly this summer includes incorporating Zio into a tank mix consisting of an OMRI-listed plant protectant, seaweed, ferrous sulfate and manganese sulfate. Unlike colleagues with access to traditional fungicides, Banks quickly turns to – and budgets for – promising new products fitting the rigid requirements of managing a

modern golf course on Martha's Vineyard.

"Zio will be included in our weekly sprays and we have enough inventory for it," Banks says. "My goal was to start our program in early May and get through the end of September. Now it will be the middle of May and getting to early October, which is fine, too, because our falls the last three years have been more mild and wetter than what they have been in the past. I'm looking forward to seeing how Zio does in summer, how it does when we transition into fall, and how it's managing brown patch and anthracnose like it's labeled for when we see those pressures."

While Irving monitors ball marks to determine how Wolf Creek's programs are performing, Banks will compare regulation greens with a trio of short-game practice greens throughout the summer. The short-game greens are treated with a tank mix used on the Vineyard's tees, approaches and practice areas. Zio will only be incorporated into the mix used on regulation greens.

"We're going at the high-end rate with Zio, because we're not mixing it with your basic chemistries," Banks says. "We have found that going at high rates of these organic products is just a much better product for us. We'll see the results of Zio when we hit July 4th. Our green spray isn't exactly what we do on tees and approaches, but it's pretty close and we'll have a good idea if Zio is

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Part 1 of the series explored why superintendents Kevin Banks, Tim Huber and Bill Irving are adding Zio Fungicide into their disease management programs. Enter [bit.ly/ZioParh](http://bit.ly/ZioParh) into your web browser to read the story.



Kevin Banks



Tim Huber



Bill Irving





Wolf Creek is using Zio Fungicide on its greens as part of a tank mix designed to control *Pythium*.

working or not. I'm very curious."

As Banks awaited the return of golfers to Martha's Vineyard, Tim Huber has observed a bevy of member activity at The Club at Carlton Woods in The Woodlands, Texas. The combination of a mild (and dry) spring by Texas standards and people seeking quality outdoor recreation to interrupt the monotony of working from home increased the amount of weekday activity on the private club's two golf courses. The lack of rain through mid-May temporarily reduced concerns of a spring *Pythium* outbreak.

From building construction to 40-yard dash times, everything seems to happen fast in Texas,

including the potential for *Pythium* to infect Bermudagrass greens following a dousing. So, Huber has continued with a diligent preventative spray program.

The nucleus of the program resembles what protected the greens the previous year. But slight tweaks are made. This spring, for example, Huber worked Zio into a mix used on the Nicklaus Course greens. He applied Zio on a 28-day interval in a mix with other *Pythium* control products. "We use new products slowly at first," Huber says.

"In the case of Zio, it's a little bit easier, because it's providing biological control," he adds. "If it was a traditional fungicide, then

it's a little bit different. Every superintendent is going to ask, 'Is it a safe product? Is it safe for my turf? What are the side effects? How many applications can I have?' If they say you can only have three a year, then you're going to have to get into a strategy of when it makes the most sense. If they say you can have 12 a year, then you can be a little more liberal with your applications. With Zio, you know it's a product you can add into your sprays."

Products with tank mixing capabilities are attractive to superintendents, especially considering the labor dilemmas surrounding golf course maintenance. Huber and Banks entered the second half of spring with smaller crews than last season. "Everybody is figuring out a way to be more efficient and still produce the same product to their golfers," Huber says.

The Vineyard devotes significant labor to spraying. Greens, tees, approaches and practice areas are sprayed

weekly during the peak season. The interval between fairway applications decreased from 14 days to every 7 to 10 last year. Enhanced turf quality has convinced Banks to spray playing surfaces with the same frequency and seek efficiencies elsewhere this summer.

"We're not stopping with that program because I have seen how positive our results are in that short window," he says. "The grass is so much better. Our spray program is important to what we do here and providing a good product."

A superintendent maintaining a course far from the ocean working with traditional options requiring more time between sprays demonstrates similar confidence in his course's 2020.

