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GOLF COURSE[®] INDUSTRY

BOB HINGSTON

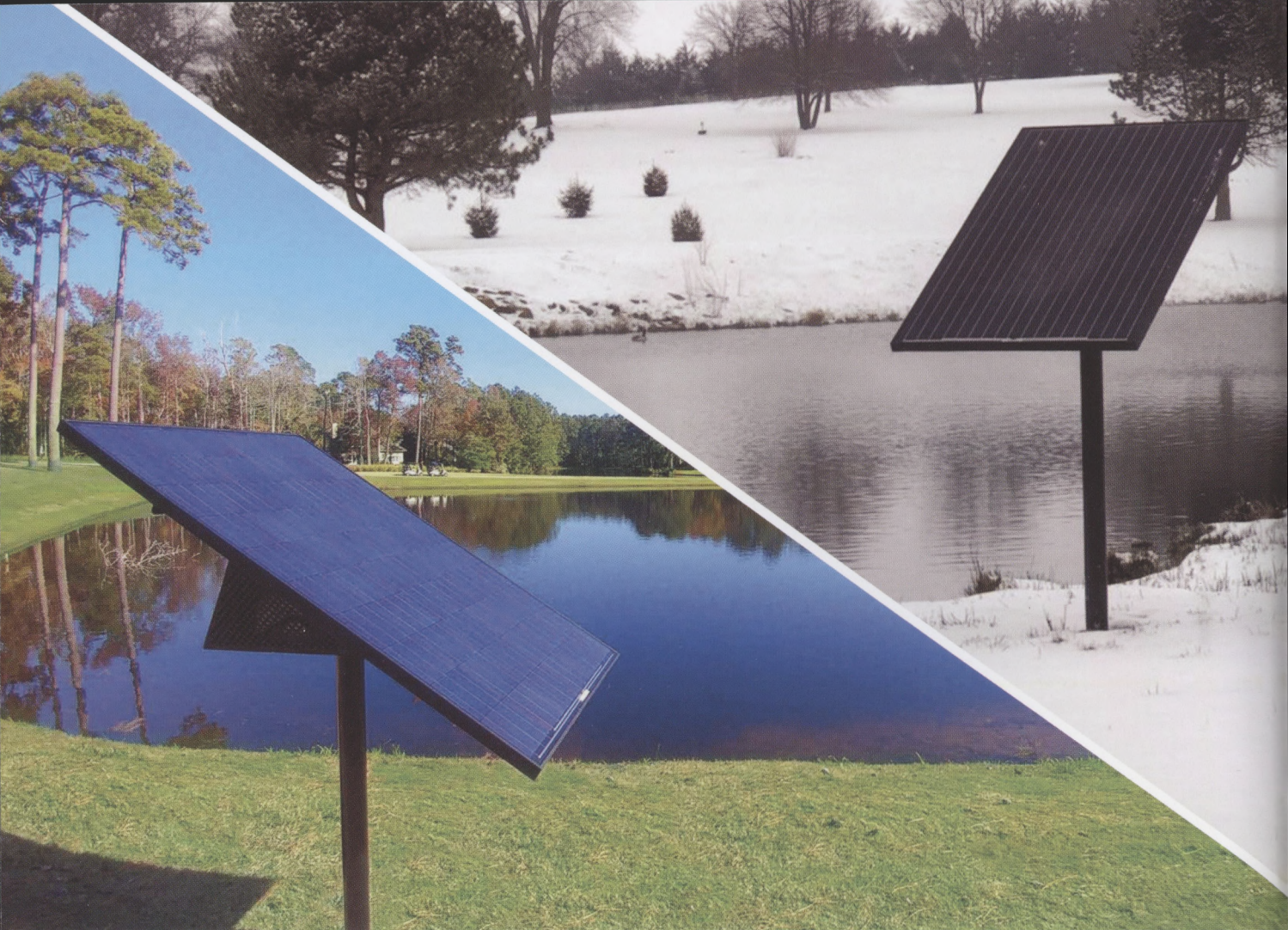
GREEN MOUNTAIN

MAGIC

A retired high school athletics director, a new superintendent, a teenage crew and more than a few hamburgers power John P. Larkin Country Club, a picturesque nine tucked in the Birthplace of Vermont.

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ABOUT THE COVER: A lifelong New Englander and longtime Windsor, Vermont resident, Bob Hingston opts for Dunkin' at John P. Larkin Country Club. Photo by Rob Strong.

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WHAT TO DO ABOUT CUSTOMER B?

Customer A supported your course through the meh moments of the 1980s, the profitable parts of the 1990s and 2000s, and the bleakness of the Great Recession. The unyielding loyalty then helped replenish financial reserves throughout the subsequent recovery. Through the years, Customer A has learned to expect a specific and repeatable experience.

Customer B dabbled for a decade, grabbing clubs once or twice each year, usually for an annual outing, vowing to play more, yet resorting to the same list of reasons why devoting more time to golf was impractical. Then the restaurants and bars closed, the children had fewer places to be, and the hometown team could only be followed on a screen. Those 100-plus acres of greenspace once representing an annual resolution gone awry became a desirable place to spend a few hours. Through their one year of avid interest, you observe Customer B seeks a different experience than Customer A.

Getting a Customer B to become a Customer A will be the biggest conundrum — and the biggest opportunity — facing many golf facilities this year. The inflow of beginning and returning players in 2020 reached 6.2 million, according to the National Golf Foundation. The total easily surpassed the number of players who left the game, resulting in an increase of 500,000 golfers and bringing the overall number of golfers to 24.8 million. The bulk of those newcomers experienced the game at public courses, which account for three-quarters of the American golf supply.

Signs exist that newcomers might stick with the game. Golf equipment sales topped \$1 billion in the third quarter of 2020, according to Golf Datatech. Who drops hundreds of dollars, or more, on items they only plan to use for a few months? OK, we all know “Gadget Girl” or “Gadget Guy.” But most reasonable people seek a return on an investment, even one forced to stay in the garage or trunk throughout winter.

Rounds played increased by double digits compared to 2019 during each of the final seven months of 2020, according to Golf Datatech. The trajectory suggests the people who entered or reentered the game enjoyed their experiences. So, yes, Customer A and Customer B can coexist.

Unlike many other pursuits, customers can experience golf in whatever format they deem fit. Some golfers putt out. Others give their friends 4-footers. Some golfers play from the same tee markers every hole. Others bounce between markers depending on distances and angles. Some golfers want to play 18 holes. Others want to play seven. Some golfers like quiet. Others like to blare Beastie Boys from Bluetooth speakers.

Tactically, a turf team doesn't need to do much different to connect with Customer A and Customer B. Presentable and playable course conditions are universal, especially within the segments of the market where most newcomers experience the game. Golfers who expect — and, more important, are willing to pay for — super-slick greens and lush rough don't represent a growth opportunity for the industry. They were already heavily invested in the game before 2020.

Course conditions, as 2020 proved, represent the core product. Any trained eye can determine that the product has never been better thanks to teams led by people reading this magazine. The experience is a different matter. Turning Customer B into Customer A requires a different skillset. It means displaying a willingness to enter their realm. Observe how they experience the game and listen to their needs. Collect scientific and anecdotal data on their tendencies. Find time to play a few holes alongside them.

Incredibly unfortunate circumstances presented generational opportunities for golf facilities. Customer B stopped for a preview and demonstrated interest in the experience. Millions of dabblers are on the brink of becoming a Customer A. Think of what proper conversions mean for facilities and careers.

Customer A kept the industry running. Devoting resources in 2021 to understanding Customer B can ensure growth opportunities aren't squandered. **GCI**



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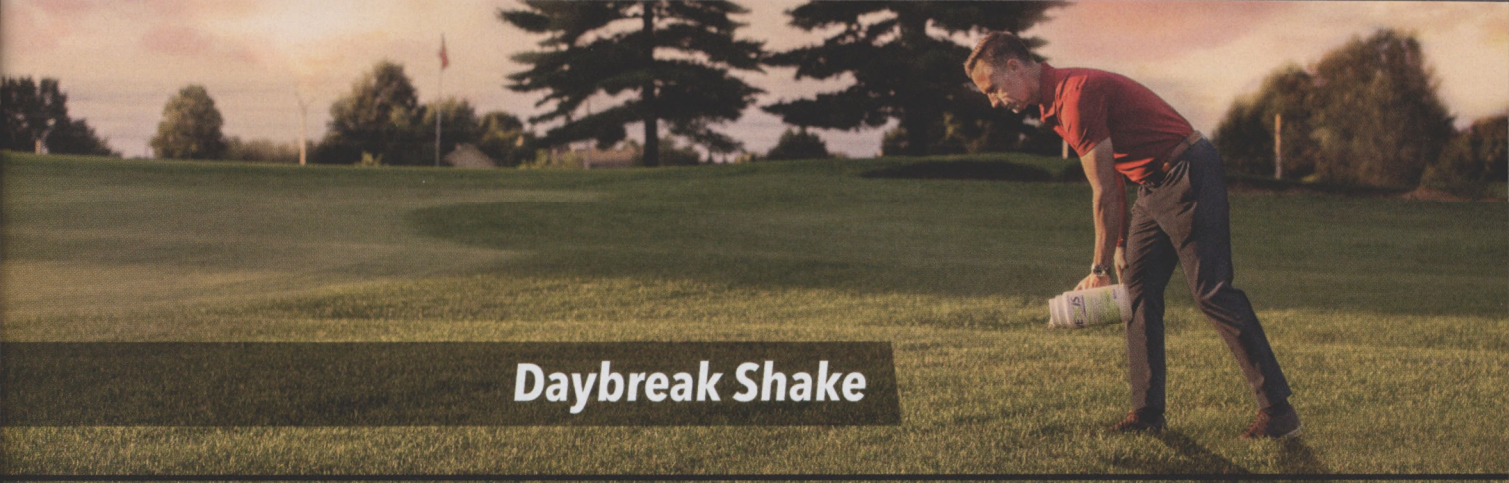
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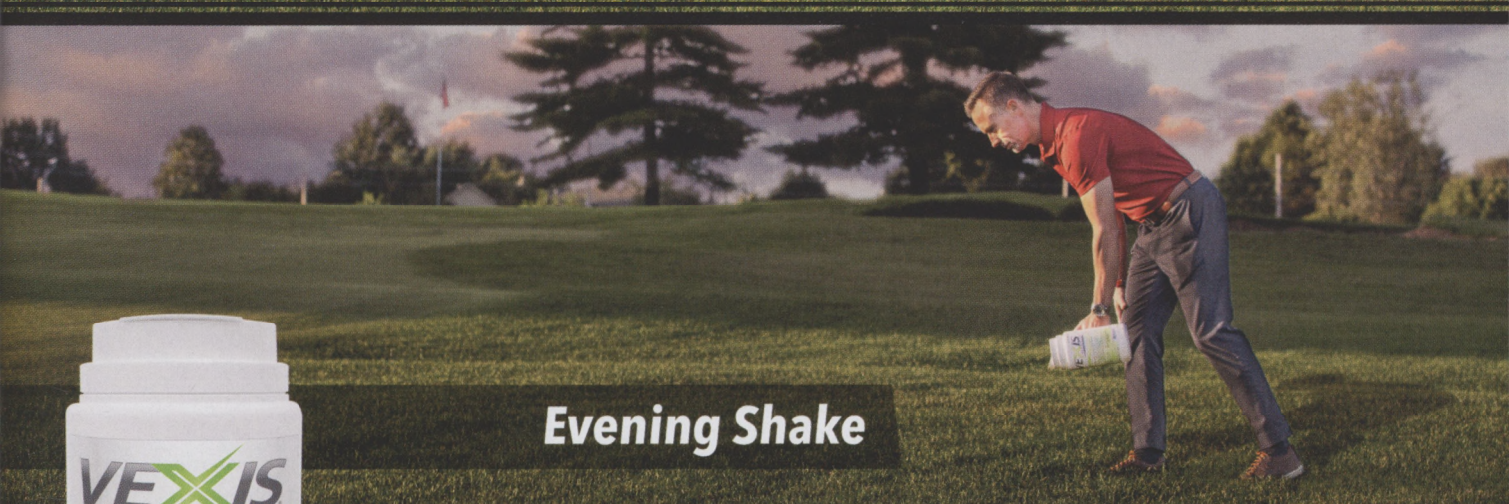




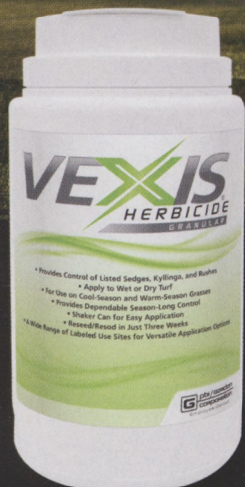
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GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW 2021: A SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Ron Furlong didn't plan on attending the annual event. It then went virtual and he started taking notes on the unique experience.

It's pretty safe to say there has never been a Golf Industry Show like 2021's virtual offering. Like many, I had no idea what to expect. I should point out I'm not an annual attendee of the show. I usually attend about every third year. Living in western Washington, I tend to hit the show when it's on or near the West Coast. San Diego is my favorite, don't-miss site in the rotation. Close, warm and — on a personal note — after the San Diego show ends, I take the Amtrak north to Orange County and visit my sister and her husband for a few days. It's always a pleasant trip.

Having said that, I had not planned on attending the in-person 2021 event because the 2022 show is set for San Diego. For me, one huge benefit to the

2021 virtual show was that I could participate in an event I wasn't planning on attending.

So, how was the virtual show? Although I can only give one person's experience, I'd have to say there was some good, some bad and some so-so. Some of the positives were unexpected, which made them seem even better somehow. And some of the bads were also unexpected — I think this bears out when I say I did not know what to expect of the virtual show — that seemed to make them even more frustrating somehow.

