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THE LAST 12 MONTHS

Bet when you opened our 2020 State of the Industry issue at this time last year you didn't expect to be reading the following script a year later:

January: Ah, a new year! The average 18-hole course, according to our research, enters 2020 with a \$987,488 maintenance budget, a modest increase over 2019. This was neither the panic of 2010 nor the prosperity of 2000. Signs point to another steady, yet unspectacular, year.

February: Those new snowbirds sure like to play golf and their former neighbors are enjoying non-frozen turf. Favorable southern and northern weather results in a 15.2 percent increase in rounds played nationally over the first two months compared with 2019, according to Golf Datatech.

March: Handshake? Fist bump? Step away? Nobody knows how to react upon seeing industry friends at events such as the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference and Show at the beginning of the month. Nobody knows where 2020 is heading by the end of the month, although a few "experts" predict hundreds of course closures, significant contraction in quality industry jobs and a year without major championships.

April: Foam pool noodles at the bottom of the cups, single-rider carts, bunkers without rakes and 20-minute intervals between times. Welcome to a version of golf none of us had ever experienced — if you are even fortu-

nate enough to experience it. When the National Golf Foundation releases its update for the week of April 5, only 44 percent of golf facilities in the United States are open.

May: Herculean efforts keep golf courses maintained as politicians continue placing essential and non-essential labels on industries and activities. Calculated efforts by associations result in every state permitting golf by the middle of the month.

June: Play ... golf! With ball parks, pools, amusement parks and other warm-weather recreational staples closed, golf courses move into the summer 2020 recreational forefront.

July: Good luck trying to find a tee time — and good luck trying to get a course fully prepared for sunup-to-sundown play with a staff much smaller than its projected summer size.

August: The people who started playing more golf in May, June and July play even more golf in August. Rounds played nationally for the month are 20.6 percent higher than in 2019, according to Golf Datatech. Remote work and less business travel keep the GHIN system hopping.

September: That member-guest scheduled for June finally happens. So does that U.S.

Open originally scheduled for June. And that on-course slowdown typically associated with the shift from summer to fall? It never happens. Fortunately, quality facilities bypass the easy money presented by abundant demand and complete aerification and other necessary cultural practices.

October: The bosses need the 2021 budget, sales representatives seek decisions on EOP offers and golfers want leaves cleared from everywhere, including bunkers still without rakes. Amazingly, conditions remain splendid despite 11 million more rounds played during the month compared with 2019. Once fearful of potentially stalled projects, builders and architects bounce between northern job sites, improving all areas of golf courses, especially bunkers.

November: The snowbirds are back! Of course, many never returned to their northern homes. Golfers start wondering if they'll remember how to pull a pin or rake a bunker. Superintendents begin daydreaming of seeing their industry friends again while trying to focus on their fourth Zoom meeting in two days. A thirtysomething from South Carolina engaged to the daughter of a hockey great wins a Masters staged in the middle of football season.

December: Readers of this magazine complete a 35-question survey. More than three-quarters of them feel better about the industry they make innumerable sacrifices to improve than they did in 2019. **GCI**



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GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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We have seized the challenge of staying connected in 2020.



The **EW** Podcast


Joel Simmons with
Todd Bohn
Director of Agronomy
at Big Cedar Golf



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LIVE IN THE QUESTION

A legendary Ohio superintendent/general manager retired in 2020. But that doesn't mean his enduring work will stop.

By Lee Carr

You have to pause, *reaaaaally* pause, to reflect upon the career of Frank Dobie. And, when you think about the man himself, you have to smile. Dobie led as superintendent and general manager at The Sharon Golf Club in Sharon Center, Ohio, for 56 years, including two years of construction before the course opened in 1966. This private, 18-hole course with bent-grass fairways and greens plays between 6,400 and 7,200 yards and was designed by architect George Cobb in 1963.

Cobb was the only architect to work on the course until 2020. Over the years, Dobie and his crew were happy to execute projects such as dam modifications (to keep the 15-acre lake up to code), constructing a new hole, creating forward tees (25 years ago, before it was trendy), redesign the bunkers (and add some, too) and more. Dobie credits his long career to great leadership by president M.G. O'Neil, an outstanding staff and a culture that promotes respect for employees and members

alike. "I learned early on that you cannot micromanage people and have them be satisfied," he says.

Dobie hired problem-solvers, people who wanted to contribute. Many staff at TSGC have worked there for decades. Dobie also hired several retirees, some of whom have now, remarkably, been with TSGC for more than 25 years. "We tailored some of our routine practices for retired people," Dobie says. "For example, we triplex greens and tees instead of hand-mow them."

He over-hired on staff

so everyone could take time off (even summer vacations!). He also allowed employees to play golf six days a week. Employee golf privileges are a great incentive and promote awareness of course conditions. People are having fun and working hard. That success feeds itself. "Even when there were labor shortages, we never had that problem," Dobie says.

Dobie was empowered by O'Neil. They had an understanding. "He would give me a direction and let me figure out how to get it done," Dobie says. "Our meetings rarely lasted more than 20 minutes. When he hired me, he said, 'We are not going to have any committees. I want to talk to only one person and that person is going to be you.'"

The singular relationship fostered freedom, trust and productivity, where some of his colleagues had to devote more time to diplomacy, particularly when management and committees changed. "All my energy was focused on creativity, where much of their effort was tied to surviving," Dobie says.

There are very few properties where being a superintendent and GM can



be a joint position, as it was for Dobie, but TSGC has always been solely focused on golf—it's not a social club and events are limited. Dobie warns against the idea that becoming a general manager is the promotion it is perceived to be. "I have counseled people about this route," he says. The hours are different. General managers typically spend less time outside and they spend more time managing the overall business and staff. Anyone considering becoming a general manager needs to thoroughly understand the expectations."

Some technological advancements Dobie noted as very useful are moisture meters, degree-day software and Stimp-meters. His team stimped greens every day to help maintain the speed and consistency members desired. Dobie believes texting and social media have a place in the industry, but they must be balanced with face-to-face conversations for optimal productivity. Another advancement Dobie enjoys is PowerPoint and the direction it has moved presentations and the sharing of information. Dobie is interested in promoting education through various media and he is working on a video to help players increase their pace of play.

Dobie will also continue participating in the Penn State Alumni Association that he helped start and continue his leadership of the Musser International Turfgrass Foundation as president. Another effort close to Dobie's heart is to preserve the history of superintendents, starting with the creation of the Northern Ohio GCSA Historical Library and Hall of Fame Committee. There are so many wonderful careers to learn from and celebrate. His advice for young people in the industry is to "take care of your story by updating it annually." Though most superintendents don't like to talk about themselves, you should be proud of what you have achieved. Your story is worth sharing.

Together, O'Neil and Dobie maintained an operating profit at TSGC for 54 consecutive years with O'Neil's wise tenet that if you don't have it, don't spend it. Keep it simple. Dobie has more advice gathered from his own storied career and from interactions with his mentors Joe Duich, Eb Steiniger, Bob Williams and others. "It was Dr. Duich who told me not to always rely on conventional wisdom to solve problems but go outside that realm by 'living in the question,'" Dobie says.

He believes in managing your staff so the average work week is about 44 hours, including yours. Everyone needs to spend time with friends and family. Consult older colleagues and learn from their experience. "Acknowledge your staff, sincerely," says Dobie, and remember during job interviews that questions should be asked by both parties. "Be positive and keep the job fun," he says. "If you can't, change jobs."

When you next see Frank Dobie, pause, smile and live in the question.

Lee Carr is a Northeast Ohio-based writer and frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.

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Tartan Talks No. 54

What happens when golf course architects collaborate on a book?

You get “Colorado pot shop” and “trendy coffee shop” references. You also get a great example of how technical topics can be described in relatable ways.

Jeff Brauer and **Nathan Crace** joined the Tartan Talks podcast to describe methodology and creativity behind

the ASGCA Foundation’s recently released “Designs on a Better Golf Course: Practical answers to common questions for Green Committees.” The book’s aim is simple: educate the people responsible for making course enhancement decisions about practicality, viability and playability.



▲ Brauer



▲ Crace

Brauer, a past ASGCA President who spent 14 years writing the “Game Plan” column on these pages, led the effort to write, edit and publish the book, which is available on Amazon. Crace, Greg Muirhead and John Sanford were among the ASGCA members who provided assists.



“One of the great things about the way Jeff writes is that it’s relatable and it doesn’t get too technical,” Crace says. “Anybody in the golf industry, whether you’re an owner, green committee chair, golf professional or anybody that has any type of say-so, can sit down and read it. You don’t have to be a superintendent or have technical knowledge to understand what he’s talking about.”

The podcast isn’t entirely book chatter. Brauer and Crace also provide witty insight on timely topics ranging from green speeds and how future maintenance considerations are impacting current design decisions. “Maintenance costs, I think, are going to drive design decisions for the next 50 years,” Brauer says.

Visit the Superintendent Radio Network page on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or Stitcher to download the podcast.



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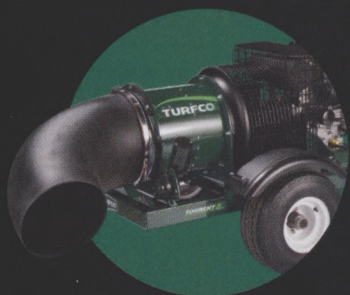
The LPGA announced a three-year official marketing partnership with **John Deere**. With the agreement, John Deere becomes the LPGA Tour's Official Golf Course Equipment Supplier and will support the LPGA Foundation's efforts to introduce more girls to golf. Additionally, the Ladies European Tour announced a three-year extension to its longstanding partnership with John Deere, which began in 2007. John Deere has also signed on as the Official Golf Course Equipment Supplier of the 2021 Solheim Cup at Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio.

Spectrum Technologies extended its product offering with the release of the FieldScout TDR 250 Economy Soil Moisture Meter. The new model enhances the well-adopted TDR product and represents an option for turf managers looking to capture spot measurements for hand-watering or syringing greens for consistent turf. "Spectrum Technologies is responding to what the turf market has been asking for," president and CEO Mike Thurow said. "The TDR 250 has been specially designed for courses with lower maintenance budgets. With the TDR 250, turf managers will receive Spectrum's precision measurement technology while investing 20 percent less."

Troon (Arizona) Country Club reopened its Jay Morrish- and Tom Weiskopf-designed golf course for member play following a \$4.6 million, seven-month renovation. Weiskopf and design consultant Phil Smith oversaw the project while Heritage Links golf course construction company served as the contractor. As part of the renovation, Weiskopf and Smith made design modifications to enhance playability, accentuate site lines and assist in course maintenance. Greens were resurfaced with A4 bentgrass, tees were leveled and expanded, and several new forward tees were added. Tee boxes, fairways and rough were re-grassed with Tifway 419 Bermudagrass.

Paragon Casino Resort and Hotel's **Tamahka Trails Golf Club** in Marsville, Louisiana, completed a renovation guided by Nathan Crace. Bunker improvements included replacing all drain lines and sand, shaping the bunker complex to eliminate steep slopes, converting roughly 40,000 square feet of bunkers to grass, strategically adding small pot bunkers to four holes, and implementing the Better Billy Bunker system to improve drainage and better protect the bunkers. The addition of a practice green and chipping bunker and a new set of tees measuring around 4,000 yards for juniors and beginners were among the other changes. GCI

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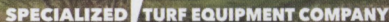


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WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO DEVELOP FUTURE LEADERS?

One of the most important responsibilities for managers is developing the next generation of leaders and preparing them for the professional challenges they will face. The most obvious way to develop leadership qualities is simply to pay your knowledge forward by identifying the most important lessons you've learned — often the hard way — and passing them on to your team.

That responsibility starts with acknowledging that agronomic knowledge is simply table stakes. Knowing how to grow turf and keep it healthy is expected of anyone in the superintendent role, and most up-and-coming turf managers come to the job well prepared. GCSAA educational programs and the generous teaching of consulting specialists and suppliers go a long way in helping to lay this foundation. Certainly, the college of hard knocks provides its lessons as well.

But what lessons will you teach your assistants and crew members? And how can you help prepare them for their next opportunity to move into more responsible positions? In addition to making yourself available as a mentor, you can also broaden your own knowledge by paying attention to what your most respected peers consider their priorities. Here are suggestions from two of the best in the business.

Bill Cygan is the exceptional young superintendent at Silver Spring Country Club in Ridgefield, Connecticut. After graduating

from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Bill spent six years as an assistant at Innis Arden Golf Club in Greenwich and another six years caring for the West Course at Winged Foot.

Build strong relationships and communicate often.

"This is not easy and doesn't happen overnight, but the stronger your relationships are at the club, the smoother the ride will be, especially during times of adversity," Bill says. "Relationship building should include department managers — especially the golf pro, controller and general manager — as well as certain key members of the club, including the green chairman and treasurer, who can be important allies."

Trust your teammates. In addition to the administrative leaders with whom a successful superintendent works, Bill adds, "Be sure to build a strong team responsible for the daily golf course maintenance operations." The strength of the team is your strength.

Carlos Arraya, the assistant general manager at Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis, began his career as a golf course superintendent and over two decades has grown into a key leadership position at one of America's finest clubs, having hosted the 100th PGA Championship in 2019. Carlos teaches several key points of focus:

Lead the way. "Understand your leadership style and voice," he says, adding that managers who favorably influence the next generation of leaders practice mindfulness, leaving their ego at the shop door, putting the in-

terests and needs of their crew ahead of their own and recognizing a job well done. Further, he recommends continue evolving as a leader to best handle the needs of a changing workforce.

Be present. Some managers are overly focused on the next job, but Carlos counsels: "Focus on being great in your current role." One can never know too much; by the same token, one can never know everything, so don't pretend that you do.

Hone your own character. Superintendents and managers of all descriptions work in the proverbial glass house. The key to being effective at each level is understanding that one is setting an example for others up and down the organizational chart. "Know the difference between an excuse and a reason," he says. "And don't fall into the trap of professional jealousy."

Rely on science. "(Superintendents) are trained in the scientific method. But sometimes we overreact and are too quick to make a decision," he says. Club and course managers can pressure superintendents, especially when times are tough, to have immediate answers. "Be deliberate, rely on the science."

Developing young people into experienced and highly effective crew members, ones who will one day lead their own operations, is one of the most important jobs of any superintendent. And only when you lose some of your best people, when they move on to the top job at another club or course, you will know that you've been successful. **GCI**



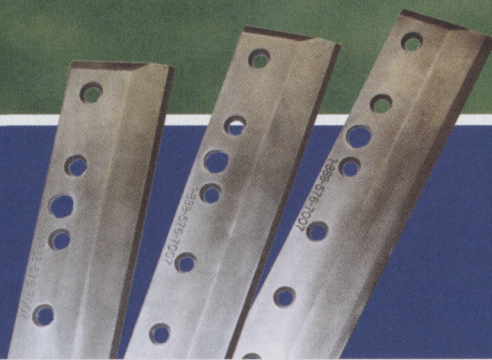
HENRY DELOZIER is a partner at GGA Partners, trusted advisors and thought leaders. He is currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of Audubon International.



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OUT OF THE HALL

I recently read the news that the next class of inductees to the World Golf Hall of Fame won't be welcomed until March 2022. Among those to be honored are competitors Tiger Woods and Susie Maxwell Berning, as well as former PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem and player/architect/benefactor Marion Hollins.

Hmmm ...

After I read the announcement, I did some research and learned there are no golf course superintendents in the Hall. OK, that's not entirely true: Old Tom Morris was inducted in 1976, as part of the third class (surprisingly, a year after his son, Young Tom).

The absence of golf course superintendent representation strikes me as very odd. And wrong. Consider this: Would there be golf without golf course superintendents? Of course not, at least not how we currently play the game.

So how do we crack the selection code? First, let's look at how members are elected.

The World Golf Hall of Fame is supported by 26 organizations, including our own GCSAA. Which raises numerous questions: Can the GCSAA nominate potential inductees? Do any of the other organizations care about superintendents? Is anyone representing our interests?

I'm looking at you USGA, AJGA, ASGCA, GCBAA, CMAA, GWAA and the rest of you supposedly with the best interests of the game at heart. None of you thinks the superintendent is worth honoring? Not one of us in more than a century of work?

Part of the problem could be the process, which was revamped in

2014. It's not easy to follow, but let's try.

Elections are held every other year. There are four categories for nominees: Players — male, female and veterans — and Lifetime Achievement. So, if you don't play, there's only one option for you.

Anyone who has made a major contribution to one of the organizations or the promotion of the game may be selected. We must have someone who meets the criteria. No?

From there, a 20-member selection subcommittee nominates in the four categories. Then a separate 16-member selection committee votes. Election requires 75 percent of the vote.

But here's where the odds are against us: Every two years, only three names are permitted in the Lifetime Achievement category. (Players get five.) So only three from architects, journalists, administrators, celebrities and so on.

And then, only five individuals can be elected to each class.

I'm sure you can see the flaws in this system. And I'm sure you agree with the sentiments of Arizona Golf Hall of Famer Shawn Emerson, who asks, "Could golf continue without turfgrass?" No way!

Not to single anyone out, but without the superintendent would Bob Hope, Bing Crosby or Karsten Solheim even have a Hall of Fame to go into? On what canvas would Alister MacKenzie, Donald Ross or Robert Trent Jones have been so creative? What sport would have nourished Dwight Eisenhower,

Fred Corcoran or Billy Payne? Check out the list yourself: It makes for interesting reading.

I got to wondering if we're overlooked by the WGHOF because we have our own Old Tom Morris Award. But even that annual honor is light on superintendents. Incredibly, in 38 years only three of us have been inducted into our own "hall of fame." Even if the GCSAA created its own hall of fame, would it be any different from the Old Tom Morris Award? And no disrespect to 2021 winner Jim Nantz, but when was the last time he mowed any grass — the artificial putting green in his backyard or other? I appreciate his mentions of course superintendents during PGA Tour telecasts, but we need more than gratuitous shout-outs.

Furthermore, every other organization has its own awards, too. That doesn't stop players, architects, golf writers and others from entering the WGHOF.

Admittedly, most golf course superintendents are far from household names, nor would they likely attract viewers or an audience to an induction ceremony. That is beside the point.

Let's turn to the second consideration: If we could add a superintendent to the WGHOF, what would the criteria be? What would he or she have to have contributed to the game? What would this person have to have done on a world stage to help grow and enhance the profession? (If those alone were the criteria, I nominate the reel mower.)