"The fewer apps we make, the less prone it makes us to resistance issues," Irving says. "That's why a rotation is so important to us. If Zio gives us a couple of extra days of protection, that's really important to us because our weather is so unpredictable." ■

## ZIO FUNGICIDE AT A GLANCE

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- Can be tank mixed with traditional fungicides
- Registered for use in 47 states
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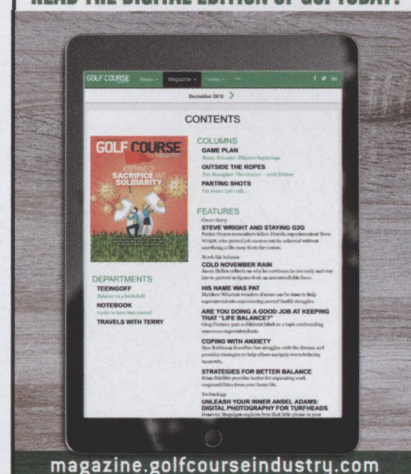
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## BACK IN THE SADDLE!

**F**or many of you across the country or around the globe, you may think the header references golf reopening after lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. I stated my case for golf last time, and I am happy to see golf return to all 50 states and other parts of the world.

I am thankful golf stayed open in my locale, but I must admit there were many days I felt guilty we were operating when so many of my peers were dealing with other forms of this ongoing crisis. The past two months I have had countless conversations with my wife and peers about the rising and sinking tides of emotions that have come to define what we are experiencing for the first time in our lives.

But the real story behind the header is slightly different. And for the record, Aerosmith has always been one of my favorite bands, so I make no apologies. You may recall last year I opined about the fun we all had when we first started working on golf courses. After my obligatory indoctrination with the string trimmer I graduated to the triplex greens mower and pulled a five-gang behind a Massey Ferguson tractor. Then my life changed when the club acquired secondhand a monstrosity of a machine – a Jacobsen F10.

Operating an oversized oc-

topus around the golf course three days a week gave me an immense sense of pride and satisfaction. Not only was I responsible for the playability and presentation of the fairways, but the sheer size of that mower boosted my confidence while leaving me many hours to observe, think and, dare I say, dream.

Aside from changing holes or pins, or perhaps you call it cutting cups, mowing fairways is my favorite thing to do on a golf course. And for years my butt did not touch the seat of a fairway unit. For the past 15 years, I have been blessed with a hard-working staff and my skills and experience have been applied elsewhere.

But starting last year, during the peak of the labor challenge, I found myself doing all sorts of things to help the team, including mowing fairways an hour before others arrived just to speed up the process and maximize productivity. I guess climbing back in the saddle was both a necessity from the standpoint we were short-staffed, but it was also therapeutic as I reconnected with those earlier days.

And it has carried over into this year. We all know managing a golf course can be stressful but managing a golf course during a pandemic, well, I am pretty sure none of us had those pages in our playbooks. Choosing to work some mornings from the “mobile office” has helped clear my mind and sharpen my focus on what

is best for my team's health and safety along with the golf course.

Granted, I am blessed the course layout provides sweeping views, making it easy to keep tabs on the team and the whereabouts of play. If I were managing a course where each hole felt isolated or disconnected, I might not be so quick to climb aboard.

We experienced a bizarre spring, with temperatures abnormally warm at times (80s in late March), but we also had patchy frost and a record low of 36 degrees on the morning of May 12. Although the golf course began to wake up early due to those warm conditions in March, the cold we experienced in April slowed its progress.

But I know my time in the saddle is quickly coming to an end as the heat of summer is fast approaching. Soon fans will be going up around the greens and I am certain by the time you read this I will have traded my ear plugs and sunglasses for my TDR and hose reel.

So, what is the point I am trying to make? I guess it is simply we all need to identify what our saddle is and make time to climb up and enjoy the view from time to time. Whether it be the seat of a sprayer, mower or even an excavator, find time to allow yourself to hear that tuning fork inside you and experience the power of deep thought. And do not forget to breathe, because right now that is the single most important thing you can do for yourself, family, team and facility. **GCI**

“Choosing to work some mornings from the ‘mobile office’ has helped clear my mind and sharpen my focus on what is best for my team's health and safety along with the golf course.”



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



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