The good

The education sessions were my favorite part of the show. I only purchased the base package, but even with that I

found lots of worthwhile and informative sessions offered. Because it was virtual, logistically, I attended more sessions than I normally would have.

I found that attending a session online, either in Zoom or in a webinar, didn't seem much different than listening to the speakers, watching a PowerPoint presentation and taking notes in person. For the most part, I actually felt like I was in the education session. Even the oddity of having the presenter speaking from their living room or den didn't seem to diminish the experience.

The bad

For me, the trade show was a bit of an odd experience. Normally, I walk the show floor with a hint of an agenda. But, mainly, it's not very scripted. I like to wander a bit aimlessly, eventually stumbling on my targeted vendors while finding lots of other stuff on the way. Scrolling through the virtual trade show map

just wasn't the same. Of course, it couldn't be the same. It was simply bound to be a bit of a weird experience no matter how it was done.

Going into a booth virtually, watching a few videos and perhaps chatting with a rep just didn't quite get me to where I wanted to be. I think one of the things I like about a normal trade show is eavesdropping. Although I do tend to talk with reps about my specific target needs, I like to listen to someone else getting the lowdown. Piggybacking on someone else's questions, especially when it's something I wasn't actually targeting at the show but did have some level of interest in. That part was missing, so I just hit the things I had targeted, missing out on all that other info I normally get from wandering and eavesdropping.

Another negative for me was that I didn't give it my full attention, primarily because I wasn't physically there. In a normal year when I travel to another city and attend the conference, my guess is I'm actually somewhere around 95 percent present at the show. I say 95 percent because most of us remain connected to our courses to a certain level while at the show, usually through our phones. When at the show, I am show focused, first on the education sessions and then the trade show. Aside from checking into work and home a couple times, there are few, if any, distractions.

One mistake I made while attending the virtual show was doing it from work, meaning I invited all kinds of distractions. I thought I could get the crew going in the morning and then devote the rest of my day to GIS. I soon realized that being at work tempts one to ... do some work. Because we have a very small crew in the winter, and because our golf course is still unusually busy even in this colder weather because of COVID-19, I couldn't help but do a little more work on the course than I had planned. I found myself running out to the course numerous times to get something done or check on something and then rushing back to a session. I felt distracted much more than I normally would have.

The so-so

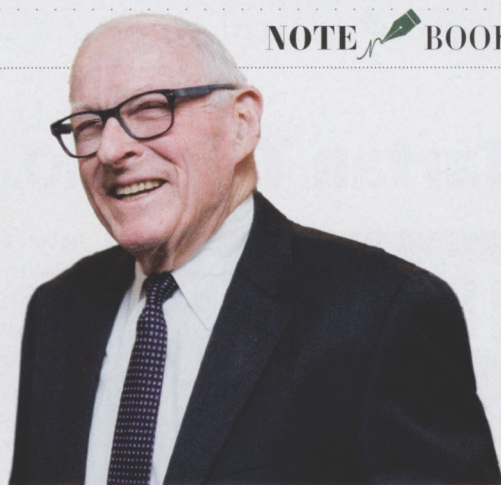
The opening and closing ceremonies were bound to be odd as well and, sure enough, they were. Just like the trade show, there was really no way to do this with any type of normalcy. I attended both sessions only briefly because of the oddity. Again, this was expected, which somehow made it less of a letdown than the trade show.

Networking with our peers is such a big part of the show, whether it's out in the lobby during the education sessions, on the trade show floor, or having a beer in the hotel bar in the evening or breakfast in the morning. This was sorely missing. But we all knew this going in.

The 2021 show was never going to be a normal experience. The fact that there was a show and those of us who attended felt like we got as much out of it as we possibly could have hoped made it a success at some level. It was a daunting task for those who put the effort into this to make it as good as they could. Hats off to them.

Having said that, I really, really hope I get to take my San Diego trip next February.

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



REMEMBERING TONY LAFETRA

Anthony W. "Tony" LaFetra, president and CEO of Rain Bird Corporation, passed away this winter. During LaFetra's tenure, the small irrigation company in Glendora, California was built into an international market leader working to promote The Intelligent Use of Water around the world.

LaFetra led the company's transformation from a manufacturer of brass impact sprinklers, primarily used in agriculture, to a leading provider of irrigation products used worldwide in landscapes, golf courses, sports fields and farms.

LaFetra joined the business in 1964, first serving as a plant manager and later taking on the roles of vice president of sales and marketing, and then executive vice president. In 1978, he succeeded his mother, Rain Bird's co-founder, Mary E. LaFetra, as president and CEO.

His tenure was highlighted by innovations that revolutionized the irrigation industry, from the world's first computerized central control system for irrigation management in the 1970s to the launch of subsurface drip irrigation to save water and reduce the need for herbicides.

LaFetra was an advocate for education. He earned bachelor's and MBA degrees from Stanford University. He was a lifelong learner and placed high value on the education of Rain Bird employees. Many of them attribute their college educations, advanced degrees and less formal education to the support that Rain Bird provided them over the years.

Outside of Rain Bird, LaFetra sat on the boards of directors of several universities. He most recently sat on the board of trustees at the University of La Verne and he donated generously to establish the LaFetra College of Education.

Tartan Talks No. 56



Robert McNeil designs, restores, renovates and manages golf courses in the Northeast. He even owns one. He's also a terrific podcast guest.

McNeil's appearance on the Tartan Talks podcast resembled the type of golf he tries to promote: fast-paced and flexible. Topics ranged from how learning the game at charming Donald Ross-designed Whitinsville Golf Club in Whitinsville, Massachusetts, shaped his future work to his experiences owning Kings Crossing Golf Club in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. Whitinsville and Kings Crossing, coincidentally, are 9-hole courses.

McNeil purchased Kings Crossing, which is just eight miles from his Rhode Island home in 2014. Last year proved good for business as Kings Crossing experienced a 20 percent increase in play, according to McNeil.

"Most courses did very well as far as rounds go and as well as introducing new players to the game," he says. "The key is how you hold onto those players and what percentage stay in the game."

McNeil has plenty of retention ideas and some of those concepts are illustrated in his short-course work at The Reserve and The Links at Mendham. His list of current projects includes "The Hoot," a 9-hole short course at Owl's Nest Resort in New Hampshire. In addition to working on condensed courses, McNeil has received opportunities to restore Ross, the architect whose work he grew up playing every summer day at Whitinsville.



"It's an honor and it's a fun thing to watch," McNeil says. "When you have a little dream when you're 14 years old and it comes out to happen the way you kind of envisioned, what else can you ask for?"

Visit the Superintendent Radio Network page on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and other popular podcast distribution services to hear the entire conversation.

COURSE NEWS

San Vicente Golf Resort in Ramona, California, completed a comprehensive renovation plan that upgrades the golf experience while dramatically improving long-term sustainability of the original 1972 Ted Robinson design. Andy Staples, ASGCA, directed the plan to fully renovate all greens, bunkers and tee complexes to increase strategy and provide a unique style and aesthetic to the San Diego golf market. The project allowed longtime superintendent Pat Shannon to complete a needed renovation prior to his

retirement. Australian-born Ben McBride has been named Shannon's replacement.

Sterling Grove Golf & Country Club, a new semi-private club in Surprise, Arizona, opened for preview play last month. The 18-hole Nicklaus Design golf course is the first new course to open for public play in Arizona since 2016. Set against the backdrop of the White Tank Mountains, the course showcases features from Golden Age architecture. As the course

matures, more than 1,700 trees will grow to line fairways and further define the routing. The Sterling Grove course will ultimately become part of a private club.

Toro and Pebble Beach Resorts finalized an agreement naming Toro as the official supplier of golf course maintenance equipment for the resort's collection of golf courses, which includes Pebble Beach Golf Links, Spyglass Hill Golf Course, The Links at Spanish Bay and Del Monte Golf Course.

Escalante Golf acquired The International in Bolton, Massachusetts — the only 36-hole private golf club in the Greater Boston area. The club includes courses designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and Tom Fazio.

Heritage Golf Group announced the purchase of the **Shackamaxon Country Club**, a century-old private club in Union County, New Jersey, with an A.W. Tillinghast-designed course. Shackamaxon is the ninth property to join the Heritage Golf Group portfolio.

INDUSTRY **buzz**



The Musser International Turfgrass Foundation selected **Cameron M. Stephens** as the 2021 Award of Excellence recipient. Stephens earned a Ph.D. in plant pathology at NC State, where he pursued a dissertation entitled, "Etiology, Epidemiology, and Management of Take-all Root Rot on Golf Course Putting Greens." He has already accepted a position as the technical market manager for Turf & Ornamentals for BASF in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

FMC announced an exclusive supply agreement with Nisso America to market and sell Picarbutrazox fungicide for use in the golf market. Picarbutrazox is a new mode of action fungicide for control of Pythium diseases. EPA registration is anticipated in 2021 and FMC expects to formally launch the product in early 2022.

John Deere agreed for its golf and sports dealer network to sell and support the Wiedenmann Corporation line of aeration solutions. Through the agreement, customers can purchase Wiedenmann products at John Deere dealers.

Mark F. Jordan, CGCS and natural resource leader at Westfield Country Club in Westfield Center, Ohio, was elected to a one-year term as president of GCSAA at the association's annual meeting Feb. 4. He is the 85th president in the association's history. A 34-year GCSAA member, Jordan is also a member and past president of the Northern Ohio GCSA.

Toro acquired TURFLYNX, a privately held developer of autonomous mowing equipment for golf courses. The new Toro employees will continue to be based in Portugal. TURFLYNX is recognized for introducing the industry's first fully autonomous, all-electric fairway mower in 2016.

The USGA announced LPGA Commissioner **Mike Whan** will join the organization this summer as CEO. He will become the eighth top executive in USGA history and replaces

Mike Davis, who will depart later this year to team with Tom Fazio II in a new course design venture.

More than 9,300 attendees participated in

the virtual **Golf Industry Show**, according to numbers released by the GCSAA. The education component of the event included 88 sessions, and more than 200 exhibitors participated in the trade show.



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Managing Stress in the Heat of Summer



By Paul Giordano, Ph.D.,
Green Solutions Team
Specialist, Bayer

Summer's here, and it's brought the toughest time for golf courses – and superintendents – across the country. For many, the tolls of summer stress on turf are already apparent. Whether general chlorosis, poor vigor, reduced density, diminished root systems, increased disease activity or overall inferior turf quality, the symptoms of stress won't let up anytime soon.

Most superintendents take the necessary steps months in advance to protect and prepare turf from summer heat, drought, and the most difficult to manage stresses like shade and traffic. However, even the best preparation can't fully prevent the inevitable effects of biotic and abiotic stresses.

So how do you manage the stress once it's arrived? The good news is, it's not too late.

Cultural Practices

There are several cultural tactics that help mitigate the most challenging mid-summer stressors. Encouraging sufficient air movement by pruning/removing trees and installing/using fans, spoon feeding nutrition, reducing moisture extremes (too wet or too dry), and directing foot and mechanical traffic away from vulnerable areas can all help mitigate abiotic stress.

There are also measures that can help turf bounce back faster. These include raising the height of cut and alternating mowing and rolling to accomplish the effective increase in mowing height while still maintaining green speeds. Raising mowing height is one of the single most helpful strategies for improving turf quality by encouraging more leaf surface area to drive photosynthesis, carbon metabolism, cellular development and root growth.

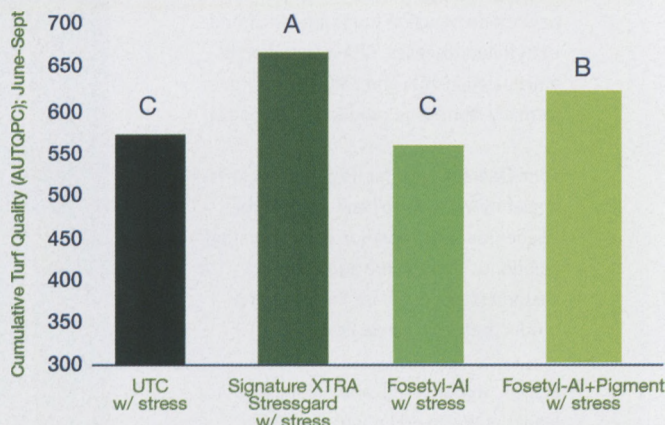
More Than Disease Management

Most turf diseases are opportunists that take advantage of a compromised plant. Disease can often be the "final straw" that takes a stressed plant to the point of no return. A robust, preventive fungicide program that covers the bases of both fungal and oomycete pathogens can help combat disease and ensure better survival during times of elevated stress.

However, in the brutal heat of summer, superintendents need more than disease management. Stressgard® fungicides from Bayer deliver benefits that extend well beyond disease control, as they're specifically designed to increase turf's tolerance to, and recovery from:

- Heat
- Drought
- Traffic
- Shade issues and light quality
- Oxidative stress

These benefits are evident in recent research on heavy shade and traffic stresses. The research, conducted by Dr. Bingru Huang at Rutgers University, studied the impact of Signature™ XTRA Stressgard from Bayer, which includes the active ingredient (a.i.) fosetyl-Al. Over the course of 3 months, Signature Xtra Stressgard showed significantly improved turf quality under high stress conditions compared to a generic fosetyl-Al and fosetyl-Al tank mixed with a pigment.



All treatments were applied at commensurate labeled rates (4 oz per 1000 sq ft.) on a 14 day interval. Means followed by different letters are significantly different according to statistical analysis.

The Bottom Line

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The best way to combat summer stress is to implement cultural and chemical practices aimed at improving root growth and photosynthesis throughout the year.

Combined with the versatility, consistency and satisfaction that Stressgard brings, superintendents can feel confident their turf can survive the dog days of summer. That may mean less hand watering or lower run times, less scouting or babysitting problem areas, a higher comfort level when using plant growth regulators, greater peace of mind during heavy periods of play, and more time to do things other than worrying about summer turf stress. Bottom line: your summer just got better with Stressgard.