MORAGHAN continues on 52



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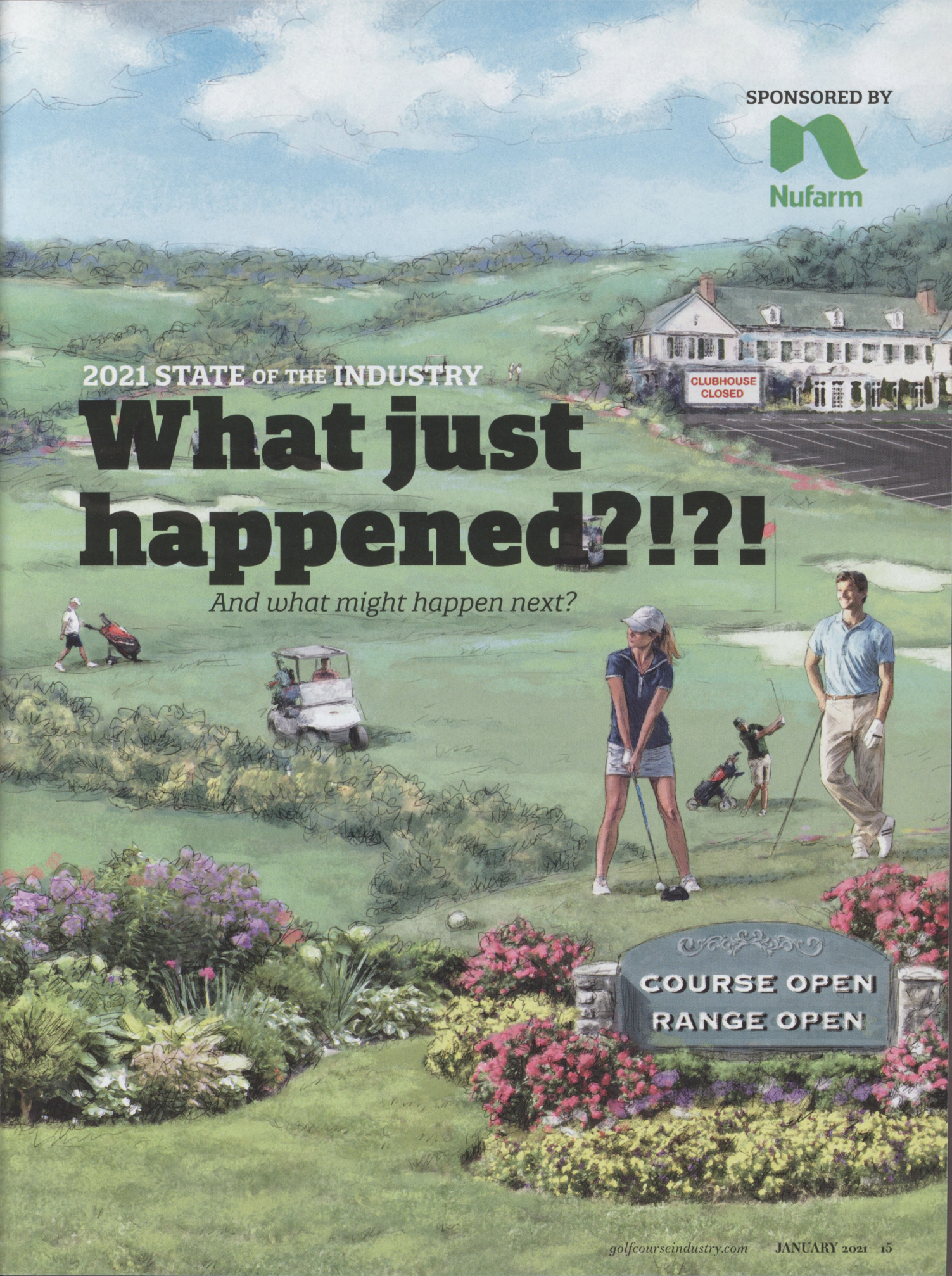
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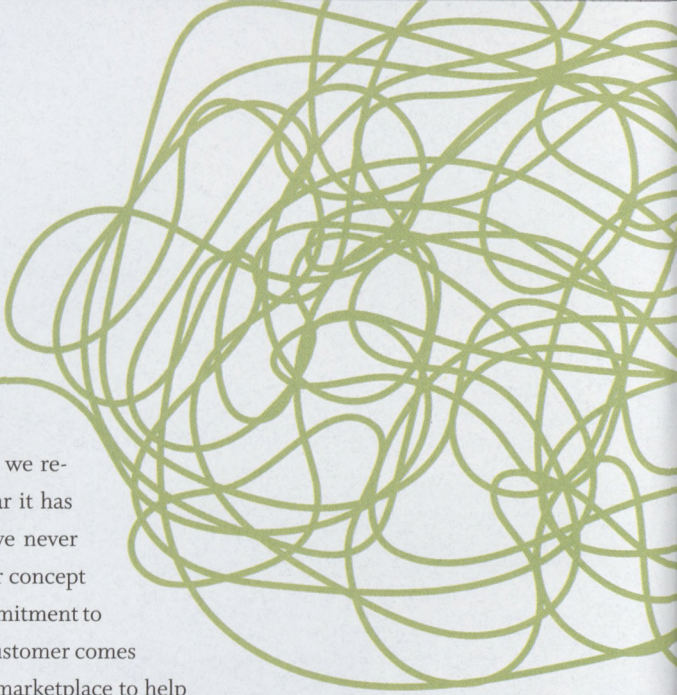


2021 STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

What just happened?!?!

And what might happen next?





Happy New Year from Nufarm! As we reflect on this year (and what a year it has been), we can all agree that we've never had another one like it. While our concept of "normal" has changed, our commitment to our customers hasn't. No matter what, at Nufarm, the customer comes first. We will continue bringing new innovation to the marketplace to help you meet your 2021 goals.

Our golf course solutions portfolio remains strong, with new additions on the way. We recently announced a partnership agreement with Nichino America to develop, market and sell the novel fungicide active ingredient Pyraziflumid for the turf market — an important tool for the management of turf disease, coming early 2022. We are also continuing research on Anuew™ Plant Growth Regulator. As we learn more about the performance advantages of Anuew, we continue to find even more innovative ways to utilize this unique active ingredient.

We are continuing our support of the EXCEL Leadership Program in collaboration with GCSAA. The three-year program offers expert-led leadership training and development opportunities for assistant superintendents, chosen annually. Participants complete a curriculum focused on personal, professional and community development to prepare them to excel as tomorrow's golf course industry leaders. Learn more about the EXCEL Program and how to apply for the next class of membership at <https://www.eifg.org/education/excel-leadership-program>. Due to COVID-19, Nufarm and GCSAA have made the decision to extend the timeline of the first class to enable them to get the most out of the program before graduation.

Nufarm's team of technical, sales, and customer service experts have served this industry for more than 100 years and we look forward to another year. Whatever new challenges 2021 brings to the table, we'll be there with solutions designed to fit your needs. Thank you for allowing us to join you in your success, and we look forward to another year of partnership.

Cam Copley

Cam Copley
Golf National Accounts Manager



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2021 State of the Industry

REMEMBERING A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF
FRIENDS, NEW AND OLD.

How do you measure any year, much less the physical and mental ultramarathon that was 2020?

When we mailed our annual State of the Industry survey a year ago, we focused on the personal details of turf pro life: How many hours you worked, how often you worked out, how many vacation days you were able to use, whether you were really happy. Those questions are still important, of course, but after a year that featured both courses first empty (thanks to thousands of closures across the country because of the COVID-19 pandemic) then packed (thanks to record month after record month after golf was declared one of the few safe social activities), our questions shifted from micro to macro.

Did rounds played at your course increase in 2020? What percentage of your crew were you forced to furlough or let go? What are your biggest challenges for

the year ahead? And what can golf do — what can all of us do, really — to hang on to so many of the new golfers who arrived during the last nine months?

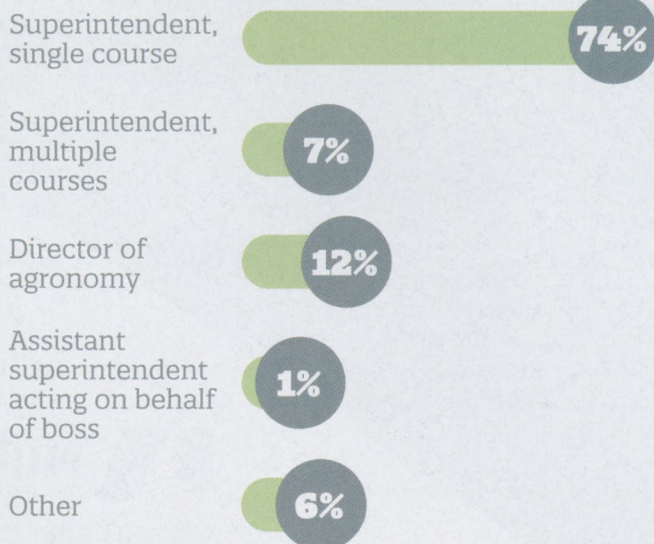
Golf Course Industry partnered with Signet Research, Inc., an independent research company, to produce this 2021 report. We distributed a 35-question survey from November 17 through December 3 to an email list of 3,734 print and/or digital subscribers who are superintendents or directors of agronomy. Results are based on 318 responses and the confidence level is 95 percent with a margin of error of ± 5.5 percent.

In thanks for your annual participation in the survey, *Golf Course Industry* will donate to the Wee One Foundation, a charitable organization established in 2004 in memory of Wayne Otto, CGCS, that helps superintendents and other turf professionals in need.

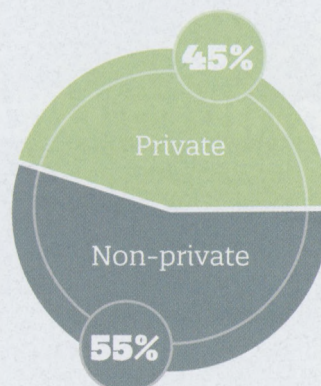
Guy Cipriano and Matt LaWell

METHODOLOGY

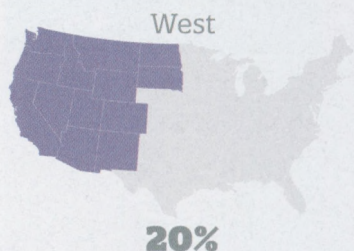
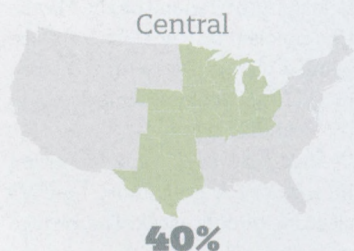
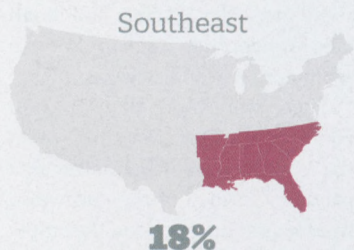
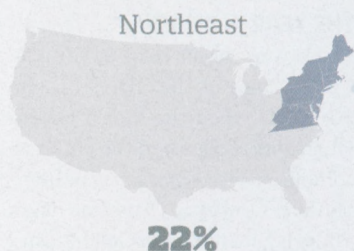
Who are you?



Type of course where you work



Where is your facility located?



2020

A year unlike any other

GOLF COURSES HAVE PROVIDED AN UNEXPECTED SAFE ESCAPE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. WE LOOK BACK AT HOW THAT HAPPENED AND AHEAD AT WHETHER IT MIGHT HOLD.

By Matt LaWell

Air is essential. Water and food are essential. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness have been undeniably unalienable and almost certainly essential for the last 243 years and change.

And, during much of a year that seemed to last at least a decade, golf was essential

— physically, mentally and, it should not be overlooked or forgotten, legally.

What a strange year 2020 was. When ballparks and stadiums remained shuttered, when offices shifted from downtown towers to webcams filming suburban guest rooms, when more than a billion swabs wriggled around more than a billion nostrils to search for COVID-19, golf courses developed into

“We had a couple bumps, a couple glitches, but the team stuck together — from the golf pros to the superintendents, they kept it going. They knew there were furloughs in other departments in the park and they just kept plugging away.”

— Sean McHugh, Cleveland Metroparks



some sort of composite of a gym, a town hall, a community center and maybe even your favorite weeknight dinner spot — curbside delivery, of course.

“It was an amazing year,” KemperSports CEO Steven Skinner says. “There was so much pain, and there

still is so much pain, and we’re very fortunate to have golf come back. It gave people some sanity, to get outside and exercise.”

Rounds played increased year-over-year every month from May through November, and quarterly equipment sales topped \$1 billion for

the first time since before the Great Recession. Agronomically, projected operating budgets are hitting record highs across all segments of the industry and superintendents are busier than ever.

What in the world just happened? Do all these facts and figures represent a blip or a boom? Where can — and where will — golf go from these pandemic peaks?

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

There were fewer than 8,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 on Jan. 30, 2020, when the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. That same day, a Thursday, thousands of Golf Industry Show attendees walked out of the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando after a week filled with seminars, sales pitches and small talk. Wonderful to catch up. See you again next year in Las Vegas.

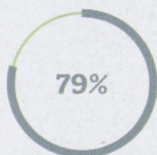
There were more than 118,000 confirmed cases on March 11, when the WHO declared the outbreak a pandemic. Much of the golf world was focused that week on the empty galleries at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, where Si Woo Kim finished three shots ahead of the field in the first round of The Players Championship. The PGA Tour suspended play, in line with the NBA, the NHL and Major League Baseball, the next day.

After that, everything happened in a blur. For golf, more courses closed within the week. The average

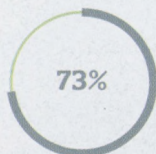
Was your course profitable?

2020	All courses	Non-private	Private	Northeast	Southeast	Central	West
Profitable	59%	65%	51%	59%	56%	65%	47%
Broke even	20%	16%	24%	15%	29%	19%	19%
Experienced a loss	17%	14%	22%	19%	7%	15%	31%
Don't know	4%	5%	3%	7%	8%	1%	3%

Percentage of courses that were profitable or broke even over last five years



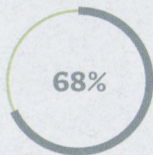
2020



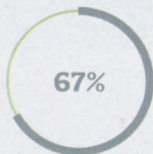
2019



2018



2017



2016

shutdown, at least among our State of the Industry respondents, lasted more than 22 days.

"At the very beginning, you never thought they would get to the point of shutting businesses down, or shutting golf courses down, and at one point 75 or 80 percent of our courses were closed by government order," Skinner says. "We really spent a lot of time working on protocols but also working with local governments, trying to get the facilities back open in a safe manner."

People from every corner of the industry banded together in March, April, even May, in an effort to reopen courses. The game was designed with social distance in mind. (You ever try to swing a club with anybody within six feet of you?) Superintendents and executives and GCSAA leaders called mayors and governors and legislators to lobby for the game.

"We had several calls with some of the other big management companies, and I had never seen the groups come together," Skinner says. "It really showed the value of having the national associations and everybody's support of them."

"Right when everything hit, for a week straight, I just called my contacts, from New Jersey, New York, Florida, Virginia, all my contacts back in Ohio, all my buddies here, a couple guys in Chicago, a couple guys out in Colorado, California," says Ross Miller, superintendent at the Country Club of Detroit in Grosse Point Farms, Michigan. "We've got a pretty tight-knit group around Detroit here of about 12 of us, and we share quite a bit. Picking their brains, seeing what they were doing. More

Average non-capital maintenance budget over last decade

2021	\$1.044 million
2020	\$987,488
2019	\$845,705
2018	\$911,705
2017	\$798,200
2016	\$750,000
2015	\$697,000
2014	N/A
2013	\$622,500
2012	\$651,392



than anything, I wanted to listen and just get different thoughts."

More than 46 percent of survey respondents reported labor cuts — from furloughs to layoffs — as belts tightened figuratively and perhaps literally. General managers hopped on mowers. Kitchen staff pitched in on sodding. So many turf pros described the weeks of empty courses as "eerie."

When courses reopened in whatever modified capacity their city or state leaders allowed, most on-course touchpoints and shared cart rides had disappeared — anything to stop the spread of a virus we knew next to nothing about. Superintendents are an adaptable and inventive bunch. Best practices popped up everywhere.

"Our key principle was the safety

Projected 2020 non-capital maintenance budget by course type

Non-private **\$801,139** | Private **\$1,253,712**



“I hope people consider what they learned last year as a positive. Yeah, 2020 was a pain in the rear, it was different, but I’m a much stronger golf course superintendent and manager than I was 12 months ago.”
— Ryan Cummings,
Elcona Country Club

Projected 2020 non-capital maintenance budget by region

Northeast



\$1,067,047

Southeast



\$1,252,485

Central



\$638,151

West



\$1,620,860

Maintenance budget change compared with 2020

	All	Non-private	Private
Increase 20% or more	2%	2%	2%
Increase 10% to 19%	16%	18%	12%
Increase 1% to 9%	44%	33%	58%
No change	30%	40%	18%
Decrease 1% to 9%	5%	4%	7%
Decrease 10% to 19%	2%	1%	2%
Decrease 20% or more	1%	2%	1%

of our staff. That was paramount,” Miller says. “We broke down to a four-on, three-off schedule for all of our staff, and then had only one day of overlap with the whole staff. If someone would get COVID on our team, I needed that separation. We saw an increase in productivity, and we saw a massive decrease in tardiness and called days off.”

Designed for physical health, the move will soon become permanent at least as much for mental health.

“We’re moving to a five-on, two-off schedule next year where half the crew gets Friday and Saturday off, half the team gets Sunday and Monday off,” Miller says. “Why should our industry be any different and not get two consecutive days off? It’s up to us to lose the badge of honor stuff and work on quality of life for our staff, which will increase the quality of product on the course.”

Thanks to a more global scope, Troon COO Bruce Glasco says the company, which manages nearly 600 golf facilities around the world after

safety of your members and guests was something they were going to mandate prior to your opening back up. Through that learning process in California, we took those lessons and pushed out the idea of having an action plan, company-wide, into all regions, so we were prepared in the event that other states followed California’s lead.”

Learning on the fly in California allowed the company to operate more efficiently elsewhere and figure out more quickly when other courses might be able to reopen.

And when those courses did open back up, golfers flooded the tee sheets.

BLIP OR BOOM?

Among the first Golfers-in-Chief, Woodrow Wilson played about 1,000 rounds during his eight years in the White House. He loved the game enough to prescribe regular rounds for World War I stress relief and later recommended the same during the now-famous flu pandemic of 1918

and 1919 by playing nearly every day for weeks. Participation increased even as waves of that virus spread around the world.

The more things change, of course, the more they seem to remain the same. A little more than a century later, with another golf-loving President in the office, the game has become a balm for millions.