For additional guidance, visit es.bayer.us/stressgard or send me an email at paul.giordano@bayer.com.



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STAFFING FOR SUCCESS: PART 2

Game Plan continues its series on staffing for success with the second of three installments. After looking at how the pandemic has afforded club and course managers the opportunity to reevaluate their teams and redefine job descriptions, we turn to finding and hiring the right team members.

As businesses reshape themselves into leaner and more efficient operations, top performers are the best value their money can buy.

A great many Americans are currently unemployed and looking for a job. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 6.7 percent of the labor force — more than 10 million people — is out of work. Finding top performers for rising needs in club management roles should be easy work, right? If only it were a simple matter of statistics.

As management professionals in any business know, the magic is finding the right person for the right job. With the war for talent continuing to escalate, we turn to three experts to help us identify the best practices for optimum staffing in these turbulent times.

JIM COLLINS: GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE ON THE BUS

Step one, as management thinker Jim Collins advises in his best-seller “Good to Great,” is to start by “getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats” before heading down the proverbial highway. In other words, focus on “who” before determining “what.”

Those who build great organizations make sure they have a

busload of people who can adapt and perform brilliantly no matter what comes next. Selecting the right people is a matter of clearly deciding what types of people — attitudes, talents, backgrounds, skillsets — are needed to enable your team to accomplish great things.

JEFF BEZOS: ASK THESE THREE QUESTIONS

The Amazon founder uses a straightforward three-question guide for hiring key employees. Bezos’ three questions offer direct application to the management of golf and private clubs and are particularly useful during unpredictable circumstances.

1. Will you admire this person? “If you think about the people you’ve admired in your life, they are probably people you’ve been able to learn or take an example from,” Bezos says. This discipline requires that management first knows who he or she is and has a clear-eyed understanding of the strengths and benefits that are needed for any position. Hiring managers do well to ask themselves:

- What traits and attributes inspire me to be my best?
- What do we need?
- To what do we aspire?

2. Will this person raise the average level of effectiveness of the group they are entering? Will the candidate increase the efficiency within the organization? Is he or she able to see around the corner and anticipate needs? Are they willing to challenge established norms and traditions? (Should

course setup be executed in the afternoon instead of first thing each day? Can mechanical work be executed after hours by veterans who need extra work?)

3. Along what dimension might the person be a superstar? Listen to candidates’ answers. Push for details. Ask follow-up questions to understand how your candidate thinks and imagines your operation. One is more likely to be a superstar when he or she is encouraged to make others better.

REGINA HARTLEY: HIRE THE SCRAPPER

Throughout her 25-year UPS career — working in talent acquisition, succession planning, learning and development, employee relations, and communications — Hartley has seen how people with passion and purpose will astound you when given the opportunity. That’s why she says, “Hire the scrapper.” She defines scrappers as people who have had to fight against the odds to get ahead. They differ from those she calls the “silver spoons” — people who have had clear advantages in their lives and from birth seem destined for success.

Before tossing the résumé of someone who has obviously scrapped his or her way to the experience and skills that qualify them for a job in your organization, at least give them an interview, Hartley says: “A résumé tells a story. A patchwork quilt of odd jobs and experiences may signal a lack of focus and unpredictability. Or it may indicate a committed struggle against obstacles.” **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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Clubhouse manager Ryan Hingston, former superintendent Bob Hingston and new superintendent Travis Williams are three big reasons for John P. Clarkin Country Club's recent surge.

GREEN MOUNTAIN MAGIC

A former high school athletics director, a teenage maintenance crew and a Scotch-swilling bartender are among the colorful characters who make John P. Larkin Country Club in Windsor, Vermont come alive.

By **Matt LaWell**

During the weeks and months after the old Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company plant shuttered for good, Maxine Griswold stayed on her feet and filled her days waiting tables around Windsor, Vermont.

Griswold had celebrated her 53rd birthday less than a month earlier. She was happy and able to wait tables, but after so many years inside the plant she wanted more. Where was the thrill? Where was the fun?

Just a couple miles south of the plant, as it turned out, inside the clubhouse of a 9-hole golf course.

Over more than 30 springs, summers and falls, Griswold tended bar, collected green fees and generally kept the clubhouse in working order



Approaching its centennial, John P. Larkin is a community cornerstone for Windsor, the Birthplace of Vermont.

at John P. Larkin Country Club, a public course where a strong and errant drive can land in the Connecticut River and where the tee boxes and clubhouse alike filled up over the years with an incredible cast of characters. There were business leaders, of course, and small business owners, all of them churning and chipping alongside each other. There were the longtime regulars, too, who played three or four rounds every week, then headed inside afterward for a couple more. There was a retired arborist named Jacques who was dubbed Jocko (or perhaps Jacques-o) because everybody in Windsor seems to have a nickname. There were Griswold's own sons, Dennis, an executive chef, and Don, a mechanic everybody

called Grizzy who once considered golf to be "a stupid game" before he started fixing carts and received a set of clubs from his brother. There was Griswold herself, often clapping backs, grabbing behinds and imbibing in an occasional Scotch, to hear Grizzy tell the story.

And, in 1978, there was a young couple, just married and just arrived in Windsor, who joined the club—JPL for short, still another nickname—and started playing most Friday nights. They were in their 20s and already quickly becoming a part of the fabric of the club, a part of the next generation.

But after five or six seasons, they welcomed their first child, a son, and they played less and less often, and then not at

all. Life interrupted their time on the links.

More regulars followed their exit, for all sorts of reasons, and JPL struggled. Like so many thousands of other courses across the country, its very survival teetered more than once.

Again and again, it managed to hang on.



LIFELONG LEARNER

Unless you happen to be driving in from Maine, New Hampshire, parts of northern New York or Vermont, or perhaps Quebec, you can follow Interstate 91 North all the way to the Hartland / Windsor exit to reach John P. Larkin Country Club. The course is about two and a half miles off the ramp and it can sneak up on you, a beautiful flash of green as you drive along U.S. Route 5.

Windsor is home to one entrance to what was, for more than 150 years, the country's longest covered bridge. The Constitution of Vermont, the first document in U.S. history to explicitly ban slavery, was signed in the town back in July 1777 and gives the town its own nickname: the Birthplace of Vermont. Windsor is the kind of place where state championship

**“
Even at my age, you truly can be
a lifelong learner. You're never too old.**

— Bob Hingston

Vermont Golf by the Numbers

66 FACILITIES **56** DAILY FEE **1** MUNICIPAL

9 PRIVATE **21** 9-HOLE COURSES **42** 18-HOLE COURSES **3** 27 HOLES OR MORE

Source: National Golf Foundation 2020 Golf Facilities Report

high school teams receive a police and fire escort through the square, conquering heroes returning to flashing headlights and honking horns.

It is home to JPL, too, one of 21 9-holers and 66 total facilities spread across the Green Mountain State — and to Bob Hingston, the former Windsor High School athletics director and dean of students who started working at the club shortly after he stepped back from those positions in 2015. Hingston worked at a local hardware store and later in sporting goods before shifting full time to coaching but ask around and most everybody knows him as Mr. Windsor. He seemed to be at every Yellowjackets home game for 16 years. He could run for mayor if that post existed.

Hingston maintained a variety of playing fields, courts and surfaces during those years but he had next to no golf course maintenance experience when former JPL superintendent Steve Ashworth mentioned he could use more help outside. Hingston was just shy of his 64th birthday and had started working in the clubhouse earlier that summer, about 20 hours a week. He added some mowing

to his schedule. The next summer, he was outside with Ashworth full time.

“Bob picked up things very quickly,” Ashworth says. “You sent him off to do something, it got done. You didn’t have to check it.”

Ashworth retired from the position in 2017 after two full decades at the club — he was the mechanic his first two years — to return to his family farm in Westmoreland, New Hampshire, where he spends days baling hay and tending to bees. The board hired Bo Taft, a talented young turf pro who had worked most recently at The Quechee Club in Quechee, Vermont. Hingston worked alongside Taft as he had Ashworth, soaking up enough knowledge of process and projects that when Taft received an offer he couldn’t turn down early during the 2019 season — superintendent at Hanover Country Club at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire — Hingston was able to step up to interim superintendent. On the brink of 68, Hingston was working more than 70 hours a week.

“Bo gave about a month’s notice so I started drinking up more knowledge from him,” Hingston says. “I knew about mow-

ing, the importance of keeping grass at the right level, mowing in different directions for the health of the plant, watering. Steve was really good about teaching me what to look for on the greens — dollar spot, whether it needed more moisture — and I learned about fertilizers a little bit, but I was a novice for sure. I never thought I would have to run things.”

JPL is a small enough course in terms of acreage and budget that there is almost never money for a traditional assistant superintendent. That first season, Hingston filled his summer crew with three teenagers — a 17-year-old named Dylan DeSchamp who’s now a freshman studying turfgrass at Penn State, a 16-year-old named Caden and a 15-year-old named Cooper.

“The big challenge was there was some stuff I couldn’t have them do,” Hingston says. “Because of his age, I couldn’t have Cooper driving any of the big mowers, I couldn’t have him running the chainsaw when we were cutting brush. He could run a weed-wacker and he could run a push-mower, but he had to do a bunch of the grunt work because of his age.”

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

John P. Larkin Country Club's Bob Hingston has learned plenty after six years on the course, 16 years in schools, 22 years in hardware and sporting goods sales, and nearly 70 years of life. Here's a sampling:

I didn't want to be a guy going to work in a machine shop or in an office where I had to wear a coat and tie every day. I just thought it was a good style of life.

I work to stay fit. It's not as easy as it was when I was 35.

There's a difference between getting out and doing stuff yourself and making sure that other people are doing what they're supposed to be doing, planning the day out, that type of stuff.

Don't lie to me, don't steal from me, and if something comes up that's kind of crazy, tell me and we'll work through it together.

And if you're going to be late getting home, just call.

Could I have been a better parent in some ways? Probably, for sure, but my Dad told me one time, 'We did the best we could.' I feel the same way. I was always there for them. We're family.

My Dad was a special guy. I said at his funeral, there will never be a street named after him or a stadium or anything like that, but he gave us a great example. I never saw my parents argue or fight, they never cursed at us. I was pretty lucky. It wasn't all wine and roses, but I think overall, they loved us and they showed us a good work ethic — we certainly got that from them.

My Mom would always say, 'Teachers are born, not made,' and I think she's right. You either have that ability to reach out to people, to read people, or you don't.

It's all about relationships. That's the backbone of life — your family, your friends, your coworkers.

If you make fun of yourself, kids know you're a real person.

If you're a hard worker, an honest person and willing to learn, you can always find employment.

I'm not leaving till the job's done.





In Windsor, we live and die by people like Maxine and Grizzy and Jocko, all the people who come and help us. It's a close, tightknit community and it takes each one of us to help the place survive.

— Bo Taft

Hingston promised Friday cheeseburgers from nearby Frazer's Place if the teenage trio worked hard during the week — though he admits, "I was always going to buy them anyway." At the end of the first season, Hingston lobbied the board for the three to receive more substantial cash bonuses. The board agreed.

A fan of collaboration and a builder of relationships, Hingston also developed working friendships with several area superintendents just as he had over the years with area athletics directors. That allowed for regular equipment exchanges and afforded JPL the use of a fairway aerator from neighboring Claremont Country Club, just over the river in Claremont, New Hampshire, and a verticutter from Granliden Golf Course in Sunapee, New Hampshire — both thanks to current Granliden general manager Andy Fowler. Hingston supplements his active, on-course education by watching Grizzy work on equipment and breaking down YouTube videos as if they were game film.

"Even at my age, you truly can be a lifelong learner," says Hingston, who is the son of two educators, the grandson of another, and a graduate of Springfield College, where James Naismith created basketball and Amos Alonzo Stagg helped pioneer modern football. "You're never too old."

DEVELOPING THE FUTURE

Hingston is old enough, though, to implement a succession plan for JPL. He will become a septuagenarian this summer, after all.

Prior to the 2020 season, the board hired Travis Williams, more than a quarter of a century Hingston's junior, who had worked at Claremont as well as at two Colorado courses before a 12-year detour into carpentry. The pandemic delayed the formal superintendent transition by a season and is in full swing as tee sheets start to fill up next month.

Because of the addition of a second fulltime turf pro, the budget allowed for only one of the three teenagers to return last season. In love with turf,

DeSchamp dove in while his classmates and former colleagues opted for summer spots with a local landscaping company and a family carpentry business.

"I started to learn how to use the greens mower the first week of my second summer," DeSchamp says. "My third summer, I continued to mow the greens and I started to mow the fairways and work with Bob and Travis on irrigation." He can add rough and tee box mowing, and equipment maintenance to his growing résumé, too.

At Penn State, his advisor "is a turf management professor and he was pretty surprised about how far along I've come and what I've done on courses. I think working at a small 9-hole course with a low number of staff helped. You have to know how to do everything."

"Dylan is a stud," Williams says. "He's going to handle a private golf course someday. ... He's a great student, he's great at what he does and he can do pretty much everything. And we have him for one more year."

With Hingston, Williams and DeSchamp on the course this season, JPL should be able to continue a long turnaround that has improved playing conditions, further beautified a course that already has stunning mountain views — and helped add 36 new members last season, increasing the total to 143.

And there is work to do.

"The course is so quirky," says Williams, who gained an interest in turf after watching his Dad, Larry, mow and stripe their nearby acre and a half plot throughout his childhood. "It's the fine line between 'you have to do things a certain way' and 'that's the way they've always been done.'"