But will all these new golfers stick around after bars, restaurants, movie theaters, stadiums and every other favorite social spot opens back up in 2021 or ’22? And will those golfers who played an extra round every week or two come back as often when golf is no longer the only escape? (For more on those questions, check out *Break on through*, starting on page 28.) In short, does this spike reflect the first boom for golf since the late 1990s? Or just a blip?

California, for example, was among the earlier states to shut down. “We learned early on that having an action plan for reopening and the general

and 1919 by playing nearly every day for weeks. Participation increased even as waves of that virus spread around the world.

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According to our survey results, rounds played in 2020 increased at 88 percent of all golf facilities—with 56 percent of that group reporting a bump of at least 20 percent—and 84 percent of respondents say they expect rounds to either increase again or at least remain the same this year. By itself, that is a strong indicator of at least another year of record or near-record numbers.

Beyond that, 91 percent of respondents say their maintenance budget will increase this year—to a record \$1,043,755, up nearly 6 percent from

Projected capital improvement budget

All	\$204,668
Non-private	\$126,730
Private	\$285,724
Northeast	\$290,975
Southeast	\$391,131
Central	\$94,578
West	\$183,156

Percentage of operational budget devoted to labor and overhead

	All	Non-private	Private
Less than 30%	2%	4%	1%
30% to 39%	14%	20%	6%
40% to 49%	18%	23%	12%
50% to 59%	36%	30%	43%
60% to 79%	29%	22%	37%
80% or more	1%	1%	1%

last year — 82 percent rank their self-assessed job security 8 or higher on a 10-point scale, 79 percent say they are optimistic about their own facility's long-term financial future, and 76 percent say they feel better about the overall health of the game compared to a year ago.

But perhaps it might be better to look at the year ahead in sections.

"We've really broken 2021 into two halves," Skinner says. "The first half, we think there will be continued strong demand because there will continue to be restrictions on travel and activities. When the economy opens back up again and people start traveling, we'll have a lot more competition for the recreational dollar. The industry has a real opportunity, and it's incumbent on us on how we take these literally millions of new golfers and build a lifelong relationship with them."

"I am quite bullish," Glasco says. "I like the demographics of the golfers who are starting to play — not just the good junior numbers but there are quite a few college-aged golfers, which

represents a potential turning point for the industry. After decades of not actively pursuing non-golfers, new organizations have popped up to attract women and younger golfers. There have to be at least a

is a little bit new, those 20- to 25-year-olds." Those twenty-something golfers are playing plenty of municipal and daily-fee courses, "and I think that bodes well for them sticking around. We as an industry have always been challenged to keep the people who come in every year."

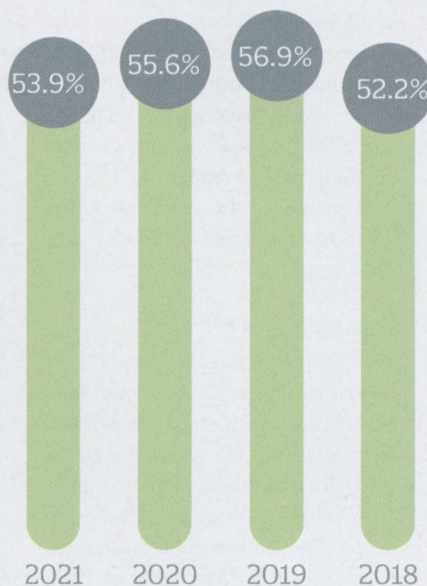
This year rep-

resents a potential turning point for the industry. After decades of not actively pursuing non-golfers, new organizations have popped up to attract women and younger golfers. There have to be at least a couple million folks among the 328 million or so who live in the United States who might come to the game and play a dozen rounds every year, right? Because even a couple million could make the difference in continuing a boom.

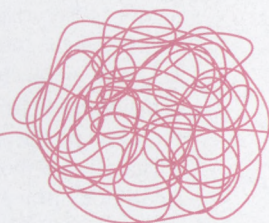
"I do think we've blown the dust off some clubs and bags among the fortysomething, well-to-do executive or middle manager" who had stepped away because of work and home demands, says Forrest Richardson, owner of Forrest Richardson & Associates and the current president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. "And then we have new people into the game, and we haven't lost the avid golfer, and we've put more kids on the course. So there is a positive. How big it will be, I don't know. That's not my department. But I have certainly been a cheerleader for my clients and the management companies: 'This is an opportunity. Let's build on this. Let's build forward tees, let's cater to kids and people who haven't been on the course in a while.'"

"If we want to keep new golfers with us, then there should be a certain low- or no-cost instruction," says Jan Bel Jan, owner of Jan Bel Jan Golf Course Design and the immediate past president of the ASGCA. "We need to celebrate all the successes — and sometimes the successes are the three shots that were stellar out of 50."

Percentage of operational budget devoted to labor and overhead last four years



2020



THE FUTURE IS NOW

More than 1 million Americans received the first shot of the two-shot COVID-19 vaccine by Christmas Eve. Another 1 million received it by New Year's Eve. And while few golfers and probably no superintendents were among those earliest few, everybody will have an opportunity to receive it should they desire as the line moves forward.

How quickly enough people can receive that vaccination is another quandary entirely.

"You can only vaccinate so many people so fast, so we're cautiously optimistic about being able to claw our way out of this," Glasco says. "But we don't believe that Q1 will necessarily be a light-switch environment in which suddenly everything will change. We think it's a slow, methodical process.

"We're in a good position with the new golfers who have come into the game and we know the people who have played golf this year have a new appreciation for what the sport brings, the benefits it brings for health and wellness. We're hopeful that Q2 really starts where the numbers support getting more back to normal." That, Glasco says, is when clubhouses and event centers could finally return to some sense of the Before Times.

"That will allow us more freedoms in restaurants," he says. "I think we will see more hard commits in the conference and business space, so our clients who are also hotel operators will start to get some firm commitments for future business. It's hard for them right now because

“It was an amazing year. There was so much pain, and there still is so much pain, and we're very fortunate to have golf come back. It gave people some sanity, to get outside and exercise.”

— KemperSports CEO Steven Skinner

the restrictions keep changing. We're hoping people will start thinking and start reacting in a more positive manner in Q2.

"And then, in a perfect world, we'll be in a new renaissance for the sport by Q4 of next year."

Renaissance might be the perfect word for golf in 2020 and beyond: These last nine months have represented a sort of rebirth, a revival, a renewed interest in the game. Through so many dark days, golf was essential.

"I was just talking with one of my superintendents and I was telling him how proud I was that we hung in there," says Sean McHugh, executive director of golf operations for the Cleveland Metroparks' eight Northeast Ohio courses. "We had a couple bumps, a couple glitches, but the team stuck together—from the golf pros to the superintendents, they kept it going. They knew there were furloughs in other departments in the park and they just kept plugging away. And he said, 'It was almost a badge of honor that we were here, providing them good conditions.'"

"Now the snow's here, we're starting to grind reels and work on maintenance equipment, and it's like a little breath. Before you know it, March

will be here and we'll kick it off and get going again."

Who knows what this year holds? Predictions and forecasts are such a volatile gambit that even the best meteorologists seldom venture out past 12 days, much less 12 months, but it is fair to say that rounds will still be higher than almost any year during the last couple decades, labor and weather will provide more consistent challenges than even a pandemic, and there are few places as meditative and cleansing to spend a few hours than a golf course.

Oh, and turf pros remain some of the more centered and resilient people on the planet.

"I hope people consider what they learned last year as a positive," says Ryan Cummings, superintendent at Elcona Country Club in Bristol, Indiana. "The last couple years, I tried to shrug things off. Yeah, 2020 was a pain in the rear, it was different, but I'm a much stronger golf course superintendent and manager than I was 12 months ago."

Celebrate all the successes — essential and otherwise.

Matt LaWell is Golf Course Industry's managing editor.

2021



GOLF IS FOR EVERYBODY

Public courses provided a (sometimes literal) lifeline during an unprecedented year.

Who could have imagined that a global pandemic would provide public and municipal golf with its biggest boom since Tiger Woods first donned his Sunday red?

During a year filled with so much national and worldwide pain, calendars shuffled and plans snuffed, public courses became a safe place to spend two or four or six hours and just breathe. And if even a fraction of the folks who came out for the first time in years — or the first time ever — come back out in 2021, this could be the start of an upward trend for the game.

The numbers are staggering.

Among the 174 State of the Industry survey respondents who are superintendents or directors of agronomy at non-private facilities, 85 percent say rounds played increased last year over 2019 — and 51 percent say they expect more rounds in 2021 than during the robust 2020. 65 percent say their facility was profitable and another 16 percent say they broke even. Nearly 56 percent generated enough on-course revenue to offset food and beverage and events losses. And chew on this one for an extra second or two: The average

projected non-capital operations budget is up 45 percent at non-private facilities — \$801,139, for the record — over the projected budget reported in our 2020 survey. All this after losing an average of almost 25 revenue-producing days at the start of the pandemic.

"It was a nice shot in the arm," says Sean McHugh, the executive director of golf operations at the Cleveland Metroparks, which operates eight Northeast Ohio courses. The Metroparks handled about 398,000 rounds in 2020, up about 34 percent over 2019. "I got recruited here in '97, so I hit the tail end of the boom. These numbers are better than we had then."

Unlike more courses than not, the Metroparks' octet never closed — they are considered part of a 23,000-acre public park, which Ohio Governor Mike DeWine kept open for general recreation — and welcomed waiting golfers "from the time we were cutting the cups until dark," McHugh says.

Up north, in Arcadia, Michigan, Arcadia Bluffs Golf Club director of agronomy Jim Bluck did weather a shutdown, which afforded him extra time to improve the course. "With fewer people in here," Bluck says, "we were able to rebuild a number of our sidewall bunkers without

play hindering us, we resodded a lot of areas, just spruced things up and put some shiny touches across the property."

Bluck says rounds still increased 11 percent on the original Bluffs Course and about 8.5 percent on the South Course. "If we had more daylight, we probably would have been up 50 percent," he says. "We had a waiting list almost every day."

Bluck called 2020 "one of the toughest years I've ever had." He hired a new superintendent and two new assistant superintendents in less than six months just before the start of the pandemic, which led to a significant learning curve. More than 300 feet of eroding shoreline along Lake Michigan also sparked the creation, with the help of shaper Jimmy Kleinschmidt, of a new golf hole at the peak of summer.

His peers were equally stressed. By May, he says, "some of the most seasoned veteran superintendents I know were looking forward to blowout in November. Everybody had their own situation to deal with, but everybody was really tired. It was as much mental as it was physical."

Second-generation superintendent Scott Schurman of LaFortune Park Golf Club in

Tulsa, Oklahoma, stepped back and slowed down some. He even brought his middle-school-aged son to the course more often — to play, not to help out on maintenance.

"It was nice to be with him out on the golf course more," Schurman says. "It reminded me of when my brother and I were young. We were able to go out and play whenever we wanted to, and then I started working for my Dad when I was, I think, 14."

LaFortune Park closed for five weeks, from late March through the end of April. "The first few days we were closed, it was weird not seeing any golfers, and then it was pretty cool," Schurman says. "We were getting things done, turf density in the fairways was probably the best we had seen in who knows how many years, no cart traffic, we were able to get tees aerified, really play catch-up, temps were perfect. The golf course kind of needed a break. Since we opened back up, we've been very, very busy. I don't want to say it's been chaos, but our rounds for the year, these are numbers we haven't seen since the '80s."

Some day, maybe 2020 numbers will provide the standard.

— Matt LaWell



SUPERINTENDENT
R·A·D·I·O N·E·T·W·O·R·K

TUNE IN TO GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY'S PODCAST SERIES

TARTAN TALKS

Guests from the American Society of Golf Course Architects discuss their career paths, current and past work, design trends, and how they work with superintendents and operators to improve the functionality, playability and marketability of golf courses.

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GOLF COURSE

beyond
the page



A conversation that expands the scope of a story from the most recent issue of *Golf Course Industry*, including a chat with one of our columnists on their latest work

GOLF COURSE

OFF
THE
COURSE

Candid conversations with superintendents, directors and other industry professionals about anything and everything other than their work. Episodes focus on physical and mental health, outside interests, family, and the constant pursuit of life-work balance among other topics.

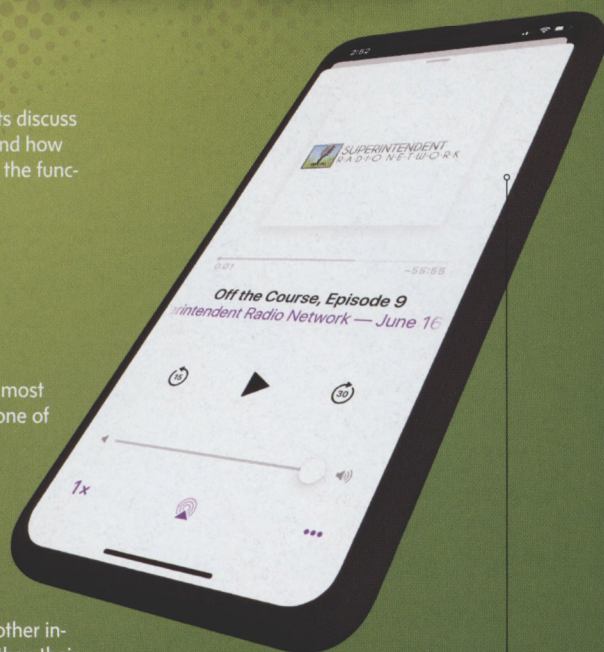
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GOLF COURSE

GREENS WITH
ENVY

Editors Guy Cipriano and Matt LaWell discuss the many (many, many, many) courses they've visited during the last month. Guy brings the decades of play and maintenance; Matt brings the fresh perspective of a hack golfer who appreciates the beauty of courses and the work required.



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Break on through

By Matt LaWell

DESPITE COURSES SHUTTING DOWN FOR WEEKS OR EVEN MONTHS EARLY DURING THE PANDEMIC, **ROUNDS PLAYED INCREASED MORE THAN 13 PERCENT IN 2020. WHAT CAN THE INDUSTRY DO TO HOLD ON TO THESE NEW GOLFERS?**

Golf courses, much like space and time, are a construct. We might glance at our scorecards or tee signs to check distances and pars, but there are no real boundaries. Each course can be whatever we

want it to be.

Just ask Forrest Richardson.

"The game played 500 years ago, 400 years ago, 300 years ago and even 200 years ago didn't look anything at all like today's game," says Richardson, owner of Forrest Richardson & Associates and the

current president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. "Think for a minute that all the way up to the 1800s, there was no term *golf course*. It didn't exist. There were no set number of holes. There weren't any such things as fairways or greens, just holes dug

Rounds played in 2020 vs. 2019

	All	Non-private	Private	Northeast	Southeast	Central	West
Increased	89%	85%	92%	90%	77%	93%	85%
Stayed the same	3%	5%	2%	2%	8%	2%	4%
Decreased	8%	10%	6%	8%	15%	5%	11%

Rounds increase in 2020

All	Non-private	Private	Northeast	Southeast	Central	West
24%	21%	27%	25%	21%	24%	22%

in the ground. People started here or there. Holes could be 700 yards or 200 yards or 100 yards, and you could play till you quit or till the match was over. You might play 30 holes or 20 holes or eight holes.

“And the next day, a new band of people would come out and play a totally different route.”

The evolution of golf and the development of golf courses and their accompanying economies are welcome, but this current environment will not be permanent. There will be more change, and there is no time like the pandemic present to embrace it.

“In today’s world, where things move faster, my encouragement is that the game might make a leap even quicker to new things,” Richardson says. “Not to get rid of tradition, but there might be new ways to enjoy the game.”

The game might have never leaped forward more quickly than it did during 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic sparked first lobbying, then adaptation from coast to coast. Three-quarters of respondents to our State of the Industry survey were forced to close at some point during the pandemic — 32 percent reported losing at least a month’s worth of potential revenue-producing days, and the mean and median

closures were 22.5 days and 16.9 days, respectively — but the ideas that sprouted up and helped make courses recreational safe havens saved plenty of seasons and perhaps even some clubs. Heck, more than half our respondents reported their facility earned enough revenue just from golf to cover losses from food, beverage and events.

Golf boomed during the pandemic. Rounds increased more than 13 percent year over year through the end of November and quarterly equipment sales topped \$1 billion from July through September — just the second time that figure has hit 10 digits and the first since right before the start of the Great Recession in 2008 — according to Golf Datatech. Rounds played last year decreased at only 8 percent of courses, according to our survey results, and among those courses that reported an increase, 56 percent said their jump was at least 20 percent.

THE TASTER PORTION

What can the industry do to hang on to all those new golfers, and to keep those existing golfers who visited the course more frequently during 2020 coming back just as often?

Consider what Jan Bel Jan calls “the taster portion.”

“Some of the golf facilities that

have been most successful are the ones who have made decisions in the last four or five years to add forward tees, to create short-game areas, to create short courses or even a short golf course inside the practice range, who decided that family events were a good thing,

Did your course earn enough golf revenue to overcome 2020 losses in F&B and events?



Yes



No



Not sure

Potential days of 2020 revenue lost because of COVID-19 closures

All	Non-private	Private	Northeast	Southeast	Central	West
22.5	24.9	19.6	33.5	13.6	18.6	24.8



and who decided to make the golf facility not just family-friendly but child-friendly — and when you make anything child-friendly you make it community-friendly,” says Bel Jan, owner of Jan Bel Jan Golf Course Design and the immediate past president of the ASGCA. “That goes a long way to people inviting a friend and engaging them in the game.”

Bel Jan and Richardson partnered in October to deliver a tremendous webinar on just that topic for PGA Show Connects, the virtual platform for the annual event, that is archived online. Watching or listening to “Where Do We Put All These New Golfers: Master Planning for the Present and Future” will be an hour well spent for anyone interested in the continued growth of the game.

“All the things we have been talking about for the last 15 years are very important,” Richardson says. “Flexible loops within golf courses — go play six holes, go play nine holes, go play 12 holes, pay

by the golf hole — shorter courses, practice venues. The same holds true that if someone has more flexible time, they have more time to practice. If we’re getting more people to the course and our rounds are up, then our practice facilities need to be larger to accommodate more people. And I’ve always been an advocate for short courses.”

“There’s something to be said for the short courses, the nine-hole courses,” says Troon COO Bruce Glasco, whose company currently provides golf management services at nearly 600 locations and for more than 630 18-hole equivalent courses around the world. “There’s something to be said for the entertainment centers that got some kids to swing a club for the first time.”

Glasco cited Troon’s internal exit surveys when mentioning that, “10 or 15 years ago, golfers were more infatuated with the rankings of the courses and Augusta-type conditioning. The new generation of golfers is more concerned with who they’re playing with and the people they surround themselves with. It’s more about the experience. People like to be connected, and golf is one of those connectors. It allows you to put your phone down and spend a couple hours with friends. You can get some really valuable exercise, clear your head.

“There is just nothing like it. There is nothing like the game of golf. That’s why I remain so bullish on the future.”

EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD

And what about the future? 42 percent of our survey respondents said they expect another increase in

Forced 2020 reductions in response to COVID-19



Labor	58%
Hard goods purchases	38%
Soft goods purchases	36%
Employee salary and benefits	19%
No reductions	32%

rounds played at their facility this year, and another 43 percent said they expect the count to remain about the same.

Men still provide the most significant growth opportunity, with 43 percent of respondents saying that men ages 19 to 39 are the most important demographic for growth at their facility. Another 22 percent said men 40 and older are the most important demographic. Despite increased play by women and families last year, women 19 to 39 (15 percent), women 40 and older (10 percent) and children 18 and younger (9 percent) were all lower on the list.

“Across the board, all of those groups are important,” Kemper Sports CEO Steven Skinner says. “I do think there were a lot more women and families playing this year, and that was one of the more gratifying things to see this summer. But the biggest gap we had was



Percentage of staff laid off or furloughed because of COVID-19 in 2020

None	54%
1% to 25%	25%
26% to 50%	12%
51% to 75%	6%
More than 75%	3%

PRIVATE PARTY

Rounds increased at private facilities, too, but are those numbers sustainable?

First, the good news for private golf facilities. Among the 144 State of the Industry survey respondents who are superintendents or directors of agronomy at private facilities, 51 percent say their facility was profitable in 2020 and another 24 percent report that they broke even. Almost 60 percent did not need to lay off or furlough a single employee at any point during the pandemic. The projected operating budget for 2021 is more than \$1.25 million and 72 percent say they expect that figure to jump. Oh, and play increased at a whopping 92 percent of private facilities.

There are some more sobering numbers, though. Yes, 51 percent of private facilities were profitable, but so were 58 percent of non-private facilities, in large thanks to less reliance on — and loss from — food and beverage and events. (Only 48 percent say their facility earned enough from golf to overcome those F&B and events losses.) That \$1.25 million projected operating budget actually represents a 4 percent drop from our 2020 survey results. And only 31 percent say they expect more rounds in 2021, compared to 21.0 percent who expect a decrease.

"The changes in food and business got people more focused on a

blocking-and-tackling-type mentality with scaled-back menus," Troon COO Bruce Glasco says. "Many clubs traditionally overstaff food and beverage, so this was an opportunity to rightsize some of those levels that previously did not make sense economically. We've seen operations get leaner, get smarter and get more efficient through this process."

"The private clubs did fine," KemperSports CEO Steven Skinner says, "but they didn't do as well as previous years because they couldn't overcome that food and beverage (drop)."

All things considered, though, "It was a banner year for golf," says Ross Miller, superintendent at the Country Club of Detroit in Grosse Pointe Falls, Michigan. Back in the spring, Miller says he and his club's leadership "knew we were going to have about a \$3 million shortfall in projected revenue, and we were OK with that. Our core guiding principle was serving our membership. We had a moral and service-based responsibility to our members to serve them."

The pandemic provided an opportunity to establish even more of a "sense of exclusivity," Miller says. Tee time intervals stretched from 10 minutes to 15, a switch that might remain permanent, and pace of play increased — the average round is

now between 3:35 and 3:40, buoyed by 85 percent of all rounds being walking.

"We took a breath," Miller says. "We weren't reactive." Club leadership approached the lockdown almost analytically, looking at it as an opportunity to figure out what could be better, what could be more efficient and, with an emphasis on service over profit, still ended the year almost \$1 million in the black. The 2021 U.S. Senior Amateur awaits starting Aug. 28.

Ryan Cummings experienced a challenging and ultimately rewarding year, too. The superintendent at Elcona Country Club in Bristol, Indiana, Cummings worked alongside director of golf and club operations Tom Thome — and *only* Thome — for about two weeks early during the pandemic after sending his older crew home as a precaution to quell community spread.

"I don't know if we would have been able to start out like we did without his willingness," Cummings says. "We always ask each other, 'What do you need? Do you need help?' and he was not afraid to reach out." Thome had no significant turf background, though he did grow up on a farm in Michigan, "and he likes to tell you that," Cummings says with a laugh. "Now he can

Rounds at Private courses UP 27%

he can triplex fairways, he even ribs me about my lines. He's an honorary turfhead."

Cummings normally works with a crew of 18 and was at 15 or 16 for much of last season. "I was very fortunate to be able to bring back most of my staff," he says. "I know a lot of guys and gals weren't able to do that." He counted a little more than 17,000 rounds played, about a 30 percent jump from 2019, and led a full bunker renovation that wrapped up during the fall, and "we're going to market the heck out of that." He also brought in two new assistants: Adam Morr in May and Austin Dance the first week of this year.

"This year was like getting punched in the face," Cummings says, "and then getting right back up."

— Matt LaWell

19 to 39, or however you define the millennial generation, because they weren't playing."

Skinner acknowledges he might be biased because his own children — Jack, 23, and Caroline, 21 — both started to play more last summer.

"We probably played 10 or 15 times this summer. We might have done that once before when they were 10 or 12," says Skinner, who also played regular late-afternoon or early-evening nine-hole loops with his wife, Anne, throughout

last summer. "Sometimes it takes that immersion into the game to get that bug. It's fun to see and it's one of the best things about the game."

Women are a focus group for facilities around the country.

"When I look around our proper-

Ability to find and retain labor in 2020 vs. 2019

Significantly better 3%	Better 18%	The same 49%	Worse 22%	Significantly worse 8%
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Does your facility offer any of the following benefits to full-time employees?

Golf privileges	88%
Medical and dental	74%
Uniforms	62%
Retirement	55%
Continuing education opportunities	52%
Meals	37%
Housing	2%
None of the above	5%

ties, it's 90, 95 percent men," says Sean McHugh, executive director of golf operations for the Cleveland Metroparks' eight Northeast Ohio courses. "We've been trying to get women golfers to feel more comfortable for years. The other group is the younger generation. You have to grab them when they're young and get them interested in the game. They may not stay with you the whole time, but I think they'll come back to you eventually."

Bel Jan, only the second woman to

serve as ASGCA president after the late Alice Dye, recognizes important grassroots programs that have helped grow the game among women and younger golfers.

"Some of them have just been stellar," she says, listing Operation 36, LPGA*USGA Girls Golf, PGA Jr. League and First Tee. "When you start seeing that 35 percent of the junior golfers are girls, and 10 years ago that number was 17 percent, that's pretty remarkable."

"Golf courses do bring something to the entire community even if only—only—10 percent of the community plays golf."

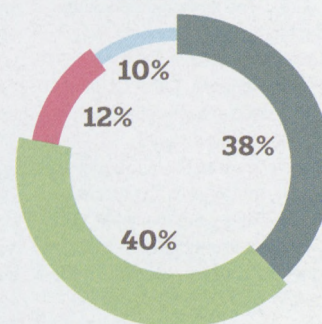
But how many in that community play baseball or softball, or go bowling, or play tennis? To be able to understand that golf courses are contributing to the society and the environment is pretty important."

In 2016, Bel Jan was at work on a course renovation in Naples, Florida that included the addition of forward tees—what she calls "scoring tees," a term that is gender-, age- and skill-neutral.

"It took me a long time to come up

with that name," she says. "They're not ladies' tees. They're not fast tees." Why call forward tees "fast tees" when that term might put more pressure on, say, a 36-handicapper? "Golfers might say, 'I can't play fast so I won't play at all,'" but

Outlook on your facility's financial future



■ Very optimistic
■ Slightly optimistic
■ Unconcerned
■ Slightly pessimistic
■ Very pessimistic 0%

EMPTY ROOMS

Travel restrictions left destination and resort courses searching for alternatives to fill tee sheets.

For all the successes—financial, agronomic, expansion and beyond—at public and private facilities across the country, resorts and destinations represented the one sector of the industry that struggled during an otherwise unforgettable year.

That might not be a surprise considering the restrictions placed on travel and annual buddy trips turning into socially-distanced backyard cookouts at best, but it still stings.

"Our numbers were pretty flat," says Chris Cooper, the head golf professional at Tidewater Golf Club in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. "On March 9, all of our

spring golf was canceled and all of the 30-day restrictions were put in place. All of our golf was gone. We had to accept that all our spring travel golf just wasn't coming."

And, go figure, "the course conditions going into the spring were phenomenal," says Shaun Donahue, who works alongside Cooper as the Tidewater superintendent. "We had a mild winter, we had covered our greens on real cold nights, we did everything we needed to do and the course was showing the results of that. We were expecting a bang-up year."

Instead, Cooper and Donahue say, they switched their focus

as quickly as possible and, with out-of-towners out of play, targeted local golfers to fill tee sheets. "Fortunately," Cooper says, "we have quite a local following."

After an almost-totally-lost spring, Tidewater rebounded with a packed summer season and a fall that was down only about 15 percent. Early projections for this spring are down only about 20 percent and the fall, perhaps thanks to the projected vaccination of hundreds of millions of Americans, is actually up about 10 percent.

Elsewhere in Myrtle Beach, Steve Mays, the president of Founders Group International,

which owns and manages 21 area courses, also praises local golfers for spurring the tourist-dependent market.

"Our local golfers and our members were out playing a tremendous amount of golf," says Mays, whose own 2020 golfing doubled to 24 rounds and ended with him putting an end to a decade of the chipping yips. "We did have people travel in, but not in the numbers they normally would. Travel haunted us throughout the year, but we were saved in some respects by the amount of golf our area and member golfers were playing."

Mays also projects "a soft

What demographic presents the biggest growth area for your facility?

Children 18 and younger



9%

Women 19-39



15%

Women 40 and older



11%

Men 19-39



43%

Men 40 and older



22%

everybody, Bel Jan says, wants to learn how to score — pars, birdies, maybe even an eagle here and there.

Forward or scoring tees can also encourage golfers with physical or mental challenges, Bel Jan says. She remembers a player at that Naples club who wore leg braces and had to drive a cart to every edge of the course to play. “The course was 5,100 yards and it was too long for him,” she says. “So he left the club and took a membership at a par 3 course. The guys he played with three or four times a week continued as a threesome.”

The green committee chair announced the addition of those new “scoring tees” that measured around 4,100 yards, “and he came back,” Bel Jan says. “He was there playing as a member. He wasn’t a member with a disability. He was a member. And that’s important. What you’re going to see, what I’ve been working on for 10, 15 years, is that people with disabilities are potential customers,

Top 3 anticipated challenges in 2021

Labor	54%
Handling COVID-19 interruptions	39%
Weather	34%
Meeting course conditioning expectations	33%
Funding capital improvements	31%
Finances	23%
Making up for lost F&B revenue	17%
Employee customer/safety	16%
Customer/member retention	13%
Paying off debt	8%

spring,” but says that pent-up demand could spark a rapid recovery “because of our driving proximity to markets up and down the coast. It’s about being patient and trying to just wait and see what transpires over the next 60 to 90 days.”

Two time zones away, the golf courses at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs remained closed into early summer. But once the course opened for members in June and resort guests in early July, “it was like opening the floodgates,” superintendent Fred Dickman says.

Designed by Donald Ross, and Robert Trent Jones Sr., the

esteemed resort’s East and West courses remained popular even as the 784 rooms stayed far emptier than any year in memory.

“All through April and May, the greens and the more finely-maintained areas weren’t on their regular program,” Dickman says. “Typically, we’re walk-mowing and rolling greens every day, and we were just bringing the triplexes out and not rolling. You can’t just flip a switch and everything will be perfect. It took two or three weeks once we opened just to get everything to where we normally are.”

Just as significant a challenge was the inability to bring in

veteran seasonal employees from Jamaica — some of whom have worked for the resort April through Thanksgiving for decades on H-2B visas.

“We do have a fulltime, year-round crew of guys,” Dickman says, “but when we couldn’t get our seasonal crew, we had to go out and hire people. We never could get ramped up. And there are still so many unknowns. We’re applying for H-2Bs, but we just don’t know right now. In a good year, you don’t know if you’re going to get the visas and now it’s just another question mark.”

Troon COO Bruce Glasco estimates that among the nearly

600 golf facilities the company manages around the globe, fewer than 10 were forced to shut down temporarily to weather the proverbial storm — all of them resort or destination facilities, and not all of them necessarily in the United States.

Glasco expresses a cautious enthusiasm that our world in general can emerge from the pandemic restrictions at some point in the second quarter. Group travel won’t come back as quickly, he says, “but we’re hearing from the right people that the industry is moving forward.”

— Matt LaWell

Which of the following do you think will help attract more golfers

Faster play
52%

Improved customer service
40%

Instructional programs for younger and new golfers
39%

Expanded practice and short-game areas
34%

Wide variety of play options
29%

Easier booking procedures
29%

Enhanced clubhouse facilities
26%

Topgolf and similar facilities
8%

Other
6%

Other responses included: More tee options, lower price, course renovations and enhancements

and they're a significant group of potential customers. ... This is a trend I believe you'll see."

The potential audience for the game is only as limited as we think it is.

"It's up to us as operators to make sure we keep those individuals engaged and excited about the sport so it becomes a generational sport for families," Glasco says. "We're so fortunate we can play from age 6 to age 100, and when we're passionate about it, we can pass it on and it can become a generational gift."

"That's what golf is about, being out with your son or your daughter, playing the game, passing down your love for the game to another generation," says Steve Mays, president of Founders Group International, which owns and manages 21 courses in and around Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. "The biggest thing is just to focus in on the fun of the game. It's not so much about dress code, about that image. It's just fun. It's good exercise, it's good to be outside, it's a constructive hobby. We just need to keep that momentum going."

NOW STREAMING

In addition to his public work, Richardson is the father of Haley Lu Richardson, a young actress with more than a dozen movies on her resume, including *The Edge of Seventeen*, in which she starred alongside Woody Harrelson, Kyra Sedgwick and Hailee Steinfeld, and *Five Feet Apart*, a love story that cast her at a pre-pandemic social distance from her fellow Disney Channel alum Cole Sprouse. Richardson is tuned in to Hollywood thanks to his daughter and the trends he sees there might work for golf.

"You see millions and millions of dollars being invested in Netflix or Amazon Prime miniseries," he says, "and there's a reason for that. People can watch them in increments. Some people have an hour, some

How would you rate the overall health of the golf industry compared with this time last year



Expected rounds in 2021 compared with 2020

	All	Non-private	Private
21% or more increase	1%	1%	1%
11% to 20% increase	14%	17%	10%
1% to 10% increase	27%	33%	20%
The same	42%	38%	48%
1% to 10% decrease	13%	9%	17%
11% or more decrease	3%	2%	4%

people have six or seven hours. Golf is going to continue to realize we need to offer our commodity in different sizes to meet different types of players and what they're looking for.

"Time is one of the most precious commodities golf course architects can give people. We're not supposed to provide a golf course that beats you up and keeps you out there for five hours. As Bill Yates, the pace-of-play guru, said, the golf course architect determines how much time you spend on the golf course. We need courses that aren't as long and don't take as much time — and we've needed these things for 15 years or more, but now would

SOI continues on page 52

Q&A WITH THE EXPERT



Q&A WITH AARON HATHAWAY

Technical Services Manager, Turf & Ornamental, Nufarm

Questions regarding naturalized areas or reduced input areas don't only cover how to increase aesthetic quality or increase playability but how to accomplish these things with the fewest inputs as possible. This means thinking about the relative cost of inputs, the time it takes to provide an input, and which inputs are worth that time and money. In the end, the goal is to provide the beauty of contrasting tan colors and inflorescence in the summer with few inputs. However, success will be accomplished by developing a plan to include the most necessary inputs.

1 Which inputs are most important in naturalized areas?

Because these areas aren't mowed regularly, weeds can get out of hand quickly. Herbicide applications are the most important input to maintain pure stands of whatever was established. When perennial weeds with vast networks of vegetative reproductive parts, like common milkweed and Canada thistle, are left untreated they get stronger and multiply quickly. Turf managers should make time to treat these areas at least once per year; it won't make a huge difference whether it is in the spring when weeds wake up or in the fall as

they prepare for winter – consistency is key because weed pressure is constant.

2 Which herbicides will be most valuable in naturalized areas?

Millennium Ultra® 2 is a broad-spectrum herbicide that consistently provides great broadleaf weed control on golf courses, including in naturalized areas. Some weeds emerge late and some areas have high weed pressure and require some spot treatments mid-season. Sure Power® will burn-down these weeds quickly and provides activity on a range of mid-season weeds including broadleaves, annual grasses, and many sedges. Those who have established these areas with fine fescues have a huge advantage when it comes to control of perennial grasses – sethoxydim and fluazifop can be applied over the top of fine fescue species to provide selective control of many perennial grassy weeds like quackgrass, reed canarygrass, etc.

3 How are naturalized areas established around in-play areas?

At establishment, seeding grasses at a low rate is key. A playable naturalized area may have 1 large plant per 1 square foot of area. This is a huge difference from the hundreds or thousands of

grass plants in the same area mowed from 0.125 – 4 inches, and may call for a vast departure from what we are used to. Accomplishing such a sparse stand of plants is easier said than done, but here are some tips:

1. Choose plant species that are clump-forming and won't spread via stolons, rhizomes, or other vegetative structures into open voids. If you are seeding fine fescue species, this may include hard and sheep fescues versus creeping red fescues.
2. Decrease your seeding rate. For fine fescues, 10 lbs of seed per acre, or even less, may be sufficient. Set up a few test plots and compare a few low rates so you become comfortable with rates much lower than commonly used.
3. Add some annual ryegrass to the mix to provide some quick cover and competition for your desired species – this is a good way to ensure a thinner stand.

4 How can established naturalized areas be thinned to increase playability?

Once these areas are established, they become much more difficult to thin out, so starting thin is key. These options for stand thinning should be tested as research in small areas as they are few and inconclusive.

Keeping these areas thin will help increase plant aesthetics because they aren't competing as much with each other, but thin stands increase the likelihood of weed infiltration, so, again, weed control is key.

1. Use PGRs. There is anecdotal evidence of superintendents using PGRs such as trinexapac-ethyl and prohexadione-Ca (Anuew™) to thin stands, but little conclusive research. PGRs are used in grass seed production fields to reduce lodging (plants falling over) and increase seed production, but not necessarily to thin turf stands.
2. Use preemergence herbicides. Because naturalized areas produce seed each and every year, a huge amount of seed is being added to the soil seed bank. If these seeds are allowed to germinate and recruit, they may increase density over time. A preemergence herbicide application may limit survival.
3. Nonselective herbicides like glyphosate or glufosinate (Cheetah® Pro) could possibly be used in creative ways to thin out naturalized areas. Perhaps a boom sprayer could be used with every other nozzle turned off and a random pattern through the areas. This may seem like an odd method, but it would get the job done quickly.