"We have to fix the third green. It's been every superintendent's nemesis. We have to fix that this year. The soil is really bad and it just doesn't grow grass on one corner. It's embarrassing and it's looked like that forever. We have to expand the seventh green, too, because that's gotten shorter and shorter every year. And the eighth green, I have to get control on eight. It's down in a hole



Open To All

Nearly 74 percent of all courses in the United States are either municipal or daily fee. The states highest on that list might surprise you.

1. Alaska	100%	6. Wisconsin	88.9%
2. North Dakota	93.2%	7. Iowa	86.8%
3. South Dakota	92.9%	8. Michigan	86.2%
4. Maine	92.5%	9. Nebraska	86.1%
5. Minnesota	90.8%	10. Vermont	85.9%

Source: National Golf Foundation 2020 Golf Facilities Report

and doesn't get any air and the mold just takes over."

"It's not the longest course and it doesn't have the biggest undulations in the green," says Ryan Hingston, the 36-year-old son of Bob and his wife, Candy. Ryan returned to Windsor in late 2019 after six winters in the ski industry to live closer to the rest of his family

PHOTO COURTESY OF TRAVIS WILLIAMS

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and now manages the clubhouse. “But golf is a game where you don’t have to have all those crazy challenges in order for it to be a challenge. There are some small greens at JPL and it’s pretty wide open, but we still have a lot of high-level golfers come here and struggle a little bit. As long as you have a good environment and you’re around people you want to be around and everybody’s respectful, it’s still a great day on the golf course.”

Ryan would know. A Windsor native, he played the course probably thousands of times starting around age 10 — about a decade after his parents, once that young couple new to town who became Friday regulars — through high school. The course was a part of his life even when he focused more on baseball and football, playing in a combined three state championship games in those sports and winning one gridiron crown.

The course is still a part of life — not just for Ryan or his parents, but for anybody who wants to play nine or 18 holes.

Every local business is important in a town with fewer than 4,000 residents where every major employer is long gone — Cone Blanchard, a machine tool manufacturer, and the Southeast State Correctional Facility eventually followed Goodyear — and every tax dollar is important. JPL is almost a public trust, but it will never be run as a nonprofit, multiple people around the town say, because its property tax value and annual water bill are too valuable for the town to give up.

“It’s a working man’s course,” says Grizzly, a 17-year member and longtime mechanic who started working on the club’s equipment a couple years ago. “And the people who actually play there are very friendly people. Next thing you know, you have 20 or 30 people

sitting on the back deck, having a good time, everybody knows everybody. It’s really nice.”

EVERYBODY’S HOME COURSE

What does the future hold for 9-holers in general and for JPL in particular? More than one-quarter of all the 14,336 golf facilities across the country contain a 9-hole course — 26.3 percent, to be exact — according to the 2020 Golf Facilities Report published by the National Golf Foundation. Couple that with the increase in rounds played and the corresponding rise of new and returning golfers and an industry more willing than ever before to cater to different skills and play preferences, and that percentage might go up over the next decade.

“The last two, three years, the place has thrown money at the turf,” says Taft, the former superintendent who now

LARKIN continues on 46

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TURF WARS

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With one major exception: When there is a job opening in our area.

Then, our stripes change, our claws come out and it's every superintendent for him or herself.

From what I've heard — true or not — there is regional bias in some areas of the country. South Florida, Long Island, Chicago, Texas, the Carolinas, Southern California and the Hawaiian Islands are "known" as being "territorial." Which means when jobs open up, there is a belief that the candidates and the chosen candidate must come from within the region, or within a geographically close network.

Why?

Some say that candidates coming from outside the "boundaries"

(their word, not mine!), lack the local turf knowledge or experience, as in "if not from (insert region), you can't grow grass here!" and you don't have the connections or vendor contacts.

There is also "I've waited my entire career for this job, it should be mine!" attitude as if working in a region gives you better qualifications. Where in the bylaws of any regional superintendent's association did they create an entitlement program?

Who a club chooses is not up to you. It is purely and wholly the decision of the club — either a club committee or a search firm working at the direction of the club board. The mandate is always to bring the club the best candidates based on an established set of criteria, which might include specific turf knowledge, renovation experience, past success preparing courses for events or dozens of other attributes.

It's not up to the local, state or national superintendent's association to place the candidate — unless asked.

Now, let's say a good job in your area does come open. What should you do?

If you've trained hard and gone through the processes to become a skilled golf course superintendent, you should apply. As a member of the GCSAA, it is your right to apply for publicly or privately announced jobs. That's one of the benefits of membership.

But that's all. You have no more right to the job than any other candidate, no matter where they're coming from. It's fine for local or state associations to encourage a club to hire

one of their own; you want your local organizations on your side. There should be no repercussions. The process should, and must, always be fair. If nothing else, think of the Golden Rule: Do you want to be shunned if you're applying for a job outside of your area?

As for the claims that someone from outside the region "can't grow grass here," that's false. Whenever one of the club search committees I'm working with raises these concerns, I respond by saying, "we/I went to turf school. I/we didn't go to Southern turf school, Southwestern turf school or Northeastern turf school. The turf growing process really doesn't vary much from region to region."

In a new position, the greatest challenge is to learn and become familiar with the local growing environment and microclimates. This is true in any region, even if you take a position just down the road from your current job. We all are aware that each course is different, and, in many instances, courses change from hole to hole.

In my own 40-plus years in the business, I've worked in several different regions, from Connecticut to the Carolinas to Florida, to Texas and back to Florida. And while I was regularly kidded for being a "Yankee from the north," no one ever told me I couldn't work somewhere due to a lack of local turf knowledge.

Most important, whatever you might lack in "local" knowledge will be more than made up for by your work ethic, **MORAGHAN** continues on 47



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

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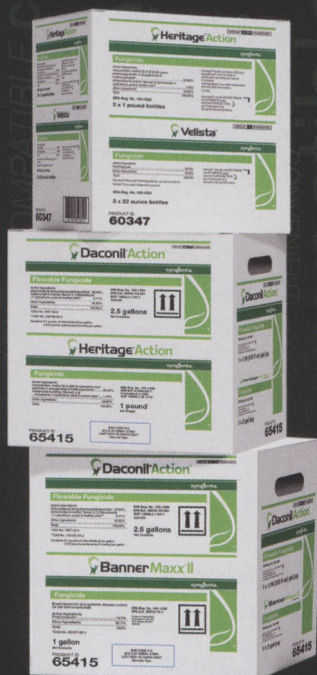
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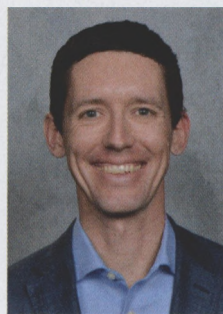
By **Rick Woelfel**

An enthusiastic superintendent strives to create a welcoming environment for the wide variety of players who experience the par-3 layout at Colorado's CommonGround Golf Course.

Mitch Savage has a fondness for par-3 courses. He's worked at three different facilities that feature short layouts, including CommonGround Golf Course, a public facility in Aurora, Colorado, where he celebrates his first anniversary as the head superintendent this month.

Savage, who started working on golf courses when he was in high school before matriculating at the University of Minnesota, believes that short courses have an essen-

tial place in the golf industry. "I think they're critical, especially when you look at the generations of younger folks who are hopefully going to be picking up golf clubs," he says. "I think we certainly saw that in 2020 more people were venturing out into golf courses. But I think the biggest thing with the younger generation is they aren't going to be quite as apt to want to spend as much time on the golf course as some of the older genera-



▲ Savage

tion or the golf purists."

CommonGround serves as the headquarters for the Colorado Golf Association. Its championship course attracts an abundance of Denver-area golfers and visiting tourists. But its 9-hole short course is no less popular. Designed by Tom Doak, it was built roughly a decade ago in conjunction

with a renovation of the championship course. The layout measures 997 yards with holes

ranging in length from 72 to 142 yards. It features just a single bunker and greens are that generally flat. "It's definitely a welcoming course for someone who is either not experienced at golf or a higher handicapper," Savage says.

The short course has a varied clientele to say the least. On a typical day, visitors might include groups of ladies or seniors looking to spend a relaxing morning on the course but who might only have a finite amount of time available.

Some low handicappers might turn up, seeking to work on their short games. And then there are those who are new to the game and experiencing golf for the first time in a comfortable setting.

"You definitely can tell when you have the low handicapper out using it as a practice facility," Savage says. "They'll tend to hit a few more balls into the greens and they're working on specific shots and stuff, but overall, you just kind of get the person who wants to come out and play a quick nine holes in an hour or less and enjoy their time in a foursome with a group of friends."

In 2020, rounds on the short course increased by 112 percent over the previous year. Many of those rounds were complimentary; CommonGround allows those 18-and-under to play the short course without charge.

During the golf season, Savage's staff numbers approximately 15, including himself, an assistant and a mechanic, for 27 holes. He does not specifically assign a crew to the short course.

"It's a team effort," he says, "and we just incorporate the maintenance of that part of the property. It's just part of our daily maintenance routine. That's not to say that I don't someday see myself possibly assigning an individual or two to kind of give them ownership of it, kind of have a foreman that runs the show down there for me, but at the moment we don't. It's a team effort."

In terms of agronomy the two courses differ in that the par-3 course

features push-up greens while the putting surfaces on the championship course are sand-based. But the two courses are maintained in similar fashion.

"We do treat those par-3 course greens," Savage says. "We fertilize, we spray them, we aerate them. They basically are on a very similar, if not the exact same, management program as any other green out here on the golf course but they are a different soil makeup."

Savage developed many of his philosophies about maintaining a par-3 course when he worked at Broken Tee Golf Course in Inglewood, Colorado, another Denver suburb.

"When I became superintendent at Broken Tee, I just felt it was important to place as much importance and priority on the par-3 course as I could," Savage recalls. "Certainly, if something comes up, you have to tend to the championship course first. But from my days at Broken Tee and everything we've done here at CommonGround it's certainly not just (a case of) 'We'll get to the par-3 course when we get to it.' Some days, we will intentionally send somebody down to mow the par-3 course greens while somebody starts on the championship greens and then when they're done on the par-3 greens, they jump in on the championship course."

Like he did at Broken Tee, Savage strives for his team to complete work on the short course without interfering with play.

"I noticed (at Broken Tee) that the par-3 course would get busy in the mornings and I didn't want to be up there getting in peoples' way trying to mow a green when they're trying to enjoy a nice, quiet morning on the par-3 course," he says. "So, I've always tried to find a way and work with my crew to say, 'Hey, this is going to be a busy morning on the par-3 course, potentially. Let's make sure we get up there and get greens mowed and get some of the most important maintenance needs done so that if we have to go back at



a later time, we're not as intrusive."

Apart from daily play, the short course fills an essential role in CommonGround's and the Colorado Golf Association's efforts to grow the game. It is a venue for various junior clinics, Ronald McDonald Houses, Special Olympics and Big Brothers/Big Sisters events to name a few. Savage is also planning to host GCSAA First Green field trips. He sees short courses having a key role in the game's future.

"Whether they be 6-hole courses or 9-hole courses, whatever they may be, they offer just a quick, fun in and out," Savage says. "You still get fresh air, get exercise, and enjoy the game of golf, but you don't have to make a four- or five-hour commitment to do it. I think that's going to be critical to getting people to pick up clubs and keeping them interested in the game of golf." **GCI**

▲ The short course at CommonGround hosts programs for golfers of all skill levels.



From *Charities* to **CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Fun and fast? Or figuring out who deserves the trophy?
Understanding setup can ensure participants speak
fondly of your course.

By **Judd Spicer**

With a round-by-round return to a semblance of national normalcy, the turn of the scorecard to 2021 is finding the golf world readying for an influx of on-course events.

Coupled with the rapid rise of playing popularity for golfers both nascent and returning, the fresh calendar looks to bring a sweet slew of championship and charity tournaments to golf properties in many pockets of the country.

After nearly a year of lost events, a refresh of course setup details overt and nuanced alike dots the tee sheet, along with a checklist of reminders for knowing one's audience for the day.

"Planning, scheduling and knowing your clientele is all so important," says Billy Lewis, superintendent at the Dormie Club in West End, North Carolina. "And communication with the golf staff about expectations is also a big factor."

For charity events, the tenets of a fun, fast and fondly recalled day need to be on the leaderboard for both the golf staff and the agronomy team.

"Hosting charity events, it sounds like obvious stuff, but it all needs to be taken into account," says Todd Jenkins, PGA, vice president of Tennessee-based Better Billy Bunker and the former head pro at Old Hickory Country Club in suburban Nashville. "Simplified hole locations, center of the green and shorter rough cuts; and while there are a lot of courses which pride themselves on 'tournament speed' greens, the charity day is time to slow them down just a bit. Utilizing different tees and moving them forward a little also helps create more enjoyment for the participants."

Ensuring a swift pace equates to a pleasing day.

"A lot of times you'll have a full field, so you need to get people around the golf course in a timely way," Jenkins says. "So tucking every hole location or having 5-inch primary rough—that doesn't equate

to getting people around quickly, and really isn't all that much fun for those players."

Whether event hosts are public, semi-private or on the high end of the club spectrum, preparation proves near uniform for charity event setup.

"We won't roll as much, and target a good, medium green speed," Lewis says. "We want guests to be challenged, sure, but we really want them to enjoy the property; things like making pins more puttable and setting up some fun pins as we've got a couple places where players can spin a ball off a mound and hit a 'television shot.' And we also want a good visual event and presentation, even something like putting some flowers up on a couple tees for a ladies' event."

For superintendents who have ample experience on both sides of the ropes, empathy translates to an onus on enjoyment.

"I go for playability and don't try to go too crazy," says Steve Gilley,

superintendent at Panorama Golf Club in The Woodlands, Texas and a veteran of 13 years in pro golf, including 15 Korn Ferry Tour events. "We want to present the course as well as we can, so I'll move up some tees, maybe not roll the greens that day and have pins set in the center."