Be Thankful for what you have

Ever take working in the United States turf industry for granted? You won't after learning the plight of a determined agronomist from a nation with little golf infrastructure.

By **Raul lurk**

While seated in Starbucks, one of my favorite places in the United States, I realized that my desired career in the American turf industry was about to end prematurely. I had just left an appointment with an immigration attorney knowing I would no longer be permitted to continue working in the industry I learned to love. The attorney, frostily, like a doctor communicates a bad disease, told me that my profile did not fit any of the available visa types. He strongly encouraged me to take a step back and leave my dreams when my legal authorization expired. It felt bad, like a punch right in the stomach.

Immediately, I started looking back on everything I did until that day and the bad feeling was just getting worse. During the last seven years of my life, I lived and breathed turf 24 hours a day, dreaming one day I'd become a golf course superintendent. From my humble start at a small club in Brazil in 2013 to my last day at famed Merion Golf Club in 2019, I had lived an intense experience filled with lots of good memories, true self-determination and personal sacrifice.

Golf was always a passion of mine and I have been playing it for a long time. But it wasn't until 2013 that I had my first contact with golf course maintenance. Like many others in this business, I accidentally ended up working

at a small golf club located in my hometown in southern Brazil. With a business background, I was hired to assist in finances. As the work progressed, I was doing a little bit of everything, from customer service to tournament organization and eventually agronomics. This is not how it's supposed to be in an organized work environment. Unfortunately, it is how things are for many clubs in Brazil. This experience immediately sparked a passion for golf course maintenance and working outdoors. More important, it introduced me to a whole new industry and the discovery of a new profession: the golf course superintendent occupation. The advent of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio boosted my desire even more and brought high expectations it could bring advancements to the local turf industry. Suddenly, I was seriously considering a career switch to prepare myself for this promising future.

It was clear I would need to start with a solid education, so I realized I needed to enroll in an American turf program. It was a very tough decision for several reasons based on my profile:

- I'm in my mid-30s, a difficult age to start something from scratch.
- Portuguese is my native language, and it could be a barrier.
- As a Latin American native, I wasn't sure how I would be accepted and if it could impact career advancements.
- I'm married. I would need to leave my wife back in Brazil to complete a good preparation.

◀ Raul lurk, shown during an internship at Carmel Country Club in Charlotte, North Carolina, relished everything about his turf education and experience in the United States.



- Lastly, it would be a big investment, especially considering an American dollar is worth six Brazilian reals.

The odds were against me, but I decided to face the risks and pursue my dream, knowing that if I didn't succeed in the United States, I could obtain a strong education capable of leading me to a solid occupation in my local industry. To increase my chances of success, I had to give it my best. I started my preparation early by improving my English skills at night and working during the day at the club. You can't find technical vocabulary for turf at any English school, so my personal method was early purchases of books recommended by my future Penn State advisor, Dr. John Kaminski.

It's hard now to imagine that two years ago I concluded the Golf Course Turfgrass Management Program at Penn State University. It was by far the best professional education of my life. The fact that I was not successful in my previous academic attempts made me a frustrated and unconfident person.

Through the program, I received a second chance to make things right and overcome many issues. The fact that I was studying turf, a subject I really loved, made things enjoyable and my dedication was growing every day. I earned a respectable GPA, collected scholarships, developed a network and even joined a champion Sports Turf Managers Association student challenge team. Suddenly, like taking a medicine for a headache, those bad memories from the past about academic performance were over. I'm proud of becoming the first South American graduate of the Penn State program.

In 2017, I accepted an internship at Carmel Country Club in Charlotte, North Carolina, working for director of greens and grounds Brannon Goodrich. His mentorship resulted in an internship exceeding all expectations. He split me between two golf courses, providing an opportunity to work with warm- and cool-season grasses, and involved me in every part of the agronomic process. I was also required to participate in meetings and watch

boardroom presentations.

On one special occasion, I received a radio call asking me to show up in the office. Brannon wanted me to meet legendary USGA Green Section agronomist Patrick O'Brien, who was visiting Carmel for a consulting visit and bunker evaluation. Brannon had me shadow and assist Patrick throughout the visit. Suddenly, I was having a full day with an experienced USGA agronomist and learned plenty from our interaction, including the dynamics surrounding debates about bunker playability and conditions.

Merion represented my final job in the United States. The experience at such a historic facility, although much shorter than expected, was unforgettable. I arrived at Merion as an assistant-in-training to reinforce East Course superintendent Patrick Haughey's team during the final phase of a major restoration. It was a hot summer and my primary job involved moisture management on bentgrass areas. On one summer day, I was watering hot spots on the

▼ Raul Iurk's final job before leaving the United States was at famed Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pennsylvania.



sixth fairway and, suddenly, director of grounds operations Paul B. Latshaw stopped by for a personal inspection. He gently asked for the hose and watered the areas by himself while showing me hidden dry spots and how he likes things to be done. At one point, I asked him about moisture and diseases relation. He looked at me and said, "Son, at this time of the year, in order to have diseases, we will need to have grass first!" I still carry that lesson in the back of my mind about priorities.

Collecting wicker baskets—which Merion uses in place of flags—during the "Golden Hour" at the end of the day was another incredible memory. What I would now give to have another look at that course.

As I was gaining on-course experience, I continued my education through various programs and opportunities offered to ambitious turf managers. I participated in the GCSAA's assistant superintendent certification program, attended the 2019 Green Start Academy and volunteered at a pair of PGA Tour events. These experiences forged my turf DNA.

Being disconnected from this industry and struggling to find opportunities back home in Brazil proved difficult. Having success and then seeing it stopped because of legal authorization could have easily resulted in "poor me" syndrome. But I prefer to use the time to rethink and try to backtrack possible mistakes.

For starters, my back-up plan

was an enormous pitfall. The strong preparation did not lead to a great occupation at home. Even with the Olympics, the local turf industry did not evolve. Brazil has 117 courses. The number hasn't changed since 2016. We still don't have a public golf course. High-priced memberships and green-fee taxes are the rule and a major impediment to expanding the game. In such a restricted market, a solid turf industry can't flourish, thus comprising the future. Lack of work organization, certified professionals, associations and a legislated herbicide market are just some of the obstacles. I prepared myself to the highest level for an industry that has yet to emerge.

Because work advertisement is non-existent and the industry is very limited, looking for jobs can be a hard task. You literally need to knock on the club's door. I did it a couple of times and it was a frustrating experience. I started with the Olympic Golf Course, the place that once motivated me to seek professional development. They never granted a professional interview.

It came to my attention that the superintendent had left and the assistant was in an indefinite extended medical situation. Confident of my background, I reached out to them and made myself available. They replied with little enthusiasm. I wasn't considered for a position. In another job interview, after a huge wait following my first call, I was offered a superintendent job at the salary of US \$1,200 and under the condition I put aside the agronomic plan I traced for the course to follow the agronomic approach of a board member. This is just one example of the disrespectful practices in the Brazilian golf market.

The much-deserved respect and professional recognition is one of the reasons why I love the United States turf industry and hold it in such high regard. Also, if you are struggling, you have associations and a huge extended network of turf people willing to help you. This is also the same reason why I get sad seeing people take their jobs

for granted. Many forget the benefits of an organized industry and how chaotic it can be without it. For me, just the fact you can open a professional website and choose between hundreds of job opportunities is a blessing.

I had a few misconceptions about my ability to succeed in the industry, beginning with age, nationality and language. I also arrived in the United States thinking the industry was saturated with talent. Conversely, many things were different. The industry had numerous opportunities available in all levels of the hierarchy and work organization. Plus, all the places I worked were inclusive. I saw a lot of people also in their mid-30s who had switched careers. That was a big motivator. My English also improved tremendously by the end of the program.

But I was late to the game. If I really wanted to develop a career in United States, I needed to prepare around my immigration process, as it was the most important thing to do immediately upon my arrival. The process is lengthy. There are many types of visas, and you should govern your decisions around their specifics. The system is hard to navigate even if you have professional assistance. Examples of visas available to those working in the turf industry include:

H-1B. This is the standard work visa. If you are planning to follow up with this type, you will be required to have at least a bachelor's degree. A turf certification won't work. Another important detail is making sure your home country is not on the restricted list. An employer sponsor is necessary for this type of visa.

H-2B: This is the seasonal visa. This visa is restricted to unskilled labor. Therefore, if you have a degree/certification or are already in a skilled occupation within any organization inside the United States, you will not be able to apply for this visa. An employer sponsor is also necessary.



► Raul Iurk, second from top left, quickly meshed with his Penn State classmates and remains in contact with many of them.

Green card through labor sponsor:

It is possible for any person regardless of nationality to get a green card (permanent residency) in the United States through the labor sponsor. The petition only can be placed by an employer requiring a labor certification process within the Department of Labor, proving the hiring will not impact labor availability. The overall process is extremely hard to navigate and it can take years to accomplish. If you are planning to navigate this option, be aware that you will burden your employer with monetary and time expenses and might not be a good approach for entry levels. Employers may pass along the costs through lower wages. With this petition, you will be tied to your employer until the process is completed. As a result, the



employer wields an enormous amount of power.

EB-1: This is a priority worker visa. You may be eligible for a green card if you are an alien with a special talent in the field, willing to work in the United States in your area of expertise and the work will benefit the country. No employer sponsor is needed. However, the criteria of special talent or extraordinary ability is hard to prove. It is required from the applicant to

match a certain number of criteria that can include awards, publications, professional memberships and involvement in the community. The good thing is that a solid educational program like Penn State can put you halfway there. I'm still trying to figure out more about this visa. Keep in mind the kind of club you are working for can be a huge factor when it comes to a labor sponsor. Large country clubs with numerous layers are more difficult to navi-

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gate whereas private clubs with a single-owner or limited membership facility can increase your chances of obtaining the proper visa.

Last year was very challenging for many people across the world to stay mentally healthy. For me, it just fed a permanent feeling of isolation through the removal from work imposed by immigration, leading me to symptoms of depression. To avoid an imminent mental collapse, I needed to find tools that could help me avoid this bad feeling and I was fortunate to find some. The virtual meeting format was highly beneficial for somebody in my situation. Events such as the Carolinas GCSA Conference and the Penn State Happy Hours provided opportunities to stay educated and

updated about industry happenings and, most important, they kept me connected to the professional network I developed. With more time available, I reconnected with the game of golf. I had forgotten how beneficial it can be to your state of mind.

I now find myself motivated with a new mindset. I overcame some of the frustrations with positive thoughts and a sense of thankfulness for everything I had accomplished so far. Also, I viewed my situation as a forced, not definitive, pause. This has motivated me to keep looking into the future.

I'm staying connected with the industry in a way that will prepare me for a strong return if something changes. I'm using extra free time to work on my European citizenship. If I succeed, I will explore the European market as

a method to accelerate my career. I'm also planning to expand my education with a bachelor's degree in turfgrass science. Obtaining a degree would help my immigration petitions and, perhaps, create an avenue for my return.

The United States turf industry is where I want to be. The industry is inclusive, friendly, boasts distinguished associative participation and is always on the cutting edge of turf technology. Sometimes people don't have the perspective to realize the industry's greatness. Rejoining it would be an honor. **GCI**

Raul Turk is native of Brazil who completed the two-year turfgrass management program at Penn State University. He's currently living in Europe as he navigates his way through the immigration process.



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Hurry up, *then learn to wait*

Well-traveled **Jordan Roberts** is just getting his turf career started and he's already playing a big part in a highly anticipated project. Thanks to patient bosses, his team will receive ample time to prepare the **East Course at PGA Frisco** for golfers.

By **Hal Phillips**



Jordan Roberts is on a fast track to the upper echelons of his profession. That much is clear. Just 25, the New Hampshire native and Penn State graduate is already the head golf course superintendent on the East Course at PGA Frisco, a high-profile Gil Hanse design at the heart of what the PGA of America is calling the “Modern Home of American Golf.”

Which is all sort of ironic. Because after rising so far, so fast, Roberts is looking after a golf course that is pretty darn playable right now — but won’t open for play until July 2022.

“Yeah, we have 16 holes pretty well grassed and complete,” says Roberts, noting how the course looked in November 2020. “We sprigged 14 and 16 fairway a bit later than we wanted, but they’re filling in well. Obviously, we have a long time before we open, but that presents a whole different type of management challenge. You don’t want to waste resources over that type of period.”

For example?

“The bunkers. You don’t want to rake them every day, just to rake them,” he adds. “So we do them once per week. We had a little algae bloom in there due to the high nitrates in our irrigation water. So we’re going through and touching them weekly, depth checking them, stirring up the faces, getting the sand turned over and promoting air flow to combat the algae. Maybe we’ll start getting a bit more hands-on come the summer of 2021. We’ll probably ramp things up to two or three times a week.”

At which point, the grand opening will be only 11 months away ...

The development schedule here is unique, like most everything else on this sprawling parcel, 40 miles north of Dallas. PGA Frisco stands to be the fanciest, most ambitious municipal facility in America: the city of Frisco owns both courses; the PGA of America has a long-term contract as the course operator. When it does finally open, the East Course will serve as centerpiece to a 36-hole, 600-acre, \$520 million mixed-use property that will serve as the PGA’s national headquarters. The West Course, designed by Beau Welling, is looked after by superintendent Kyle Bunny. Roberts and Bunny both report to Bryce Yates, the director of grounds and operations.

The development will eventually feature a massive practice area, a 100,000-square foot putting course, a 10-hole short course, and a 500-room,

Omni-branded resort. An adjacent 2,500 acres are slated for further development under a master plan from Hunt Realty.

The East Course underwent final grassing in September 2020. The course builder, Houston-based Heritage Links, was scheduled to complete all of its work by the close of 2020. Normally that would mean a 2021 debut. But the East course will not open until June 2022.

The obvious question is *Why?* Is this the mother of all COVID-19 precautions?

“No, no. The client wants an entire

day that we get the chance to create a golf course that we *know* will host multiple major championships and potentially a Ryder Cup. Opening in 2022 will allow us to get the details and conditioning exactly right.”

Eighteen months before opening, as many as 20 championships are already on the schedule, once amateur events are figured in. The Senior PGA Championship is set for PGA Frisco in 2023. The first of two PGA Championships arrives four years later. Two KPMG Women's PGA Championships are scheduled. And while The PGA of America has yet to announce

a Ryder Cup for north Texas (the first available slot is 2041), one can more or less take that commitment to the bank. There has even been speculation the AT&T Byron Nelson will move to Frisco once its five-year contract with the TPC Craig Ranch expires in 2025.

That's an unprecedented tournament schedule and Roberts has been handed an unprecedented amount of time to get it ready *and* gather an understanding of the soil, the water he'll be dealing with (which ain't great), and the management challenge inherent to being a cog in the one of the most ambitious golf operations ever undertaken on North American soil.

Roger Meier, senior director of golf maintenance operations for the PGA of America and PGA Frisco, put it best: “Championships are what we do,” Meier told the *Dallas Morning News* in October 2020. “But day in and day out this place is going to be pretty special. When you step onto this place in 2022, we want you to feel like it has been here forever.”

HUSTLING UP THE CAREER LADDER

Growing in Walpole, New Hampshire, Roberts had no conception that golf course operations could be so big. He played his golf at Hooper Golf Club, one of the finest 9-hole layouts in the world. He didn't know anything about the golf business at all, really. He worked for a landscape company while attending Fall Mountain Regional High School. He liked that pretty well, but didn't know anything about that industry either. One thing he was sure about: the idea of going to college right out of high school made no sense to him whatsoever.

But if you talk to Roberts, one thing becomes clear pretty fast. When he doesn't know something, he finds out who does, tracks that person down, identifies the information he needs, then sets about devouring it. About two months before he graduated from Fall Mountain, for example, he had a conversation with Riley Tewksbury, another Walpole kid who was doing the turf management program at Penn State University.

“That sounded interesting to me,” Roberts recalls. “So I got a hold of John Kaminski.”

That would be Dr. John Kaminski, director of the Golf Course Turfgrass Management Program at Penn State.

“He suggested that because I was new to the idea of golf course maintenance, why not consider an apprenticeship somewhere — a place where I could see what the job is about and gain some background knowledge and technique,” Roberts says. “He introduced me to Mark Kuhns at Baltusrol. So I graduated and went down a week later. I spent four months there and went straight to Penn State.” So began one of the swiftest ascents you're likely to find in turf circles. The Penn State turf management program requires a six-month internship, so Roberts did his at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, where he worked for Meier and Yates. After graduating from Penn State in 2015, he did another intern-



▲ Jordan Roberts, far right, has worked with numerous industry veterans, including, from left, Gil Hanse, Kerry Haigh and Roger Meier at PGA Frisco.

year—not to grow things in necessarily, but to fully establish the course, the maintenance practices and its tournament preparedness down to every last detail,” says Jon O'Donnell, president of Heritage Links, a division of Lexicon, Inc. “We've been involved in projects where the attitude was similar, but frankly those were very private clubs, in quite remote locations. This is essentially a resort project, in a major metropolitan area that has been very visible from the get-go. Everyone's eager to see it, to play it, to observe how it handles tournament play. But they're all going to have to wait.”

“It's a great luxury to be working a timeline like this one,” adds Hanse, the course architect. “But it's not every

ship — at Gozzer Ranch Golf & Lake Club in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho—before taking an assistant's position at Louisville Country Club under Ric Kehres. When a position opened at Valhalla, Meier and Yates called him back.

Mind you, in addition to these various assistant gigs and internships, Roberts was volunteering at tournament venues all over America: at Muirfield Village Golf Club during The Memorial, at Erin Hills for the U.S. Open, at Baltusrol and Valhalla for a pair of PGA Championships, at Victoria National Golf Club for a Web.com Tour stop, at Liberty National for the Barclays. Nevertheless, by 2019, Roberts felt as if he was “at a standstill.” “I had two more assistants above me at Valhalla—but a position opened up at Idle Hour Country Club in Lexington, so I did eight months there as lead assistant. But I stayed in touch with Roger about this PGA Frisco project. He thought I'd be a good candidate for one of the courses here and sure enough, I interviewed with Omni and Roger and accepted this position in April 2020. “I always had a pretty strong drive to get involved in construction — from growing up, and from being involved in so many projects at Valhalla and other places. Seeing how things go into place, having an understanding of what's underneath the surface — that just seems so important for a superin-

tendent to know. To be part of such a massive build as my first proper build and grow-in? What an opportunity.

“Working closely with Heritage Links during construction — with project managers Blake Smith and Augustin Sanchez — has been a true pleasure. The detail and passion these men and their crews bring to the job site day after day is incredible. The timelines the Hanse team gave Heritage Links were always aggressive, but they pulled it off every time. I mean, they are one reason we have so much time to grow in the golf course.”

MORE TIME TO LEARN THE GROWING TURF

The scale of the construction operation at PGA Frisco is difficult to put in context. According to Smith, the lead Heritage Links project manager in Frisco, “We averaged 90 trucks a day bringing in material—seven different types of aggregate material and 90,000 tons of sand capping materials for fairways alone. And that's just for the East Course.”

And while Hanse is perhaps the most in-demand architect on the planet, the East Course at PGA Frisco is new ground—what he calls a “ranch-style” design, something his firm has never before attempted.

“The property here reminded me a bit of Southern Hills — the topog-

“I always had a pretty strong drive to get involved in construction — from growing up, and from being involved in so many projects at Valhalla and other places. Seeing how things go into place, having an understanding of what's underneath the surface — that just seems so important for a superintendent to know. To be part of such a massive build as my first proper build and grow-in? What an opportunity.”

— Jordan Roberts

raphy, along with the creek so prominently featured,” says Hanse, citing his work on the 2030 PGA Championship site in Oklahoma. “Of course, Southern Hills is now surrounded by Tulsa. But when Perry Maxwell built it, Southern Hills probably looked a lot like our site in Frisco does today.

“This used to be a ranch, so we focused on that, along with what is some really interesting topography,

PGA Frisco

Owner: City of Frisco

Operator: PGA of America

Projected opening: 2022

Holes: 46

Senior director of golf maintenance operations: Roger Meier

Director of grounds and operations: Bryce Yates

East Course superintendent: Jordan Roberts

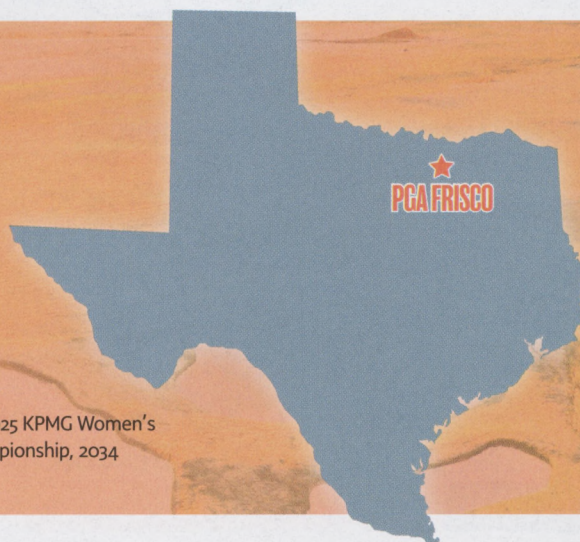
West Course superintendent: Kyle Bunny

East Course architect: Gil Hanse

West Course architect: Beau Welling

Golf course builder: Heritage Links

Confirmed major tournaments: 2023 KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship, 2025 KPMG Women's PGA Championship, 2027 PGA Championship, 2031 KPMG Women's PGA Championship, 2034 PGA Championship



► The East Course at PGA Frisco is scheduled to open for play in July 2022.

good rolling ground. But everything has been done in proportion to the broad expanses we're dealing with here. In that context the bunkers are the calling card, the most visible feature out there—and they are dramatic."

Those bunkers, with their once-a-week maintenance schedule, are the exceptions at this early stage. Most of the agronomic and logistical challenges are still being discovered and addressed. For example, the water.

"What we've learned is, there is high pH in that water and we're going to be injecting acid in there—at some point," Roberts says. "We have incorporated three 750-gallon tanks into the pump station where we'll treat the water before metering it into the irrigation system. We just haven't started

that yet. We're still doing a lot of soil testing. We're going to ramp that up and see what we need to apply—that's true for all inputs." Those soils are the subject of more agronomic strategies to be finalized later.

The East features Northbridge Ber-

mudagrass on the fairways, tees and immediate rough areas, and TifEagle Bermudagrass on the greens.

"On the East, it's a great medium for us to firm up—to topdress more aggressively," Roberts says. "We'll solidify to match that organic growth



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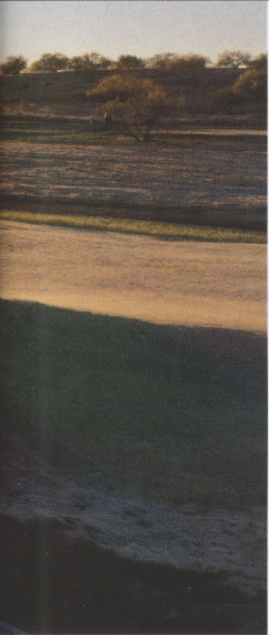
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and smooth out the surface. We've been doing that on greens already, to smooth and even them out. (In 2021), we'll start smoothing those fairways and tightening the edges of the natives a lot more.

"We went with several varieties for those native areas. It's going to be playable, low-grow blue stem with buffalograss at the bottom, so the ball should sit up. Some oat grasses, too. You should be able to find it and play it but aesthetically, we want the long,

golden waves as if you were in a field — on the ranch."

When he mentioned the West Course and its distinct growing medium, Roberts inadvertently touched on another still-evolving operational strategy. Roberts and Bunny are working side by side, out of a single shop, trying to stay within their preliminary operating budgets, and make do with 19 shared staff, where 80 are projected for summer 2022.

"Eventually, we will have our own distinct staffs for East and West, our own teams. But, for now, we have to be creative on the sharing of staff and resources," Roberts says. "Just coordinating meeting times with all the COVID precautions is a challenge. Heritage had 150 guys here at one point and they took everyone's

temperature every morning and made it work. We're trying to follow their lead.

"You have to be strategic with all your planning. We're working all that out now and we'll be fine-tuning it for the next 18 months. Time trials, for example. It's important to me to get through the morning maintenance efficiently — getting holes in front of the resort done first, so no one sees us in the morning. Well, the East Course here is so spread out. The West is not. We're figuring it all out, how to get it all done — because come 2022, we want to fire on all cylinders." **GCI**

Hal Phillips is a Maine-based freelance writer, managing director of Mandarin Media, Inc., and frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.

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TREE MANAGEMENT IS CAREER MANAGEMENT

I've seen it during the dozens of tree consults I have done over the years. The most emotionally demanding and time-consuming component of the job is managing golfers when it comes to trees.

Otherwise politically conservative business people suddenly turn into fanatical tree-hugging eco-terrorists. A stoic, self-contained introvert gets all weepy when talking about the memorial tree they planted for dear old auntie. And a 33-handicapper who spends half of his shots chipping back into the fairway from the woods worries that after removal of half a dozen trees the course will become "too easy."

The first rule of thumb I advise greenkeepers is never to get into a discussion with a golfer about this or that tree without first having established some formal understanding of the proper role of trees on a golf course. Without that analytical framework, you are lost in a he said/he said dispute with no basis for an outcome.

Trees have a place in golf, one that must be balanced with the primary function of the site, which is the game of golf. That means the ability to grow quality turfgrass in a manner consistent with modern ecological and regulatory standards. That entails relying less than used to be the case on chemicals and more on standard natural cultural practices like sunlight, air movement and drainage.

To that end, there are six criteria by which trees on a golf course need to be evaluated as part of any tree management program.

AGRONOMICS: You cannot grow turfgrass in a shadow box. De-

pending on the turf type, daily sunlight averages of anywhere from five to 10 hours are needed. *Poa annua* can thrive on the low side but bentgrass and Bermudagrass need more. Morning sun is most important, of course, but so, too, is air movement (wind). Since a golf course is open through many months of the year, it helps to pay attention to the sun angle during shoulder season and winter months, when light is lower and at a premium. Attention needs to be paid not only to tree canopies but also to roots — which often grow well into the greens and tees and can distort ground features as well as rob the ground of vital nutrients.

STRATEGY: There is no skill in chipping out sideways with a 4 iron. There is skill, however, in playing a full-bore recovery from rough beyond the fairway. The notion that tightly treed fairway corridors provide a test for golfers is based on a one-dimensional view of the game — as simply one of aerial power, a vertical form of bowling, if you will. Tightly-treed courses unduly favor strong players and make the game a sufferance for all other classes of golfers. The beauty of golf is having optional paths from tee to green, not requiring vertical golf down the middle.

AESTHETICS: The eye naturally scans the horizon from left to right. When vertical obstacles intrude, there's a sense of disruption and loss. A golf course needn't be denuded for it to

have an aesthetic appeal. The main thing is for the eye to be able to scan laterally under the canopy in order to perceive the full sense of the topography. There are two sorts of views to be had on a golf course: interior, across the site; and exterior, to the surrounding landscape. If both are unavailable, a lot is lost.

HEALTH OF TREES: Most courses that are overstaffed with trees today were improperly planted randomly by green committees trying to fill space — often with non-native species that were fast growing. Many trees today are suffering, and often the ill-suited ones are crowding out the healthy, mature species that need to be highlighted. It helps to have an arborist assess the well-being of your trees — but remember that such a specialist is usually more concerned with preserving your trees than preserving your golf course.

SAFETY: This is probably the most overused excuse for planting trees, with laughable results and the creation of a secondary risk of blind ricochet that had not been anticipated. My experience is that about 80 percent of trees planed "for protection" don't belong.

BUDGETS: Add up your actual tree budget, including inoculants, pruning, plus the extra labor required to pick up debris and leaves, as well as the cost of chemically treating those areas that are not in healthy
KLEIN continues on page 52



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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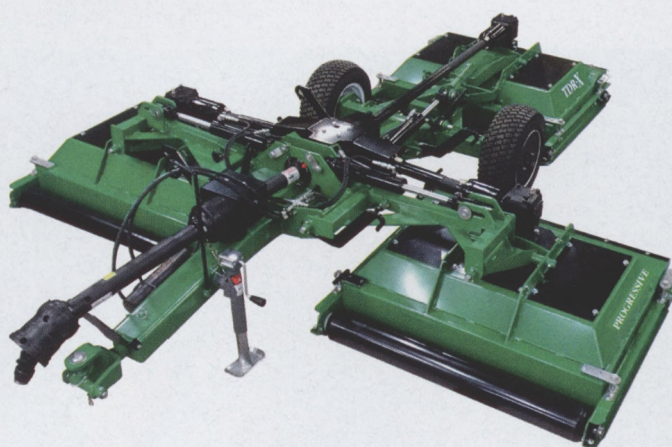
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SOI continued from page 34

be a good time to get them done.”

Richardson, Bel Jan and so many others across the industry expect more investment in bringing in and holding on to different demographics, in short courses and executive courses, in instruction areas and

putting greens, in ranges where people can escape to during lunch.

After all, golf courses can be whatever we want them to be. **GCI**

What is your facility doing to retain golfers who picked up the game or increased their rounds played in 2020?

- Adding simulators to keep interest going through winter
- Improving customer service
- Offering 2021 membership discounts and specials
- Acquiring more golfer contact information and sending specials via email and social media databases
- Loyalty programs
- Offering same green fees as 2020
- Keep providing good course conditions
- Free golf lessons
- Flexible membership options
- Capital improvements
- Increasing the number of “fun” events

MORAGHAN continued from page 14

Here are some accomplishments to consider. This individual has:

- Exhibited excellence as a turf manager and upgraded levels of conditioning
- Served as a mentor and teacher
- Made those who work for them better
- Prepared a course for major events and tournaments
- Cultivated new talent
- Educated people about turfgrass management, in person and/or in research and articles
- Participated in research and/or created a device that makes playing surfaces better
- Contributed to organization at the regional, state, and/or national levels
- Considered the environment in turfgrass preparation, practices and education
- Not just grown grass but grown the *game*

A worthy candidate would demonstrate a healthy mix of those. I could easily put forth a handful of qualified candidates: Monroe Miller, David Stone, Paul Latshaw Sr. or Mark Kuhns. And that’s just from the United States. Because this is a *World Golf Hall of Fame*, we have many more individuals to choose from.

Let’s make this a rallying cry for superintendents globally. We need to get the other organizations to support us, embrace this long omission and acknowledge that our time is overdue. **GCI**

KLEIN continued from page 48

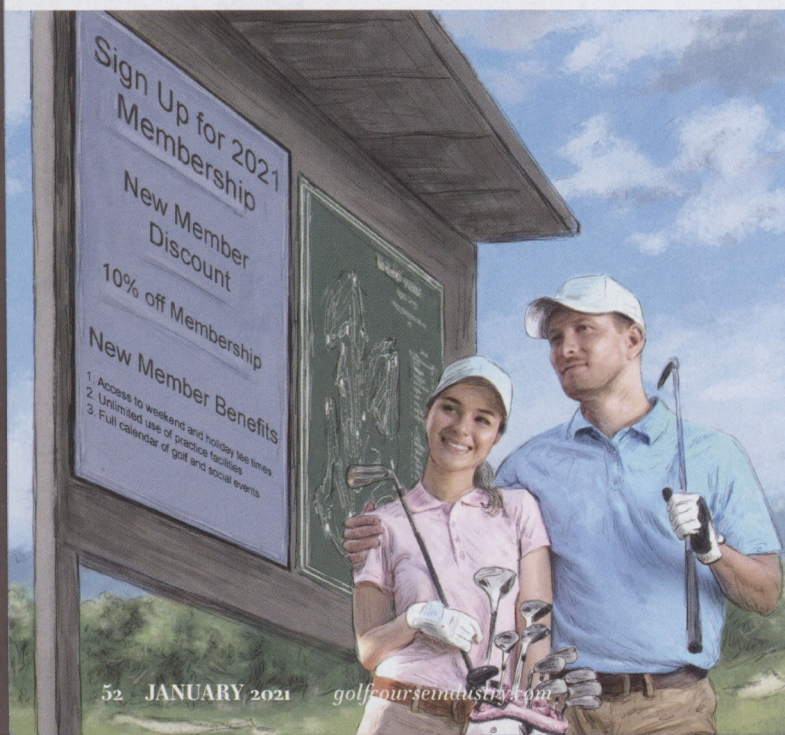
growing environments. The true cost of trees at golf courses far exceeds most initial estimates and is worth having as a datum point.

I always feel a special empathy for superintendents whose clubs still have a “memorial tree-planting program” commemorated on a board in the clubhouse. The worst is when the donor gets to pick the species and the spot and then adds a plaque that needs to be maintained. The sooner these are phased out, the better.

Explaining all of this to golfers can be difficult. My advice is to avoid saying how exactly many trees are slated for removal. In most cases, a more accurate account would be the amount of caliper inches that would remain versus what’s on the cutting board — usually well over 90 percent when all is done.

It helps having a formal decision-making structure in place so that the superintendent has some assurances that he or she will be backed up once the call is made to keep or cut down a tree. Not, however, so much structure that every decision must be approved by a board. There needs to be some latitude in the process, so that the superintendent can decide about the fate of certain trees if they are obvious offenders in the category of “agronomics.”

The main thing is to have a program in place, plus an explanation for it. That will help dial down some of the emotional turmoil involved. **GCI**





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SACRED ground

RESPECT FOR THE LAND – AND THE OAK TREES – TAKES
ON A HIGHER MEANING AT THE JOURNEY AT PECHANGA.

All golf courses, by root virtue, are instinct to grow forward. Some very special courses, however, are just as much a living history of human existence.

Since debuting in 2007, The Journey at Pechanga in Temecula, California, has fast proven a Southern California must-play, revered for its rolling topography, bubbling streams, elevated tee boxes and rustic routing through native land. And while designers Arthur Hills, Steve Forrest and team no doubt deserve ample backslaps for the modern architecture, The Journey's path was ten millennia in the making.

Built upon the ancestral grounds of the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians, the property was where tribe

members lived, survived, thrived and died, long before the thought of getting a 1.6-ounce dimpled sphere into a 4½-inch cup entered the concept of human leisure or livelihood.

Today, maintaining both the striking aesthetic of the course while concurrently—and continually—being well-abreast of cultural practices, is a balance that requires constant education and communication.

Such scales were evident from the outset of course design and ensuing construction, which had a back-and-forth of assessing routing amid ancestral grounds before a final design path was

By **Judd Spicer**

agreed upon.

“And then Steve (Forrest) finally looked up into the hills of the property and, asked, ‘What’s up there?’ almost in desperation,” recalls Gary DuBois, a tribe member and the director of Cultural Resources for the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians.

At one stage in the survey, evidencing the verdant surrounds, Forrest got himself lost amid the native landscape. “He knew where he was,” laughs DuBois. “He just couldn’t find a trail to get back down.”

After ultimately agreeing upon routing, the tribe and designers moved ahead carefully. “One of the caveats in moving forward with the course was that our Cultural Resources Department would oversee development,” DuBois says. “So, we worked very closely with Steve Forrest and his crew. And, of course, we have many,



many oaks on the property, which are sacred to the tribe, and, at first, the designers were tagging all these trees that were in fairway areas. And the fact remains the same today as it was then: We don't cut down healthy oak trees. Period."

Seen as an occasional course quirk to nascent players (e.g., the fairway-centered oak on the short, par-4 seventh), the oaks can't be addressed by Journey maintenance staff unless first approved by Pechanga's Cultural team.

"From the beginning, everybody, the whole crew, is on board," says Mario Ramirez, head golf course superintendent at The Journey. "And if my guys see something being done (which shouldn't be), or anything with the sacred oaks trees, they report it to me."

Being "on-board" is not without preface or preamble. All employees at the course and the adjacent, eponymous Resort & Casino go through a learning process upon their hiring and are educated about the tribe's history and heritage.

"You have to do your studying and ask questions. From the beginning here, everybody, all employees, go through training, and it's all explained to us about what is sacred ground," Ramirez says. "So, from the beginning, we're very aware, and learn that if you don't know or are unsure about something — you ask. We don't make those mistakes. There's a culture here, and everybody takes it very seriously."

From the Cultural Department's end, continually educating staff is in itself a challenge, though DuBois is fast to laud the communication chain he currently shares with Ramirez, who has been at The Journey for more than four years.

"Employees come and go, which means the institutional knowledge goes with them," DuBois says. "So, when new people come in with their own idea how to run a golf course — and those may well be

good ideas — we need to educate them on the cultural component and ensure they know the background. And we impress upon them: 'Whatever you do, if you're gonna dig or even if you're going to trim back some branches, you need to give us a call first.'"

Ramirez adds that the tribe is understanding and versed on course needs, although every project needs approvals.

"We don't just go ahead with digging holes anywhere, for, say, a drain," Ramirez says. "We need to ask permission, and then the Cultural Center will come and inspect an area and either give us the green light to move ahead or disapprove it for the reasons behind the ground being sacred."

Pechanga homage can be seen throughout the property via *kiicha* homes (meaning "home" in the tribal language) across peripheral areas, along with informational and educational signage located behind the fifth green.