"Golf is a hard game. People struggle with it enough. As both a super and somebody who has played at a high level, I don't personally mind a difficult setup, but I also recognize that the average player just wants to have some fun, enjoy some camaraderie and meet some good people."

Course operators and superintendents also need to pay heed to the axiom that first impressions often prove the most memorable.

"As a semi-private course, we might have people out here who have never played our course before," says Gilley, winner of the 2019 GCSAA championship. "Golf is so much about word of mouth. We want people to come back. I want them to walk away thinking, 'Hey, that was a really nice place. Maybe I'll think about joining.' The more people we can have out here playing, the better it is for our business."

Jenkins concurs: "It's so key to remember that, for the visiting group, it may be their most important day of the year. You have to provide them with a high-quality product, and that goes for both the golf and agronomy side. If you're a private club, a charity outing may be the only time that some people ever get to play your facility. It could be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for them."

Segueing to competitive events—whether it be a club championship, PGA section tournament, USGA



▲ Gilley



▲ Jenkins



▲ Lewis

qualifier or professional contest — invites a graduated mindset for setup, along with ample advance prep.

“For PGA section events, for example, those entities will come out beforehand, and they’re certainly looking to present a challenge and want the greens really rolling,” Lewis says. “So we’ll start topdressing, rolling and grooming a week or so out, we’ll drop the groomers down, cut off some of the vertical leaves and potentially target a growth regulator application. And we need the pin sheets a little bit ahead of time, a week or 10 days prior, so we limit where we put the previous cups.”

Communication from pro shop to maintenance staff to an organizing tournament body all represent best practices for championships.

“Lead-up is really important, and we’ll start prepping in advance a week or two out, dialing in from an agronomic standpoint, and the setup is also in conjunction with who is running the tournament,” Gilley says. “That could be adjusting some tee placements, lowering the height of cut on fairways and also letting the rough grow a bit more. I don’t change rough lines, as I don’t have the resources for that, but we can grow the rough up a bit more. And then getting greens as fast as we can without getting ridiculous to the point where it’s unfair, especially because we already have quite a bit



of slope in our greens.”

A balanced setup mindset often leads to a worthy winner.

“You want your champion to be deserving, to win a tough test,” Jenkins says. “At the same time, you can’t let it go to the extreme, especially with questionable hole locations or green speeds which get out of hand. ‘Tough but fair’ is a good philosophy for those events. You don’t want to lose the course.”

For Gilley, an appreciation for the backdrop of stellar setup came via his days with club in hand.

“Back when I was playing, I took (course setup) all for granted, and I think most guys do,” he says. “Some know all that goes into putting on a tournament, but many are pretty naïve to all that and are very focused on playing.”

There’s no substitute for putting oneself in another man’s spikes for a day.

“But toward the end of my career, I started to think about what I wanted to do next and I started taking notice of these things, and that those observations would serve me well, be beneficial for what I do now,” Gilley says. “And that’s been invaluable. I know what tournament conditions should

look like, though whether I can always get ‘em there is another thing, as that does take resources, manpower—and weather is also a factor.”

Amid golf’s uptick in participation and national rise in rounds, a slew of new events both fun and fervent brings a coalescence of opportunity and pressure.

“It’s a bit of both,” Lewis says. “Any time you’re taking care of a property and given all the resources to do it, the expectation is to provide that enhanced experience which members and guests are expecting. You certainly have to have a plan. The fertilization program needs to be stronger, your draining has to be better. It’s all the details.”

From daily-fee courses to private clubs, 2021 may well prove to be an historic “meet the moment” year for courses across the golf spectrum. Ensuring success via proper setups will require a true mind-meld for those who handle the grass to those they call the brass.

“In fact, we just had a meeting about this: Talking with the staff about what the members are paying and what they’re paying for,” Lewis says. “A lot of times, your staff may not know exactly what a round costs at a high-end club, so they need to understand why expectations are high. And everybody needs to buy into that.” GCI

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

“Golf is a hard game. People struggle with it enough. As both a super and somebody who has played at a high level, I don’t personally mind a difficult setup, but I also recognize that the average player just wants to have some fun, enjoy some camaraderie and meet some good people.”

– Steve Gilley

Assistant superintendent
Jeremy Vingson “constantly”
checks the 43 acres of lakes
at Foxfire Golf & Country
Club in Naples, Florida.



Something for DRY — AND WET — SURFACES

A TRIO OF TURF PROS IN THREE DIFFERENT
GROWING ZONES SHARE LESSONS
LEARNED ABOUT PGRS AND AQUATICS.

By **Matt LaWell**

Another flip or two of the maintenance-facility wall calendar should be enough to determine whether a record number of golfers turns out again this year.

Turf and aquatic plant and algae growth, on the other hand, is far more predictable.

No matter where you work, no matter your local weather, odds

are good you will turn to plant growth regulators and — if you have lakes, ponds, even streams on your property — some sort of aquatic treatment plan. But when should you start? How much should you use? What sort of control can you expect?

We talked with a trio of turf maintenance experts for the first story in a series filled with tips and best practices designed to help you master plant growth and aquatics.

WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU?

Every course and every growing environment is different.

“You need to evaluate what you have on your course before you try to develop a program based on what someone else is doing,” says Dan Grogan, superintendent at The Sagamore Club in Noblesville, Indiana. “What I’m doing might not work for someone else who has a higher percentage of *Poa*.”

Grogan, for instance, manages three acres of A1 bentgrass greens and a combined 40 acres of Seaside 2 tees and fairways north of the Transition Zone. It makes sense for him to apply about 10 ounces of SePRO Legacy PGR per acre on greens and 16 ounces per acre on tees and fairways every two weeks from St. Patrick’s Day or April Fool’s Day to Halloween. “It just depends on the weather and how much growth we’re getting from the turf,” he says.

But what if you're in a different part of the country? What if you have more extreme weather patterns? "The No. 1 thing you need to focus on is what is your goal when you're developing a PGR program," Grogan says. "Is it to sustain what you have? Or is it to improve what you have? Do you want to reduce your *Poa*? Do you want to keep the *Poa* you have healthy? Ours revolves around keeping *Poa* out and minimized throughout the growing season, but there are people who will need to keep their *Poa* alive."

"Just having a goal you want to accomplish, you can build a program from that."

When you introduce a new product or design a new application program, Grogan recommends starting small. "Try it on a driving range tee or a par 3 fairway, a chipping green or a nursery, to see what response you get from the plant before you do a full blanket application."

Brian Stiehler employs a similar approach at Highlands Country Club, where he has worked as the superintendent for almost two decades. Tucked within the Nantahala National Forest, Highlands is a "temperate rainforest," where the average annual rainfall is about 100 inches — and where the 2020 rainfall topped 140 inches.



Planning a new PGR program? The Sagamore Club superintendent Dan Grogan recommends starting small.

"I started at the lower rates and worked my way up," says Stiehler, who recently switched to SePRO Cutless PGR because of consistency and reliability. "I think five to 10 ounces is the label rate and we're spraying about eight ounces every two weeks. I like the results of that. You can always spray more, but you can't take it away if it's too much."

KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE

Highlands Country Club is nearly a century old and for most of that time the five-acre lake on the property was nearly untouched. Aquatic weed issues prompted Stiehler to dive in — proverbially, at least, if not quite literally — and have the lake hydraulically dredged in late 2014.

"They say whenever you dredge your lake, you stir up all the sediment on the bottom," Stiehler says. "It releases nutrients that were in the sediment and it stirs up all the weed seed that might be down there. Before then, we didn't have much of an aquatic weed problem. They were natural for 50 years or more until we started stirring up the lake." Bladderwort blooms followed.

Around that same time, Stiehler studied for and received his state aquatics pesticide license, taking over maintenance of the lake — and the property's handful of ponds and streams — from a local company he had contracted to spray each month.

"They were doing a good job, but they were getting so many customers and they were so busy that they were basically coming

around once a month whether the pond needed it or not, and that wasn't cutting it," Stiehler says. One month, the ponds might not need any treatment. Other months, "you could practically walk on the pond, there was so much algae." "I needed more consistency."

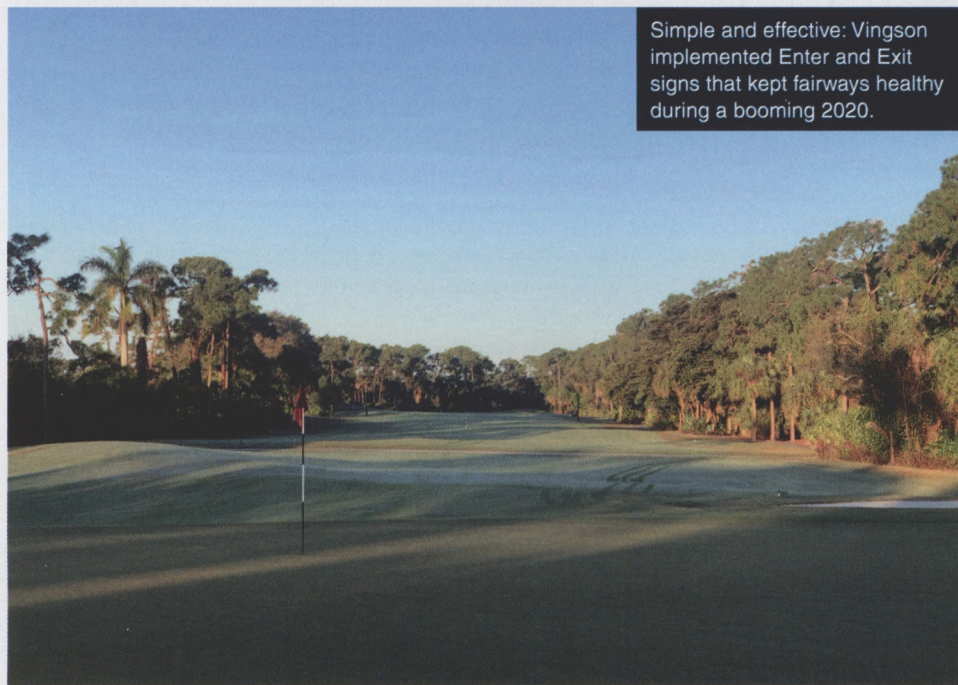
Because he works so closely with — and often in — the water, Stiehler can talk all about its quality, its pH level (he tests twice every year), its buffering capacity. Stiehler uses the lake for irrigation and knows that everything he puts in it will eventually wind up on the turf. And with ponds, he says, "you have to be careful because you're not only affecting your property but also everybody downstream from you." He opts for a suite of SePRO aquatic herbicides.

Jeremy Vingson has far more water than Stiehler and a similar approach. The assistant superintendent at Foxfire Golf & Country Club in Naples, Florida, Vingson is "constantly" checking the 43 acres of lakes on the property. "We do water tests maybe three times a year, just to know where our pH is," says Vingson, who works with

Tools for every surface

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION
Fight back <i>Poa annua</i>	Cutless PGR
Extend spray intervals and avoid rebound	Legacy PGR
Keep <i>Poa annua</i> out	Musketeer PGR
Prolific algae blooms	Captain XTR + SeClear
Weeds below the surface	Komeen Crystal
Floating and submersed weeds	SonarOne
Enhancing disease management program	Zio Fungicide
Dollar spot	Soteria Fungicide

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don't have water, you don't have grass."

SIGN UP

Like Grogan and Stiehler, Vingson is a dedicated PGR user — Foxfire features TifEagle greens and a mix of Tifway 419 Bermudagrass and Celebration Bermudagrass on fairways.

"Especially in the summer, when your grass is thriving in the warm weather, instead of going out there and keeping up with the mowing, you just use a little PGR wall to wall," he says. "That slows down the growth of the grass and keeps it healthier and less maintenance-intensive. We also use PGRs on our greens. We're always using PGRs on our greens."

More recently, Vingson also implemented another simple plan to keep the turf strong. Even before the nearly 14 percent national surge in rounds played last year over 2019, he introduced Enter and Exit signs throughout the course, marking where golfers could drive their carts.

"We found it really helped with traffic," Vingson says. "When we're pumping out close to 400 rounds a day, especially with the pandemic and single-rider carts, if we just allowed everybody to drive where they wanted to, carts would go everywhere. We implemented those signs and we rotate them daily." The rotation is 10 or 11 days, "and that really helps the wear of the rough and the fairway. That helps us a lot."

The response, Vingson says, has been amazing.

"By implementing those signs, we were able to remove all the green stakes and all the ropes we had previously used. If all the golfers and members follow those signs, we can mitigate traffic and remove those unsightly green stakes."

The wear and tear dropped, the turf health improved. Removing stakes and posting signs are far less scientific than ramping up a new PGR or aquatic plan, but the end goal is the same: improve course conditions and make it that much more beautiful for everybody. ■

his father, veteran superintendent Jonathan Vingson. "We're pretty neutral here. We test how hard our water is and how much magnesium, calcium and dissolved salts we have. That's very important when it comes to using our lakes to irrigate. We're always checking the quality

of our water.

"It's always important to know what's in your irrigation water and what you're putting on your grass," says Vingson, who most often treats the lakes with SePRO Sonar Genesis Aquatic Herbicide. "I need to know exactly what I'm putting

on my greens. For example, if we're going to spray a type of herbicide, my water needs to be at a neutral pH so the efficacy of that herbicide does what it needs to do. I think about a lot.

"Water is the most important thing for the golf course. If you



HARNESS THAT SADISTIC SETUP

Anyone getting their course ready for a big event must eventually confront the very tempting aspiration to make it as hard as possible. Whether it's a club event, a member-guest, a sectional PGA championship or a state amateur, you'd think that would be the right time to let the fangs out and the blood run and let golfers pay their penance for challenging your course.

All too often, this is the mentality of certain sadists on the green committee or the single-digit handicappers at a club who equate quality with difficulty and are shamed if one out of 91 starters breaks par. The fact is, you'd serve the players well if you took up a bit of slack and did not make every hole out there a torture chamber.