The most sacred ground on course property can be found on both sides of the top-handicapped, par-5 ninth; along the right side, a lengthy, wrought iron fence runs in stark contrast to of the landing area, separating play from sacred grounds to which even tribe members aren't allowed casual access.

"On the ninth, the fencing protects the sacred ground all along the right side; none of us can go in there," says Ramirez in earnest. "Nobody can, only with the tribe's permission. And on the left side of the fairway on that same hole, those trees are also very sacred, and nobody can touch them."

Noting that, back in the design and construction phase, the land upon the ninth was indeed the big-

gest area of concern before ultimate concession, DuBois says course staff is made especially aware of keeping golfers from going to find an errant ball beyond the gate.

"It is a bit of a choke point for the course," DuBois says of a narrowed second shot, pinched between sacred areas. "It's ceremonial ground (adjacent to the fairway), and some of the elders who are no longer with us, they consulted on that, and there was a big compromise in creating that hole."

Buoyed by the dramatic topography, there is a genuine mysticism to the course.

"In certain places ... golfers won't play on them, walk over them or even see them, but there are burials out there; and we try to be low-key about those areas," DuBois says. "Some people have said they feel an 'otherworldliness' on this property; that there's *something here*."

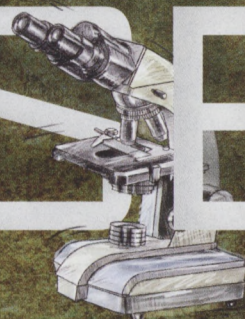
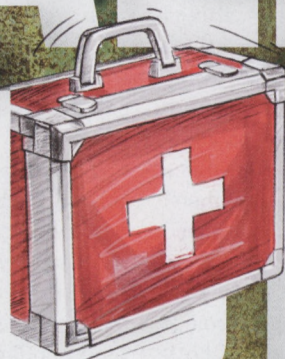
By paying homage to the history of the Pechanga people, Journey staff and modern-day tribe leaders — akin to the land's indigenous ancestors — maintain a unique adoration for the land, bestowing respect to the grounds' sustainability via environmentally-friendly practices.

"When we say this golf course is 10,000 years in the making, it's true," DuBois says. "Because, wherever Pechanga people lived in the pre-contact history, if there are sites to that effect on the golf course — we didn't build on it. We believe this is one of, if not the most culturally-sensitive golf course in the country." GCI



▲ The Journey at Pechanga was built upon the ancestral grounds of the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians in Southern California.

NO STALLING TURF DISEASE



By John Torsiello

**EXPERTS REVIEW WHAT THEY ENCOUNTERED IN 2020 AND OFFER
SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING AHEAD OF POTENTIAL 2021 ISSUES.**

Turf diseases don't take a break. They are always there, ready to wreak havoc, especially come green-up time. Being aware of what happened to turfgrass the previous year and keeping a close eye on weather patterns the following spring and summer can go a long way in helping superintendents keep the bad actors away and maintain playing surfaces as pristine as possible.

The diseases that afflicted turfgrass in 2020 were a mixed bag, from dollar spot and *Pythium* root rot to fairy ring and brown patch, among others in the cast of nasty characters that were problematic to varying degrees during 2020.

Late-season dollar spot was prevalent in the Mid-Atlantic, says Dr. Michael Fidanza, professor of plant and soil science and director of the Center for the Agricultural Sciences and a Sustainable Environment at Pennsylvania State University/Berks Campus. Longer nights and lower sunlight angles keeping turf in shade were contributing factors to producing extended periods of leaf wetness and dew: "This environment is most favorable for dollar spot incidence, coupled with undernourished turfgrass, results in plant collapse and pitting common with dollar spot affected turf in mid- to late fall."

USGA Green Section director of education Adam Moeller cited the following as 2020 disease concerns:

Dollar spot. Always an issue.

***Pythium*.** More prevalent on courses that received untimely rain during July and August.

Brown patch. Always an issue but, perhaps, more so in 2020 due to increased humidity and untimely rain in southern portions of the Northeast.

Fairy ring. More problematic when courses are dry because the rings become hydrophobic.



Take-all root rot on newly established bentgrass.

According to Dr. Paul Koch, an associate professor in the Department of Plant Pathology at the Molecular and Environmental Toxicology Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, dollar spot was "a little worse than average" across most of the Midwest due to prolonged stretches of warm nighttime conditions. "Daytime highs weren't overly brutal, but those warm and humid nights are highly conducive for dollar spot and other foliar diseases to develop," he says. "Take-all patch was really active across much of the region. It's always tough to tell exactly why a disease like take-all is more severe in certain years, but the most likely contributors were a very wet fall in 2019 that contributed to increased fungal activity and huge temperature swings in fall 2019 and spring 2020 that made properly timing take-all fungicides difficult."

Dr. Joseph Roberts, an assistant professor with the Turfgrass Pathology Horticulture Program Team in the Plant and Environmental Sciences Department Office of Clemson University's Pee Dee Research & Education Center, explains that dollar spot can be an issue on both cool- and warm-season turfgrass. "Depending on the height of cut, dollar spot can become a significant issue that reduces both aesthetics and playability of close-cut surfaces like greens, fairways, and tees," Roberts says. "We observed dollar spot in Bermudagrass roughs throughout much of 2020, but this is less of a problem as more disease can be tolerated in these areas." In most cases, severe dollar spot outbreaks were linked to poor fertilization practices with low nitrogen coupled with high rainfall events that extended leaf wetness periods.

In the Southeast, issues that proved more significant than past years, Roberts says,

included fairy ring—one of the worst years he has seen—and take-all root rot "mainly due to environmental pressure," observed in 2020. *Pythium* presented foliar and root issues throughout the year. Heavy rain events in spring and fall resulted in multiple outbreaks on warm-season greens. "We also observed issues with *Pythium* root rot on creeping bentgrass in July during periods of extended high temperatures," Roberts adds.

Brown patch (mostly on tall fescue) and dollar spot were the two main diseases observed on research golf turf by Dr. Cale Bigelow of the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, Turf Science, Management and Ecology at Purdue University. "Surprisingly due to the weather this year (a very cool spring and hot/juicy July) brown patch was more damaging than dollar spot during the summer, but dollar spot eventually did blight turf in our plots late in the season," Bigelow says. "In the Indianapolis area it may have been slightly different as that area of the state was very dry for much of the year which would lend itself possibly to more dollar spot."

Richard J. Buckley, director of the Plant Diagnostic Lab and Nematode Detection Service at the Ralph Geiger Turfgrass Education Center at Rutgers University, reports, according to a state climatologist, New Jersey had the second-warmest summer on record and the warmest July, and that led to issues with brown patch and *Pythium* blight in *Poa annua* on sand-amended native soils.

WHAT ABOUT THIS YEAR?

As for 2021, "only the weather knows what is in store," Buckley says. "Our top five to 10 problems diagnosed get shuffled from year to year but are almost always confined to the usual suspects. They move up and down the list depending on the prevailing weather condition."

They adapted too

Last year was challenging for researchers trying to find ways to help superintendents maintain their turfgrass amid a busy season for the golf industry.

"The pandemic affected our ability to travel and we had fewer trials (last) summer, but that picked back up to more normal work (last) fall," the University of Tennessee's Dr. Brandon Horvath says. "We also limited the work we sometimes do offsite and kept most of our trials at our research farm." Horvath also couldn't visit students at internship sites until the fall. For the most part, though, Horvath says the University of Tennessee team "operated fairly normally" as the year progressed.

Dr. Paul Koch says the biggest changes at the University of Wisconsin stemmed from the inability to hire seasonal undergraduate workers to help in the field and the summer closure of multiple laboratory facilities. "To cope with the lack of seasonal staff we covered by having everyone help with conducting and rating research," Koch says. "That meant grad students, post docs and even me." The lab closures proved tougher to navigate. "We just held on to the samples until they opened back up and we're still catching up on analyzing our samples," Koch says. "All in all, I think we managed just fine."

Richard Buckley and the diagnostic team at Rutgers University were permitted to return to the lab in late spring following an extended closure. Sample submissions were down dramatically in March and April, but they began tracking at a normal pace by June.

"Overall, turfgrass samples are down from 675 in 2019 to 592 so far (as of early December 2020), which is still in the window for an average turf disease season," Buckley says. "There was lots of chaos on golf courses this year, but diseases are diseases regardless of how many golfers are in each cart or how understaffed the crew was."



"It looks it could be a warmer and wetter winter for our area coming up, so I would expect to see a few samples of (pink snow mold), (yellow patch), and (brown ring patch) as we pass through the winter into spring," Buckley adds. "We are always concerned with overwintering anthracnose infections in early spring and gray leaf spot (especially in tall fescue) in late-summer."

Koch's take on 2021 in the Midwest? "Dollar spot is always problematic, so I'm sure that will be again in 2021," he says. "Take-all, fairy ring, summer patch and anthracnose are also common diseases throughout the Midwest and will likely cause problems across different parts of the region. *Pythium* root rot will likely be a problem in areas that experience heavy rainfall in the spring that saturate the soil."

Dr. Brandon Horvath, a turf pathologist at the University of Tennessee's Institute of Agriculture, urges superintendents maintaining warm-season turf to pay careful attention to spring weather so initial applications for take-all root rot, spring dead spot and large patch "get out at the right time, because there is inoculum being created this fall in areas that aren't treated. That inoculum will increase disease pressure come spring."

If Roberts "had to pick" diseases that will continue to be an issue in 2021, he believes take-all root rot certainly "has the potential" to continue its prevalence. "Some outbreaks can be linked to poor preventive maintenance practices, but I have also observed outbreaks at intensely managed areas with adequate preventive measures."

Of course, Bigelow quips, "nobody has a crys-

tal ball,” but due to the very prolonged dry conditions throughout much of the Midwest, any pathogen that might have a competitive edge on weakened turf would likely be a potential problem. “Especially pathogens that affect leaves which range from dollar spot, to red-thread to *Microdochium* patch,” Bigelow says. “Additionally, some (Kentucky bluegrass) areas may have symptoms associated with summer patch and that should be monitored.”

What can superintendents do to prepare for attacks on their course’s turf? “Always focus on agronomics and optimizing infrastructure and growing conditions first,” Buckley says. Cater inputs to the needs of your customers and individual course. There is a history of disease and insect pests, so plan a fungicide/insecticide program that reflects the historical record of your site.

“If one has a well-executed plan and the product in place (early order programs),” Buckley adds, “then it is easy to adjust if something comes up in mid-season.” Buckley recommends keeping an eye toward resistance management and remember “there are a bunch” of competent diagnostic that can help when things go wrong.

Koch says there are certain diseases like take-all patch and fairy ring where preventative fungicide applications are

the only effective means for controlling them. For those who have seen take-all or fairy ring symptoms in the recent past, two or three preventative fungicide applications initiated when 2-inch soil temperatures reach 55 degrees for five consecutive days can be very effective at preventing symptoms. Predictive tools like the Smith-Kerns Dollar Spot Model can help superintendents time preventative dollar spot applications to effectively control disease without wasting product.

An accurate diagnosis to know what you are dealing with is the first step in developing a control measure, according to Roberts. “Many diseases cause similar symptoms,” he says. “A trained diagnostician can assist in identifying the cause of turfgrass loss, potentially saving money with proper control measures.”

Thatch management is important during the growing season as many of the pathogens we see thrive in excessive thatch. Regular cultivation and topdressing are critical to maintaining playing surfaces and also assist in reduce pathogen potential. And utilize resources from turfgrass research institutions when selecting products for a management program.

“Look closely at your fungicide program to make sure the most effective

active ingredient is being used for a particularly troublesome disease,” Moeller says. “Combination products might have efficacy against a wide range of diseases, but the active ingredients might not be the most effective. The Chemical Control for Turfgrass Diseases 2020 edition developed by Rutgers, the University of Kentucky, and the University of Wisconsin is a fantastic resource that superintendents should review when building their control programs each year.”

Dr. Lee Miller, an extension turfgrass pathologist at the University of Missouri, says making prognostications with turfgrass — even in the immediate future — is difficult. “Forecasters often have trouble predicting weather patterns for the next week, much less six months ahead,” Miller adds. “This being said, even harsh winters don’t significantly alter the appearance of spring of summer disease outbreaks.”

While Miller said 2020 was a relatively uneventful year in terms of turf diseases, he saw scattered issues, such as *Pythium* root rot and fairy ring as well as the seemingly always present dollar spot. As for 2021, he says, spring showers bring May flowers and the same can be said for turf issues. This is especially true for soilborne diseases such as *Pythium* root rot, patch diseases and fairy ring. “Most spring-applied systemic fungicides should be watered in to target soilborne diseases, especially since they also do provide control of foliar diseases, like dollar spot, at the same time,” Miller says.

It’s also crucial to know soil conditions on greens. “Every once in a while, take a plug out and look and even smell what is going on in the soil,” Miller says. “You may find that in problematic areas water is not getting out of the soil profile, and there’s not a fungicide on Earth that can make bentgrass grow in a hot, waterlogged soil.” GCI

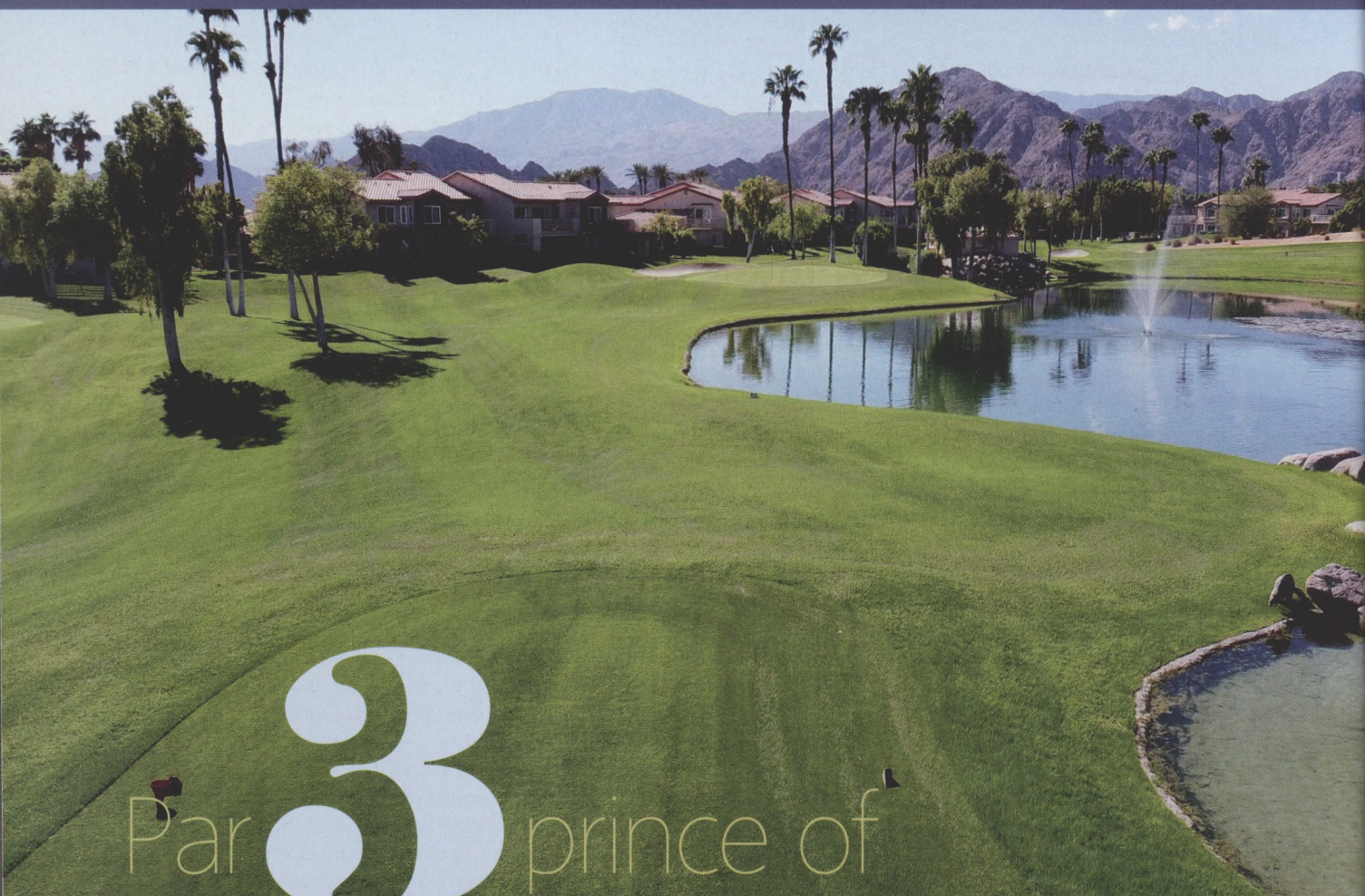
◀ Take-all patch was active in the Midwest during the 2020 growing season.

◀ The University of Wisconsin’s Dr. Paul Koch says dollar spot was “a little worse than average” across the Midwest in 2020.

◀ Dollar spot (shown here on fairway height bentgrass in eastern Pennsylvania) was prevalent late in the Mid-Atlantic growing season.



John Torsiello is a Torrington, Connecticut-based writer and frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.



Par 3 prince of

Palm Springs

By Judd Spicer

Fitting snugly among homes and operating on a summer honor box system, Palm Royale Country Club provides a quaint alternative to the golf gaudiness in California's Coachella Valley.

Home to 120 courses, the golf-rich Coachella Valley has no shortage of big-name tracks spread across the desert marquee. But to overlook some of the region's brightest co-stars is to miss the deeper narrative of desert golf.

Opened in 1986 at the height of the valley's modern golf build boom, Palm Royale Country Club in La Quinta, California, is just down the street from some of the area's most famed courses. While

not as long or lauded as its championship counterparts, the 18-hole par 3 spread instead hangs its flat cap on proving a thesis of what the game is meant to be: fun, timely, affordable and some good exercise across its walking-only grounds.

"We want to be the best-conditioned short course in the valley. That's our goal," Palm Royale golf professional Phil Boyland says. "We want to produce a product and a service which exceeds what people expect when they come play. We know people ar-

en't traveling to Palm Springs to come play here four times but before folks go out and play the big, championship courses, this is a really good place to come for a day and a warm-up round."

Designed by the late Ted Robinson, Palm Royale is one of 15 local courses crafted by the prolific desert architect known as the "King of Waterscapes." Across a scorecard of about 2,100 yards, the moniker doesn't disappoint. Nor does the engaging test.

"But there's enough trouble out here that you can't just pitch-and-putt around."

With holes ranging from 80 to 170 yards, Palm Royale sports bunkering on every hole and a water feature on half of the card. And while the likes of World Golf Hall of Famer and part-time desert resident Fred Couples may have gone course-record low with an 11-under 43 during an industry skins game back in 2017, most guests are aiming to rally for pars.

Palm Royale's wedge world proves an ideal fit for kids, families, nascent players, older golfers and even local sticks looking to refine their scoring clubs. The concept of fast and fun overcomes a potent pair of golf obstacles for many.

"The common complaints about golf are, 'It takes too long, and it's too expensive,'" Boyland says. "We feel like we combat both aspects of that. Plus, you're gonna get good exercise out here, and especially in this environment we're in now with social distancing—here, come out, grab a pull cart, head to that first tee and just start walking."

For many folks simply looking to get out of the house in 2020, Palm Royale found further palatability amid the pandemic months.

"We've been waiting for ya' to come around," Boyland says smiling. "No, we've been doing it this way for a long time, and, in this climate we're in right now, it's an attractive way to get outside, get some exercise and not worry about getting paired-up in a cart with a stranger or something like that."

In a time-demand world, and in-step with the game's cyclical turn back to concepts of playability and affordability, Palm Royale is well-positioned.

"For some, maybe this is a better fit than a few-hundred-dollar round which takes five hours. Here, we play in a few hours," Boyland says. "It's a great place for beginners, juniors, seniors and we do see a lot of good players here. A lot of industry guys come out here after their shift. Maybe they work at an exclusive private club nearby where they're not allowed to play once they're done for the day, so they come out here in the late afternoon and work on their short game."

With residential condos almost more "in" the course than "on" across these intimate surrounds, a coalescence of home-to-course grooming makes for an essential maintenance mind meld.

"Along with the course, we also maintain the homes; outside the gate, everything," superintendent Richard Jimenez says. "We've got three guys on the crew who maintain the homes, and then five who work the course."

Having reduced its footprint with a turf reduction in recent years, enhanced D.G. (decomposed granite) routing and outlining has made the property easier to maintain, while concurrently resulting in improved course-to-residence distinction. A reinvestment in course conditions has also found Palm Royale on the upswing.

"When we started here, the course wasn't the way it is now," adds Jimenez, whose turf undoubtedly benefits from the walking only/cart path-free design. "We've done our thing by mowing the greens to the proper heights of 1/8-inch. We also leveled the tee boxes and made them larger."

Close quarters call for a close rapport between residents (the HOA owns the course) and staff.

"Everybody here has a view of the golf course, and the course, that ownership, is part of what they bought into," Boyland says. "There's a community pride in how we run

this course, how Richard and his staff maintain the course and the relationships here—with the condos kinda packed in—it finds people well-connected. There's just a very good sense of community, and the homeowners have gotten to know Richard and his staff; whether it's little a wave in the morning or a lady has some fire ants in her flower bed, there's a real comfort of communication between the folks who live here and the people who work here. It makes life a lot easier."

Perhaps best evidencing its quaint vibe and nod to the roots of golf purity, come the deep sizzle of the desert summer, guests need only plop a 10-spot in an honor box outside the pro shop in July and August.

"We've run the numbers and sitting in the pro shop and running the A/C all day in 115 degrees, yeah, we go with the honor box system for those two months," Boyland says. "And it's very well-received. The locals know about it, they like it. Our grounds staff is here working, and I'm still here every day to check in and making sure nothing crazy is going on." **GCI**

Judd Spicer is a Palm Desert, California-based writer and frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.



Looking back, looking ahead

Veteran superintendent **Ron Furlong** reflects on a year unlike any other — on and off the course.



What words come to mind when trying to recap 2020?

Chaotic. Frightening. Challenging. Uncharted. Bizarre. Isolated. Dividing. Uncertain.

Successful.

Successful? This one seems out of place, right? I agree. But when considering the year from the viewpoint of North American golf courses, 2020 was often a banner year.

Calling 2020 successful at any level seems strange. Seems almost like something you don't want to draw attention to. Surviving in a year like this, and even thriving — when so many businesses and industries have not — does temper one's excitement.

For those in charge of managing golf courses, the year started out rather normally, then, as we all know, turned upside-down a few months in. For many of us, including the golf course in western Washington where I am the superintendent, this meant a complete shutdown of play and an uncertain future. It meant managing a golf course with no golfers — and with no idea when they were coming back.

And then they did come back — and boy did they! I'm writing this on the second-to-last day of 2020 and our golf course is still packed. It has been since we reopened in the spring. Golf experienced a resurgence during a year when very few industries did. But I think it's OK to view this without guilt. Golf courses have provided a much-needed

respite for many. Being on a golf course was an escape from the brutal reality of the global pandemic. Golf suddenly became a fairly safe place to put away stress and worries.

There were obvious advantages for many of our typical management practices. We quickly became acutely aware of the limitations that normal play with a crowded golf course puts on the maintenance operation. Mowers cut down their mow time. The sprayer could go out any time, anywhere, no longer limited to the constraints of tee times and a course full of golfers. Reentry times went out the window. Light topdressing of the greens, normally a logistical nightmare, became a breeze.

Managing greens with no play became an interesting endeavor. Although for us the empty golf course lasted only a few weeks, it was tricky not to keep the greens too lean and too healthy. The question of rolling frequency, tied in with mowing heights and mowing frequency became an interesting conundrum. How quick do you need greens when no one is putting on them? Maintaining firmness became critical. If they got too lean and too healthy, no doubt it would be difficult to bring them back to the level we would need them when golf returned. Thus, we ended up managing them similarly to how we normally do. If anything, we were able to keep them even more pristine and playable.

When golf returned, it returned in full force. At my course, we just missed setting a record for rounds

played in a year (the course has been open since 1991 and only 1998 saw more rounds played). The transition from an empty course to an extraordinarily full one was stressful and demanding. We went from having all the time in the world for our maintenance to having less time than anyone could ever remember.

2020 budgets went out the window. No golf to more golf than ever — how does one allocate money? Obviously, labor was the most testing. Laying off most of the crew in March and April and then needing more labor than ever from May through the end of the year was a new challenge for most superintendents.

Because of COVID-19, there was a large labor pool to draw from, so securing seasonal labor was at least one thing that was fairly easy for many. Training workers who had never worked on a course became a vital component to successful 2020 course maintenance.

Having a reliable, trustworthy assistant was vital. Not only for training but just having someone to bounce ideas off for situations that we've never really had to consider.

So what will 2021 bring? Predicting the future is not something anyone can really do with any sense of certainty. The one thing that is safe to say is that 2020 — and what we all went through — can only make us stronger and better going forward. **GCI**

Ron Furlong is the superintendent at Avalon Golf Links in Burlington, Washington.

New approach to old diseases: A YEAR WITH ZIO

PART 4: WARM-WEATHER WINTER COMFORT

By Guy Cipriano

Editor's note: Golf Course Industry is working with SePRO to tell the story of Zio Fungicide's implementation into disease control programs. This is the fourth story exploring the reasons superintendents are turning to Zio, how they are using it and what are the results during the toughest part of the season.

When cool-weather courses are blowing out irrigation

systems, applying snow mold applications and shoveling pavement, warm-weather superintendents begin a critical tussle.

Pythium becomes the focus of many southern disease management programs from November to March. Let Tim Huber, the director of agronomy at The Club at Carlton Woods in suburban Houston, explain why *Pythium* surged to the top of winter disease watch lists in his area.

"In December, we have had some good rain events and it's been

that perfect *Pythium* and leaf spot weather," Huber says. "*Pythium* on Bermudagrass loves that 40- to 60-degree window and that's been where we have been at."

Huber oversees the maintenance of two elite private courses, including a 20-year-old Jack Nicklaus design that plays and drains differently once Bermudagrass enter dormancy. An active storm season in the Gulf of Mexico elevated the potential for winter *Pythium* outbreaks.

"When you have dormant grass, the water isn't actively being soaked up," Huber says. "Our Nicklaus Course gets a little more pressure, greens included, because it just doesn't drain as well (as the club's

Fazio Course). You get these rain events, and if it's 1½ inches, the golf course is wet for a few days. Because the turf isn't growing, it's not sucking up the water and the water is not evaporating because it's not hot and that's why disease pressure is a lot higher in the wintertime, even though our soils are sandy."

Huber started preventatively treating for *Pythium* every 28 days beginning in early November. Applications include a tank mix of two fungicides labeled for *Pythium* control, with Huber planning to

incorporate SePRO's Zio Fungicide into the five applications planned on the Nicklaus Course greens.

Huber first used Zio, an Organic Materials Review Institute-listed product, at the end of last winter and saw enough encouraging signs to make it a part of this winter's Nicklaus Course greens program. A pair of traditional fungicides are rotated alongside Zio in each application.

"We aren't seeing any *Pythium*," Huber says. "Zio is that comfort factor that's in there with it. I know it adds that second mode of action, that second protective quality in there. Coming into the fall, since we didn't have any issues last winter, I wanted to continue that same program, even though Zio wasn't in there until the tail end of it. I thought I would give it a shot again."

Unless something drastic changes, Huber anticipates using Zio again during the 2021-22 winter cycle. "It's just one of those things that has a place in the program," he says.

The Nicklaus Course greens have remained strong and vibrant, despite soggy stretches and heavy play. The Club at Carlton Woods has experienced significant increases in golf activity due to members working from home and having limited recreational outlets during the pandemic. Huber is grateful

for how his team and programs responded to 2020 stresses.

"It validates a lot of what we do," he says. "It's a team effort. It's the programs, it's all the time spent staying on top of the latest and greatest products, the latest techniques and all the hard work we do

with cultural practices such as aerification. I couldn't be more proud of our team. We're not quite out of the hard challenge of turf not growing and the pandemic is still around. But if what we have done is indication of where we are going to go, I'm pretty confident we will do well." ■



Tim Huber

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.



RESTORATION PULVERIZER

During this summer's Tom Weiskopf/Phil Smith restoration of the Troon Country Club in Scottsdale, Arizona, project manager Tom Bush of Heritage Links worked with golf course superintendent Seth Miller on pulverizing the extensive root mass of the chemically killed existing 35-year-old turf in preparation for re-grassing with new Tifway 419. Conventional PTO-driven rototillers were initially used, but the productivity was too slow. Bush brought in a 9-foot-wide Cat RM-350B asphalt road pulverizer and production greatly increased to three to four acres per day, completed in 10 days at an 8-inch depth, with the smaller rototillers finishing the greens surrounds at a 4-inch depth. Mellowing out mounds, reshaping/eliminating bunkers, opening up views and establishing new forward tees were all accomplished with a shaper and bulldozer. The course was grown in on the perfectly pulverized sand-cap soil prior to re-grassing and then reopened to rave reviews.



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OVERHEAD FLAGSTICK HOLDER

Crawford Model #H13010 Adjustable Overhead Storage Hanger (Northern Tools, two at \$15.99/each) used for hanging spare and special event flagsticks at the Olde Florida Golf Club in Naples, Florida, conceived by Darren J. Davis, CGCS, and his team. Each bracket has a 50-pound capacity; the height adjusts from 12.75 inches to 21 inches; the 12-inch arms adjust in any beam direction; they have an easy length adjustment; mounting hardware is included; and there is a foam-type sleeve to protect the flagsticks from getting scratched. Twelve-inch wide shelving can also be used. Davis was the 82nd president of the GCSAA. **GCI**

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FLIPPING PAGES AS THE CALENDAR TURNS

I am not certain how you may have passed the time in 2020. I know the Mrs. and I played more golf and did a fair amount of binge watching, but I also read more books than in most years.

It is no secret I am a self-professed nerd and avid reader of all things golf. I read five trade publications regularly and last year added the USGA's relaunch of *Golf Journal*. The first three quarterly issues were well done in my opinion.

Whether it's golf history, golf course architecture, biographies, or other golf-related fact or fiction tales, I enjoy them all. And I thought with winter still around for a few more months, I would share some of my favorites from this past year.

For the golf course architecture buffs, I read "The Spirit of St. Andrews" by Alister MacKenzie, "Golf Course Architecture in America" by George C. Thomas, and "The Architectural Side of Golf" by Wethered and Simpson. I was inspired to reread "The Spirit of St. Andrews" shortly after the Masters didn't take place in April. Anyone who appreciates great golf course architecture should have this book on their shelves.

I reread "The Architectural Side of Golf" in early fall as it was to be featured on an upcoming Good-Good Golf Podcast "book club" episode with Adrian Logue and Derek Duncan of Feed the Ball fame. But that episode hasn't happened as of this writing, so there still may be time if you're interested.

One of the best books I read last year was "Scotland's Gift: Golf" by Charles Blair Macdonald. Can you imagine living in St.

Andrews and attending St. Andrews University as a teenager? Or what about learning the game of golf from Old Tom Morris and Young Tommy Morris! Mr. Macdonald lived an incredible early life and later was instrumental in sowing the seeds of golf in America.

"A History of Golf" by Roger McStravick was published in 2017 and features a wonderful collection of old paintings and photographs from golf's earliest days. Chronicling the history of golf is no easy task but Roger's edition is wonderfully done and an excellent book for display too.

If you are into biographies, I read three last year that are outstanding. "Caddy for Life: The Bruce Edwards Story" by John Feinstein is the tale of how young Bruce made his way onto the PGA Tour as a caddie in the 1970s and worked for two players to reach World No. 1 in Tom Watson and Greg Norman. Bruce and John got together to tell this story before Bruce succumbed to ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) in April 2004.

"The Last Stand of Payne Stewart" by Kevin Robbins was published in 2019 and is a wonderful look back at 1999. You will need tissues with this one too. "Monarch of the Green: Young Tom Morris: Pioneer of Modern Golf" by Stephen Proctor is exhaustively researched and beautifully illustrates a playing career that was Woodsian more than 100 years before Tiger teed off.

I had the pleasure of meeting and hosting Mr. Proctor for a round of golf at Carolina Golf

Club this past September and was inspired to read his masterpiece again after enjoying it the first time shortly after it was first published in 2019.

"Turfgrass Management" by A.J. Turgeon and J.E. Kaminski published in 2019 is probably the best turf-related publication in recent years. One of the great things about this newest edition of the classic text is many of the photos were submitted by your peers through the power of social media.

So, what is the best book I read in 2020? It was a new release by Luke Reese titled "One for The Memory Banks." Luke worked for Wilson Sporting Goods in Europe in the early 1990s. He played tennis collegiately and knew very little of golf. Scottish-born salesman Allan Bond (Bondy) takes Luke under his wing and they forge a beautiful friendship as Luke discovers a mutual love for links golf.

The story is part travelogue, adventure, love affair, friendships and more. It is masterful storytelling from a first-time storyteller. I learned of the book listening to Reese on The Fried Egg Podcast. A portion of the proceeds from the book's sale benefits The National Links Trust. I read the whole thing one lazy Sunday in November.

Luke's story inspired me to quickly reread an old favorite: Michael Bamberger's "To the Linsland: A Golfing Adventure." There's a faint similarity between the two, but I believe Luke's story might just be the best golf story ever told. **GCI**



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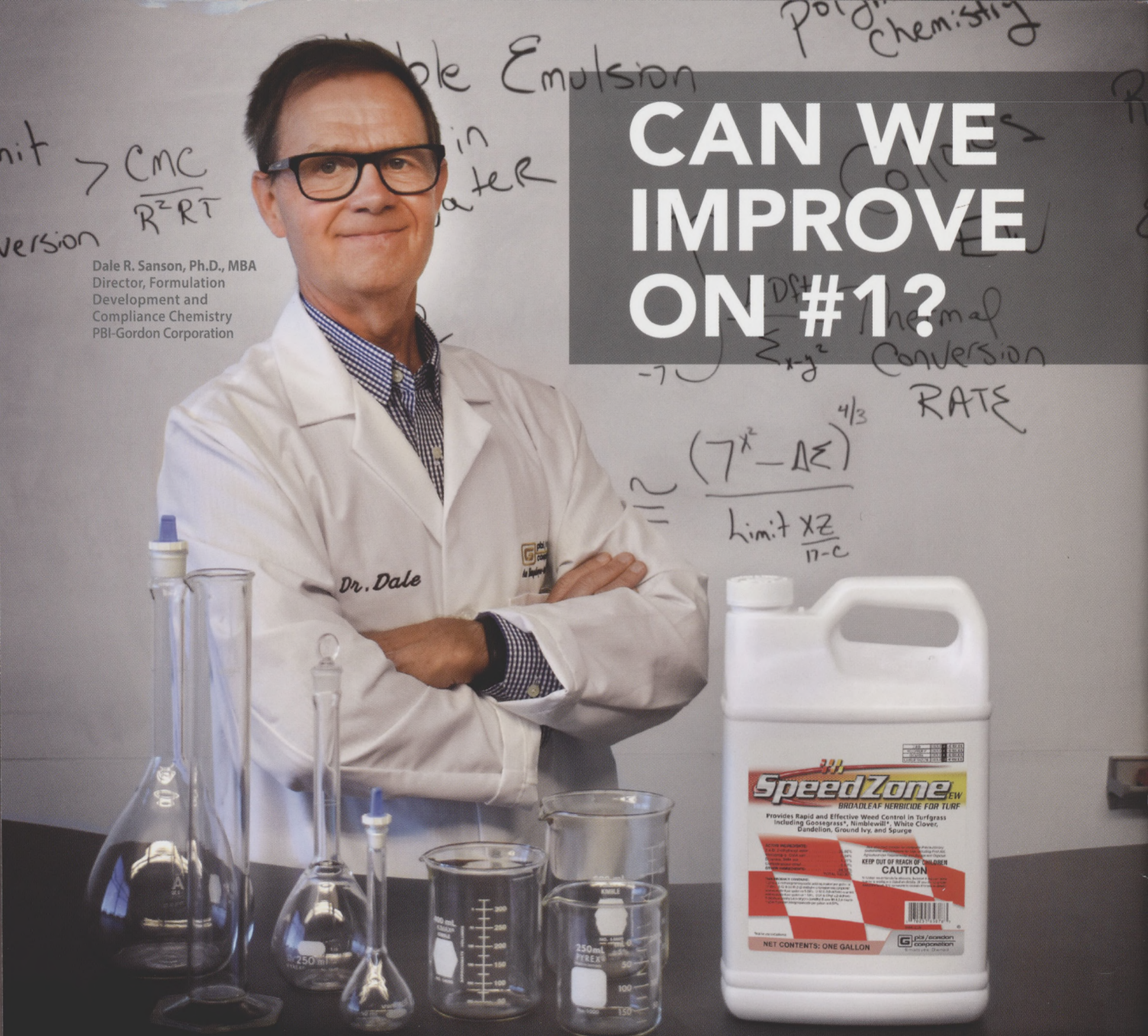
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