We've all seen it. Greens at 13 on the Stimpmeter. Tees way back. Flags tucked into corners of greens or perched just above those nasty false fronts that propel the ball back down into the fronting water hazard. It might be a good way to satisfy the ego-maniac you answer to. But it's not a good way to create a good impression. Nor is it necessarily the best way to identify the finest golfer. One thing is for sure – it will lead to slow play, a lot of (justified) grumbling and end up being a lost opportunity to showcase your property.

Ever notice that at every stroke play qualifier, members and regular players at the course are always four shots higher than normal and a half-hour slower? That's because golfers forced

to count every stroke under the actual rules of golf (as opposed to the casual rules they normally play) find themselves sweating out 4-foot return putts — which, by the way, has a dramatic impact on their 40-foot putts, because they suddenly have to worry about where their first putt will wind up, knowing there's no such thing as a gimme that day. And you want to make the course harder for them?

The dirty little secret of major championship setups — and here I am referring to arrangements at the highest level, by the USGA, the PGA of America and, most certainly, the PGA Tour — is to back off from extremes and provide variety in the presentation.

For one thing, all of these associations are trying to get their star players around in less than six hours. They are also usually smart enough to know that a golf course set up on the edge of doom might just go over the deep end if wind conditions change or the ground gets extremely dry.

No one should ever put out 18 extreme hole locations. Mix it up. I always advise what I call 6-6-6, which means six showcase locations, six moderate ones and six fairly accessible ones. Notice whenever a golf course is listed at, say, 7,800 yards, it is usually set up at 7,450, and this is for the world's elite players. Overall length is what might be thought of as reserve yardage. One day a hole plays 480, then the next day 425. The same flex goes for par 3s,

drivable par 4s and all par 5s.

The drama and challenge for most players in an event is that every stroke they play counts. If you really must put the course on the edge of extreme overkill, save it for the final two-person match following the stroke-play qualifier and the first few rounds of single-elimination match play. Otherwise, the best way to showcase your course and your talents is to focus on smoothness of greens, tightness and firmness of approaches, and pushing the mowing lines around bunkers so there is as little buffer of rough around them and the ball can roll into the sand, not just fly into them. That's the way to engage the ground elements of the layout in an active, emotionally compelling way without consigning the bulk of your players that day to a hellishly slow and torturous round.

I once arrived at a course consult at a reputable central Ohio private club and was told that one of their goals for the 6,400-yard, par-71 historic layout was to get more yardage out of the tract. On the way to the first tee, I made a diversionary trip around the pro shop to scout out a handwritten scoreboard from a recent three-round, men's stroke play club championship. The winning score was 13-over par. "I just found your extra yardage," I told them.

So much for the deep secrets of course setup. They're just about the same as the common sense ones that prevail for everyday play. **GCI**



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

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HISTORIC INTERSEC



How a project sparked by improving agronomics ultimately returned Oak Hill Country Club's famed East Course to its Donald Ross beginnings.

TION

By **Guy Cipriano**

It had always been about the next major championship. Who could argue with the approach?

The pedigree, accommodating membership and unyielding community support netted Oak Hill Country Club a seemingly endless supply of big golf events on its East Course, even as the mega-associations started outgrowing quaint and proud places such as Rochester, New York. The 1950s and '60s brought a pair of U.S. Opens. The 1980s brought a U.S. Open and a PGA Championship. The 1990s included a raucous Ryder Cup remembered for a rally.

The 2000s gave western New Yorkers a chance to celebrate likely the greatest moments Shaun Micheel (2003) and Jason Dufner (2013) will ever experience on a golf course. Another PGA Championship, the club's third this century, is just two years away.

Standing on the 10th tee of the famed East Course with former club president and turf advocate Jim McKenna on an idyllic fall morning last October, Oak Hill manager of golf course and grounds Jeff Corcoran observes the scene. A day later, the club will close the course until spring 2021, ending the first season of its post-restoration existence.

Like every day since the course reopened 4½ months earlier, the fairways are filled with members, guests and employees. The pandemic cleared schedules for more golf, the restoration of a Donald Ross course piqued curiosity. For the first time in decades, the people within Corcoran's and McKenna's view sparked the revamping of the better known of Oak Hill's two Donald Ross-designed golf courses.

"The majors had been the impetus for every single change that had been done here over time," says Corcoran, an upstate New York native who has passionately led Oak Hill's grounds department for 18 years. "This project was driven by the members more than anything else. We wanted to give them a better product day in and day out. Did we consider the 2023 PGA? Sure, we would be crazy if we didn't. But that really wasn't the impetus for doing this."

The pitching, planning and executing of the Oak Hill East Course restoration suggests a philosophical shift is occurring at clubs within the upper echelons of the industry. In different times, challenging elite players and securing championships convinced club leaders to pursue course enhancement projects. These days, it's primarily about providing the best possible conditions and most pleasant experience for as many golfers as possible.

Early internal returns on the Andrew Green-guided restoration are overwhelmingly positive. Oak Hill ended 2020 with more members than when the year started and it wasn't uncommon for the East and West courses to support a combined 400 rounds on weekend days, according to current club president Dr. David Fries.

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"If you do something well, you tell people about it," Fries says. "If you do something really well, they tell you. And the members have come and told us, 'We love how enjoyable it is now to come and play this.'"

Ross enthusiasts insist the restoration was decades in the making. For those seeking to attempt something similar, the Oak Hill experience demonstrates pushing a major project past the finish line often requires more than a half-decade of tactical and physical work.

And to think, it all started with agronomics. A project nearly 30 years ago that commenced with noble intentions to convert the East Course greens to bentgrass resulted in the fumigation of venerable, hardy and proven *Poa annua*. A course that had become overcrowded with mature trees further complicated matters. Regardless of the agronomic talent and quality tools Oak Hill accumulated, a mix stand of annual biotype *Poa annua* and bentgrass emerged and placed limitations on the greens.

"It didn't offer the playability that Oak Hill was looking for," Corcoran says.

ABOUT THOSE GREENS

Later during the October morning, Corcoran performs a walk-and-talk on the 14th hole, an uphill par 4 with fewer oaks and sycamores lining the fairway and more heroic options from the tee. The walk from the back tee to the green is just 320 yards.

Upon reaching the green, Corcoran's purposeful strut becomes a series of gentle steps. He knows what happens on this green and 17 others will determine the long-term success of a restoration that consumed his team for a year. "Our money is on our greens," Corcoran says.

Bentgrass now covers the East Course greens. Oak Hill's stable of trained turf managers experienced rapid on-the-job bentgrass education last summer. Even Corcoran had never maintained predominantly



A 'SYMPATHETIC RESTORATION'?

Andrew Green considers his work on Oak Hill Country Club's East Course a "sympathetic restoration." What exactly does that term mean?

The phrase likely stems from one of the biggest influences on Green's career: former USGA Green Section agronomist Stanley Zontek. Green spoke frequently with Zontek while working on golf course architecture and construction projects in the Mid-Atlantic and East Coast. Zontek died of a heart attack in 2012 at age 63.

"I probably stole that term from Stan,"

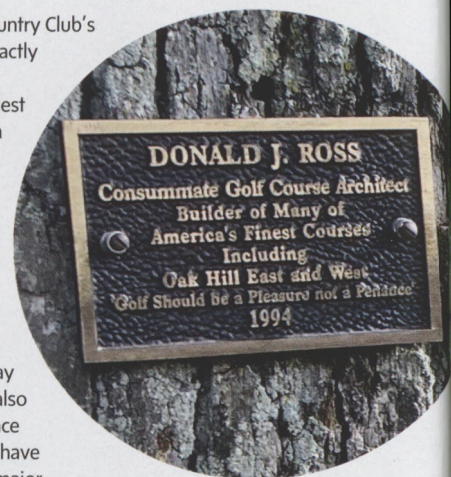
Green says. "He had a great understanding of how golf has changed over time and that there's a way to connect to your past in a meaningful way and not being trivial about it by any means, but also understanding grasses have changed, maintenance standards have changed and golfer expectations have changed the way we utilize these properties for major championships. The idea of a sympathetic restoration, for me, looks to reconnect with the past, but it also gives me some freedom to understand how the game is played today and kind of bridge that gap."

Designed by Donald Ross, Oak Hill's East Course opened in 1926. The course has hosted all six of the traveling men's major championships. Green has become a go-to architect for clubs with Ross roots and major-championship histories seeking a balance between their architectural past and golf's modernization. He completed a restoration of Ross's work at Inverness (Ohio) Club in 2018 and he's currently involved in Ross-inspired projects at Scioto (Ohio) Country Club and Interlachen (Minnesota) Country Club.

"A golf course that's purely restored to its 1925, 1926 or whatever standard, would not fly with the truth of where we are at today," Green says. "I let people define whatever they feel is the right word after they experience my work. I'm perfectly happy with it and you can call it whatever you want. I'm just trying to do what I feel the original architect would do — or if I was working for the original architect helping them make decisions."

Green's involvement with Oak Hill commenced in 2014 and he's shifted his attention to the West Course, also designed by Ross. When Green visits Rochester, it's nearly impossible to spot him without Ross sketches or photos in his hand. The archived materials guided East Course decisions on the par-3 fifth hole (Ross's original sixth) and the par-4 sixth (Ross's original fifth hole).

"He always had Ross drawings out there," Oak Hill manager of golf course and grounds Jeff Corcoran says. "When he laid out No. 5 and No. 6, he said, 'This isn't my design. This is Ross's design. I'm just trying to keep the original design intent.' That's a cool line and it's indicative of Andrew. It was always about keeping the architectural intent and what Ross was trying to do here at the forefront."





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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
INDUSTRY

OFF THE COURSE

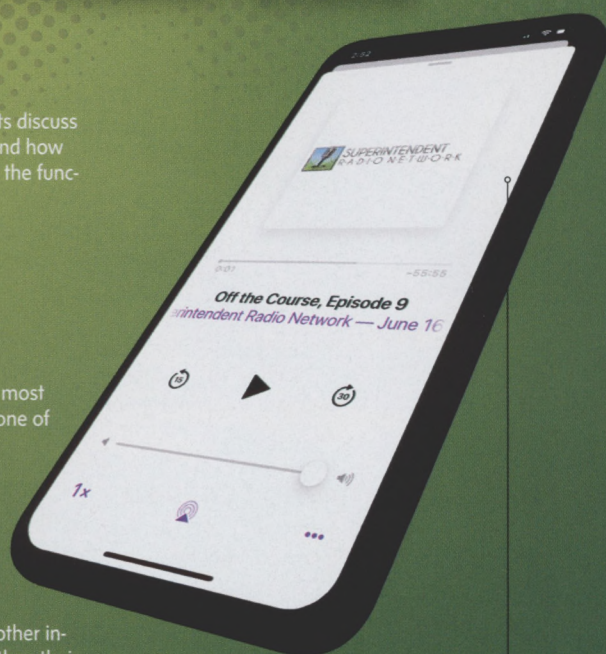
Candid conversations with superintendents, directors and other industry professionals about anything and everything other than their work. Episodes focus on physical and mental health, outside interests, family, and the constant pursuit of life-work balance among other topics.

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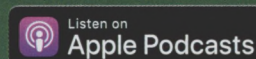


GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY GREENS WITH ENVY

Editors Guy Cipriano and Matt LaWell discuss the 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.



AVAILABLE ON:



► Rebuilding greens and surrounding features represented a critical part of the East Course restoration at Oak Hill Country Club.

bentgrass greens until 2020. “There are times when less is more on the bent vs. the bent/*Poa*,” he says. “You don’t have to do as much to these greens to get them to roll as fast.”

To give the bentgrass sod a chance to flourish, the club rebuilt East Course greens, which average 4,700 square feet, using a variable depth USGA greens construction method with a mix consisting of 85 percent sand and 15 percent profile. Bent-

grass for the project was grown atop the new mix at Boyd Turf’s western Pennsylvania farm.

“There’s an 11 on the Stimpmeter when it’s wet and you’re sticky, and you don’t have rollout. And then there’s an 11 when you’re firm and fast, and the ball rolls out faster,” Corcoran says. “You have height of cut and then you try to dry your greens down. One aspect of that is that you’re always managing your

grass at the edge, because you don’t have inherent firmness and you’re trying to get that by reducing moisture. What we tried to do with this mix is to put the firmness in the greens inherently, so we weren’t relying on the moisture aspects. So, in theory, you could keep your grass healthier, but you still have a firm surface.”

The way Corcoran views greens reconstruction — and, again, re-



member what sparked the entire restoration — below-surface decisions are as critical as any decision a restoration/renovation team will make. “The most important part of the project from my standpoint — and we obviously had Andrew’s input on it — was the greens mix,” he adds.

Manufacturing elite green speed, firmness and consistency without the proper subsurface elements isn’t for the weak, yet amazingly Oak Hill members putted on slick bentgrass/*Poa annua* greens for decades. The quality of the greens became more astonishing when trained agronomists looked toward the sky. Removing trees in the spirit of turf health remains a challenge for private club superintendents, especially those working at a course with a pleasing variety in its name.

Fries lauds Corcoran and former East/West Course superintendent Kevin Taylor, now the director of agronomy at The Club at New Seabury on Cape Cod, for their ability to use small examples, most notably near the 13th and 15th greens on the West Course and the second green on the East Course, to demonstrate how calculated tree removal can boost turf health. “To Jeff’s and Kevin’s credit, they gave us a couple of spec homes before we bought the whole thing,” Fries says.

Significant tree removal started in 2013, McKenna says, and the club held annual meetings to communicate methodology and future plans to the membership. Corcoran used multiple tools, including mobile apps designed to track sun and shade, to provide the club with data analyzing how specific trees were affecting turf quality and performance. The hiring of Green in 2014 formalized a three-year tree management program.

“There’s a balancing point,” says Green, who also used Ross sketches to restore lost hole locations on edges of greens. “Oak Hill will always have majestic oaks, but it was always about finding the best trees and the trees

that were best suited not only for the game, but for the turf.”

Once the restoration commenced on Aug. 6, 2019, around 80 percent of the tree work had been completed. The final 20 percent of trees were removed over the next four months. Neither Green nor committee members envisioned an East Course entirely devoid of its treasured oaks. The tree removal complemented the subsurface work occurring on the prized putting surfaces.

“We feel like we have the environments to produce high-quality bentgrass greens — and that’s our goal,” Corcoran says.

MEANWHILE ...

Oak Hill values its history like a mechanic treasures a proven engine. Nearly every conversation about the club eventually pivots to its past.

Preparing for the next major championship usually meant further distancing the East Course from its Ross beginnings. The club traces the architectural origins of both courses to Ross, although the West Course developed a reputation as the layout possessing more Ross-like features and character.

With Green involved and the need to rebuild greens apparent, a group of members, including the club’s architectural review committee, wondered if the digging would be worth the hassle without attempting to return the course to its Ross roots. Using input from Rochester native and major champion Jeff Sluman, Green developed a bold plan that included:

- Rebuilding bunkers to make them reflective of a Ross style. “There was thought that the bunkers needed to play more like hazards, especially given that the tree removal widened corridors,” Green says.
- Creating a new par-3 fifth hole with an elevated green surrounded by severe bunkering inspired by Ross’s original sixth hole.
- Using Allen’s Creek as a natural

OAK HILL EAST COURSE RESTORATION: BY THE NUMBERS

- 60,000-plus labor hours
- 2,000 tons of sand
- 3,700 tons of gravel
- 6,700 tons of greens mix
- 175,000 square feet of bentgrass installed on greens and approaches
- Distance from the front tees: 5,265
- Distance from the championship tees: 7,360

feature to build a new par-4 sixth hole inspired by Ross’s original fifth hole. “The hole that sat on that property from Ross’s time was always well-respected,” Green says. “It was even thought of as one of the best par 4s in the country at the time. Finding a way to put it back together was certainly important to me.”

- Removing a greenside pond on the par-3 15th hole. “The hole only functioned well on Sunday of a major championship where you would hold your breath to take a swing,” Green says. “It never really worked well for the membership.”

Under Green’s plan, the new fifth hole would take the place of a practice hole at the club’s entrance and the new sixth would use the same land as the previous fifth hole. The pond at 15 was installed by George and Tom Fazio in the late 1970s.

“I remember talking to Jeff on the phone and it was like, ‘If we don’t redo those holes, is it worth doing this?’” McKenna says. “It’s spending a lot of money and not doing what’s right for Oak Hill and the course. It was almost one of those depressing calls, thinking, ‘What are we going to do if the membership doesn’t want to do this? Why would we do any of this if we aren’t going to do what’s right for the course?’”

The uneasiness ended when two-thirds of the membership voted to



► A greenside pond on the par-3 15th hole was removed as part of the Andrew Green-guided restoration of the East Course at Oak Hill Country Club.

proceed with the project, “which at a country club is almost impossible to get on anything,” McKenna adds.

The club timed the project to begin after the 2019 KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship, giving the restored course three full playing seasons before the 2023 PGA Championship. The pond on No. 15 was drained in early July 2019, one month before a large crew from LaBar Golf Renovations reported to Rochester. Thanks to good weather, LaBar had completed its work by late November 2019.

Watching golfers hit into the sixth green 11 months later, Corcoran, Fries and East Course restoration committee chair Tim Thaney reveal how they were personally affected by the project. The morning sun is lifting, causing the verdant green and transparent creek to sparkle.

“I felt more pressure with this than I have with the championships that

we have done here,” Corcoran says.

“You didn’t show it,” Thaney responds.

“Honestly, I told most people that my own true reflection on this project would be probably right now,” Corcoran adds. “Get through a season and see how everything performs. Now that I’m there, it’s like, ‘We have more work to do.’ I don’t think there was a whole lot of margin for error.”

Corcoran is an employee, albeit one who wields enormous respect and responsibility. Fries and Thaney are members. Their professional careers weren’t at stake, but they knew the results would shape their reputations at a place for which they care deeply.

“The people who were responsible for the Fazio changes, they took grief for the rest of their lives,” Thaney says. “They were always on the defense about it and it was sad. They

did what they thought was right at the time, but they took grief, not only from the members, but they heard it from people outside the club.”

By listening to a deep team of agronomic and architectural experts, Fries always believed they were steering the club in the right direction.

“You might have had some sleepless nights,” he says. “But every book that was out there and every architect that you talked to—and it wasn’t just Andrew—was telling you this is what you need to do. We were doing everything we should, we were following best practices, doing everything we should be doing for the health of the course. It had to work because 20 other people who were experts in the industry were telling you that you were doing the right thing.” **GCI**

Guy Cipriano is Golf Course Industry’s editor-in-chief.

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TRAFFIC

Even more tires and feet could be touching the turf this year. With proper time to prepare this time around, strategies to handle the increased wear are emerging.

Rounds at most courses were up significantly in 2020. That was great news for the industry. But more carts and foot traffic on the tee boxes, fairways and greens also made maintenance difficult for superintendents. Throw in that some staffs were hit by COVID-19, resulting in less available labor at various points, and you've got a lot of restless nights for turfgrass bosses.

Adam Moeller, director of USGA Green Section Education, says he and his colleagues received many calls, emails and texts from superintendents throughout the United States about maintenance challenges resulting from increased play. "The uptick in play was welcomed but some of the side effects, single-rider carts, more carts in general on the course every day, and increased foot traffic on greens, left a lot of superintendents concerned," Moeller says.

Dr. Mike Richardson, a professor in the department of horticulture at

the University of Arkansas, fielded the same questions. "In many cases, my advice was to try and control entry and exit points of carts on and off the fairway areas and then move those points once wear began," Richardson says. Once moved, additional cultural practices such as cultivation were then recommended.

Brian Buckner, director of agronomy at the 36-hole Golf Club of Houston, in Texas, saw rounds at the club up 25 percent from 2019 to 2020. "I think the rounds themselves were not the issue, as we aren't seeing foot traffic wear," Buckner says. "The biggest issue for us has been single-rider carts. In a year where we had 60,000 rounds between two courses, a great majority of those were single-cart play." Rounds at the courses remained steady well into winter. "Thus, many areas along cart paths and forced pinch points throughout the courses have been worn down tremendously," he adds. "Many of these areas will need sod this coming spring."

While rounds increased at Santa Ana Country Club in Southern California, the club actually reduced cart usage from May to October by encouraging members to only take a cart if they were physically unable to walk or use push carts. Prior to COVID-19, the course fielded around the same number of riding and walking rounds, according to director of agronomy Dan Cruse. The split favored walking once the course was permitted to reopen late last April. "As we got into the later part of the year, we saw an increase in cart usage and thin areas developed, especially at entrance and exit points, since we were outside of the optimal growing window," Cruse says.

Bryan Barrington, co-founder of Alliance Management, which owns or manages four courses in Connecticut, says single-cart use and an increase in rounds played last year "equaled two seasons worth" of cart traffic. "Traffic control was more of a challenge because twice as many carts were out every day,"



CONTROL

2021

By **Jon Torsiello**

Barrington adds. “Moving traffic controls around helped in some areas, others we made the decision to basically beat up one area. This was primarily due to the lack of other enter or exit points on particular holes. We also had more cart-path-only days, even on sunny days, to reduce stresses.”

TECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPING A GOOD STARTING BASE

Casey Cunningham, superintendent at the Club at Old Hawthorne in Missouri, says the club installed GPS in its carts that allowed staff to lock out areas for travel. The club also limited cart traffic on some of its “smaller” holes and made them cart path only.

David Beanblossom, director of golf/general manager at Chariot Run Golf Course in southern Indiana, says his club’s new fleet of carts with GPS and cart control “really helped us limit” cart damage. “I would say it’s well worth the \$12,000 per year it cost us,” Beanblossom adds. “We

also put lime down this winter in all rough areas to help a little.” In 2021, Chariot Run will “probably” move tees forward on the holes to cut down on divots on the boxes.

According to Moeller, winter snow cover will give those courses in northern zones a rest and they should come into spring in good shape. “It will be a bit trickier for those courses that are open year-round because they’re experiencing above average play and their warm-season fairways and rough isn’t growing much during the winter if at all.”

Moeller urges all courses to promote walking, use ropes and signage where necessary to direct carts, implement cart path only on holes that have problems with drainage, and use 90-degree rules for carts on other holes. “You may want to rotate the cart-path-only holes each week to not place too much of a burden on golfers.”

Fixing ball marks, repairing divots, raking bunkers, and operating carts carefully is always something golfers

can do to care for the course, and these are especially important now given the above-average rounds. “Doing these simple things not only helps to care for the course,” Moeller says, “but it helps the golfers playing behind you.”

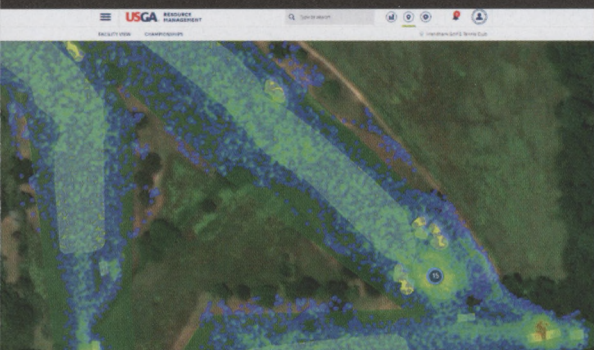
The use of surfactants when turfgrass comes out of dormancy in early spring will help prepare it for another busy season, says Bill Brown, director of brand development/distributor support at AQUA-AID Solutions. “Make early season applications to ensure soil is properly hydrated throughout the season,” says Brown, a former golf course superintendent. “When areas become stressed, go to lighter rates more often.” Linear decompaction will help reduce bulk densities in the soil and allow for proper air and water management and promote proper plant health. Don’t play catch-up. “Once you get behind, increased play compounds any issues and makes it near impossible to catch up,” Brown says.

Frequently moving ropes and

➔ More TECH TALK

The USGA offers a GPS service that helps superintendents improve operational efficiency by using data to understand exactly where their golfers go and, more importantly, don't go. This information can assist superintendents determine which areas of the course to pay most attention to and where fewer resources could be used in low-play areas, thus saving on labor hours and other resources.

"Most play occurs down on the middle of the holes and around the greens," says Adam Moeller, director of USGA Green Section Education. "This means that courses could scale back how they maintain (reduced fertilizer, herbicide applications, irrigation and mowing) the rough and perimeters without having a significant impact to the golf experience. In areas like the Southwest, courses could convert these rough areas to desert scape. Resources spent maintaining rough that wasn't receiving much play could then be reallocated to higher-play areas of the course. The information the tool provides gives superintendents accurate data that they can leverage when presenting their maintenance plans to course owners, committees, etc."



signs directing traffic can help disperse wear. "As employees drive by during the day, have them move the ropes and signs," Brown says. Early in the spring, courses can help protect playing surfaces by going to cart path only until the turfgrass is prepared to handle the wear and tear.

"Soil hydration is vital," says Brown, adding practice such as light needle tine or surface linear aeration are helpful. He also advises to possibly eliminate cart traffic from certain areas when grass becomes thin and worn.

Controlling entry and exit points of carts on and off the fairway areas and then moving those points once wear begins to show up can further protect turf. Additional cultural practices and added fertility can help encourage recovery in wear areas.

"In our region, we are dealing with warm-season turfgrasses, so limiting traffic during the green-up period by enforcing more cart-path-only days is something to consider," says the University of Arkansas' Richardson. "These grasses are especially susceptible to injury during the green-up period."

Winter traffic can certainly be very damaging to warm-season grasses, so limiting traffic in sensitive areas and spreading traffic around the course as much as possible can help minimize problems. Shaded areas or areas that tend to remain wet in winter should be protected as much as possible. Superintendents should be prepared to give those areas more attention once the grass starts growing in the spring.

"Most of the intense traffic is going to occur in landing areas for tee shots and especially around the green complexes," Richardson says. "Increasing the no-cart zone around the green complexes should be considered."

MORE PLOTTING FOR 2021

Depending what government restrictions are in place going into spring,

Barrington says dividers or charging an extra fee for single-cart use should help with putting two people back in a cart and lessening wear from tires. "We will be repairing the traffic-stressed areas with new sod and seed and soil," he says. "These areas will be roped off and will be cart path only. We will constantly move traffic into different patterns where we can, and limit traffic on those holes all together."

Cruse has increased fertility and undertaken solid-tine aerification and topdressing in high-traffic locations at Santa Ana Country Club. "We also increased the amount of ropes and stakes used to guide traffic to different areas on a daily basis," he says. "As we move into the spring months, select areas will be sodded in order to reestablish damaged areas."

Cruse plans to also encourage members to walk and take push carts. "Due to a project closure from June to September, we will not be able to have our normal five-day closure in April," he says. "If we had a continuous cart path system, we would alternate hole closures in order to ease pressure on high traffic areas leading to deteriorating turf quality."

As much as he dislikes ropes and stakes, "we have put out a tremendous amount of both in an effort to control cart traffic as much as possible," Buckner says. "We have also designated three holes per course that will be cart path only to limit wear. We rotate these holes as needed based on wear patterns."

Cunningham plans to aerify high-traffic areas and along cart paths, such as pinch points on holes that funnel carts to one area. "Usually right after the last tee on the





© COURTESY OF BRIAN BUCKNER

hole, carts will shoot into the rough and wear that area out," he says. "We locked these areas out with our cart GPS and by doing decreased stress and compaction. Around fairway bunkers is also a pinch point that we saw increased wear from cart traffic."

At Shady Canyon (California) Golf Club, another course where the play never stops, director of agronomy John Nachreiner reports golf cart traffic more than doubled in 2020. "We experienced thin turf in many areas on the golf course," he says.

"We increased aerification, fertility and topdressing, and added cart control measures, such as increased cart traffic stakes and signage. This fall and winter we implemented a program where one hole on each nine is cart path only."

Shady Canyon will add one full Bermudagrass aerification this April and extend one in mid-May from two days to five days of closure. Each aerification will be followed by two weeks of cart path only. "We hope this will allow the turf to recuperate quicker," Nachreiner says, "and regain some density lost from excessive cart traffic." **GCI**

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

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LARKIN *continued from 21*

handles campus turf at Dartmouth since the school closed Hanover Country Club. Taft is still tied to JPL, talking regularly with Hingston and Williams, and serving as a board member. “They realize we’re offering one thing: a golf course. So a lot of our money went into equipment, went into more chemicals and fertilizers. The place hadn’t had a roller for 20 years. Now we have a roller.”

And the increase in rounds played and members added portends at least another good year or two. And most of the familiar faces will be around.

Williams is the superintendent now, in name and duties, and he seems to have control of most of the quirks. DeSchamp will be back for his fourth and final summer working on the course before heading out for internships and, eventually, the start of his own professional career. The regulars,

Grizzy and Jocko and the rest, will cheer him on and probably keep tabs. They might even give him a nickname of his own.

Ryan Hingston is centered on growing the club even more, building back the membership perhaps not to its peak of 400 or so but certainly closer to 160, 180, maybe even 200. Candy Hingston, meanwhile, plans to retire next summer from Mt. Ascutney Hospital and Health Center, and Bob Hingston plans to finally scale back. Not that anybody believes he will, Candy included. “He will never stop working,” she says, “and I don’t want him to. That’s not good for him. That’s not who he is.” (The most popular scenario forecasts him brewing coffee and mowing greens from 5 to 9 every morning.)

Maxine Griswold, though, will be missing. After more than three decades working in the clubhouse — and working well past

her 85th birthday — she suffered a stroke last April and moved into a nursing home earlier this year.

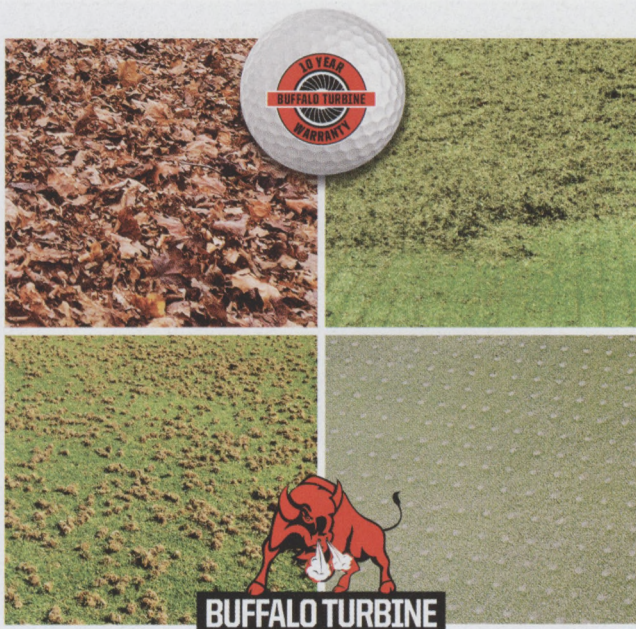
“She ran the place like clockwork,” says Grizzy. “She lived for working there. My Mother ran that club.”

“When you think of the golf course, you think of Maxine,” says Taft, who handed his green fee to Griswold when he played the course growing up. “In Windsor, we live and die by people like Grizzy and Jocko, all the people who come and help us. It’s a close, tightknit community and it takes each one of us to help the place survive.

“Without them, we may not make it.”

But when everybody knows everybody — and everybody supports everybody — even the toughest jobs get a little easier. **GCI**

Matt LaWell is Golf Course Industry’s managing editor.



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MORAGHAN continued from 22

professional dedication and agronomic skills.

No matter where I moved to, the challenges were the same: master the local growing environment, those course microclimates, and, yes, its politics. That's true everywhere, even if you take a position just down the road from your current job. No matter who gets the job there will be a learning curve, whether you're coming from across town or across the country. So why should anyone be prejudiced against someone new coming in? Pettiness and insecurity? Maybe you're jealous of an outsider coming in and doing a better job than you do — in your area. Rather than see the "new guy" as a threat, see him or her as a potential resource, ally or even friend. Who knows, you might learn some things that help you do your job better.

I've been helping clubs with searches for 15 years and advised hundreds of candidates. Here are my suggestions for dealing with a job opening, whether it's in your area or not:

- Once a job is posted, realize there will be countless applicants. Local and not.
- The club has given its committee or whoever is managing the search a set of guidelines. But remember, even if the club is using an outside search firm, it is the club that is doing the hiring. Not the search firm.
- If you're interested in a job, ask yourself this question: Are you good enough to apply? Applying is a privilege, not a right. Take a good look at yourself. Do you have what it takes to do this job? Then, if you feel you are qualified, send in your resume.

Prepare and practice your interview skills, develop an outline of your abilities, and do your due diligence on the position.

If you are interviewed, come prepared. Not only with knowledge, but with respect for the job and the people you'll be meeting. Dress for the interview, not for mowing their putting greens.

If you don't get the job:

- Move on. Other jobs will come along.
- Don't back-stab the winner and certainly, don't be a sore loser.
- Welcome the new person to the community.
- If you're in sales, don't stop making calls on the club because the new person replaced one of your friends or best customers.
- Don't blame the search firm. You probably know who was involved in the decision. If you have a question or want advice, contact the right people.

If you do get the job, especially if you're from outside the area:

- Know that you might face some bias, regardless of where you came from. Someone else wanted the job and didn't get it.
- Meet your fellow golf course superintendents. Don't isolate yourself. When the time comes, join the local association, meet your neighbors ... or they will talk about you.
- Reach out to "the man" in the area and get to know that individual.
- Invite the local leaders to lunch and to tee it up. If they decline, you'll quickly have an idea of what you're dealing with. Move on. And shame on them!
- Take the high road. But know it can be a difficult path because it is high, and it is rarely traveled.

To all you superintendents out there, remember this: The last A in GCSAA stands for "America." Not "area." **GCI**

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TRAVELS WITH TERRY

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



EQUIPMENT BACKSTOPS

Old full-size wooden pallets are recycled by cutting them to size to keep maintenance equipment from backing into and damaging the equipment storage area walls. This Toro Groundskeeper Series Rotary Mower's back wheels rest against the pallet that was cut in half to keep the tires and engine bay away from the particle board walls. The pallet sizes vary depending on how

much of an extension there is of the equipment's rear body and wheels from the wall such as turf vehicles with overhanging beds requiring the pallets to be deeper from the walls. The pallets were already in inventory and it took about a minute to cut them to the desired depth. Rob Fisher, superintendent at the Kinsale Golf and Fitness Club in Powell, Ohio, came up with another great idea.



PORTABLE PUMP TRAILER

Recycled 2002 Toro TransPro 100 Greens Mower Trailer was transformed to carry a Honda 2-inch Trash Pump (\$800), with a 15-foot long and 2-inch diameter suction hose and 25-foot long and 2-inch diameter discharge hose. A Barracuda 1/2-horsepower electric submersible utility pump (\$100), with a 25-foot and 1 1/2-inch diameter discharge hose sits atop a recycled wooden storage box with the trash pump stored underneath it. A Sportsman Storage Trunk (plastic, \$20) measuring 31 inches by 14 inches by 12 inches is fitted into a custom recycled wooden frame mounted to the trailer's tongue for additional storage for discharge hoses, fittings and tools. Everything was painted with two coats of Sherwin-Williams Exterior High Gloss with Primer (\$30) with painted black colored wheels. It took about five hours to build the woodwork and paint. Fisher keeps his great ideas coming. **GCI**



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

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FATHERLY ADVICE

Well, with winter in our rearview mirror and spring on the horizon, I thought this might be a good time to reflect on lessons learned — virtually, of course — over the past couple months.

I wrote two years ago about “conference season” and this year was a season unlike any other. With the Carolinas GCSA offering 30 seminars over 30 days in November and December and GCSAA offering 88 education sessions as part of the virtual Golf Industry Show, I am certain your teenage children would tell you that is a lot of screen time! Even my BIGGA friends overseas held a three-day virtual conference followed by five days of additional classes to meet the education demands of our profession.

One thing I noticed this year is the increasing trend of mental health and mindfulness topics. I am certain many of you remember the Ron Whitten piece in the September 2019 *Golf Digest* that highlighted the struggles of some of our peers. Admittedly, I was not initially thrilled with that long essay.

Golf Digest's audience is average golfers, not golf course superintendents, and I feared golfers at my facility might get the wrong impression. How shortsighted of me. I eventually came to realize the story was courageous on the part of those willing to tell their story. If it helped even one person overcome their own struggles, it was successful.

But *Golf Digest* was not the first. I loosely touched on the topic nine months earlier with my third contribution to the annual Turfheads Take Over in December 2018. That issue included similar contributions from my peers. But I cannot take credit for the trend. I am just happy to see my peers are willing to talk openly about the challenges that come with caring so deeply for a piece of property somebody else owns.

That is kind of maddening when you think about it. Why do we pour so much of our blood, sweat, tears and passion into something that does not belong to us? It is baffling, yet a trait shared by most successful superintendents.

So, after a year like 2020, it is no surprise the topic was on the docket at the online events previously listed. And in case you missed it, Paul MacCormack (aka the O.G. Mindful Superintendent) hosted an additional mindfulness series in January and February through the Carolinas GCSA. No, the Carolinas is not expanding to Prince Edward Island, but we do have members in the Dominican Republic!

This series featured five talks on topics ranging from self-awareness to resiliency. Each lasted 90 minutes and was basically like eavesdropping on a conversation between Paul and his guests.

Guests included Sean Reehoorn from Aldarra Golf Club outside Seattle, former superintendent Callum Haug from Halifax Seed Company, Leasha Schwab from Pheasant Run in Ontario and Carlos Arraya from Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis. Chris Tribaugh from Hazeltine Golf Club in Chaska, Minnesota, was joined by his sister Emily. Paul Robertson from Victoria Golf Club in British Columbia and Miranda Robinson from nearby Cordova Bay opened up to viewers. And we were all treated to everyone's favorite pig farmer, Dr. Frank Rossi from Cornell University and

Ontario-based golf course architect Ian Andrew.

Each week the introduction stated there were no points for these sessions. They were simply for your takeaway and benefit.

As the series progressed, I detected a simple, underlying theme. Our peers openly talked about lessons learned the hard way. Sound familiar? When we were teenagers, didn't our parents and grandparents try to warn us about the potential pitfalls and heartaches of adulthood, because they loved us and did not want us to make the same mistakes they made?

And, like true teenagers, we likely ignored their advice and subsequently learned the same lessons the way they did — the hard way. Hopefully, this new breed of assistants and superintendents will listen more closely than we did growing up and heed the advice of some veteran grass growers and make better life decisions. If not, then we can expect this topic to resurface in the future when those newbies-turned-veterans try to convince the next young generation.

Before I go, I will leave you with one other thought. I think it is good folks are talking and willing to share. But, on the flip side, I cannot help but wonder if we might have a negative impact on young folks who desire a career in turf. With all the labor-related issues and declining enrollments at our universities, could this conversation be hurting as well as helping?

Just something to think about. Take care of yourselves. **GCI**

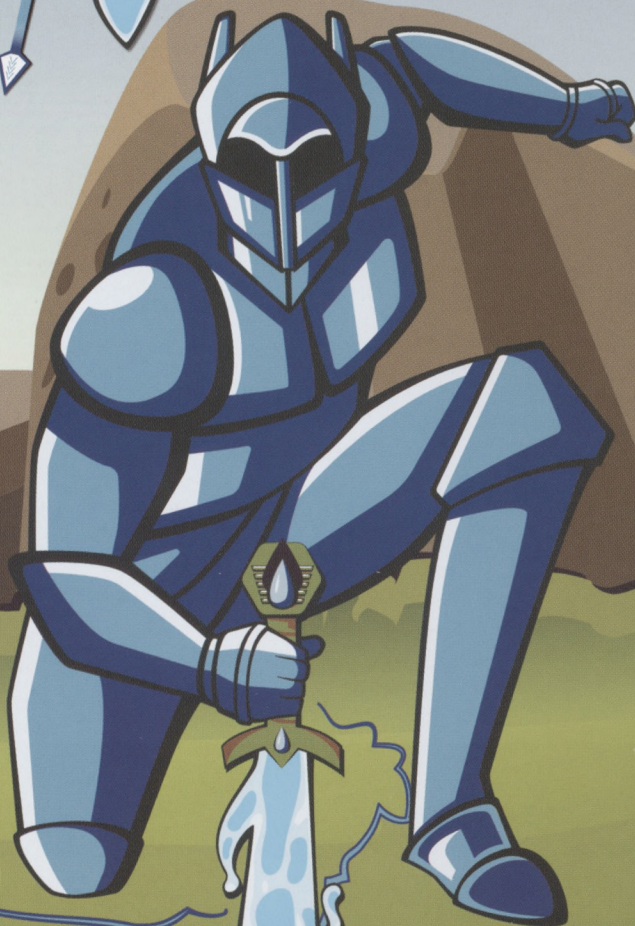


MATTHEW WHARTON, CGCS, MG, is the superintendent at Carolina Golf Club in Charlotte, North Carolina and past president of the Carolinas GCSA. Follow him on Twitter @CGCGreenkeeper.

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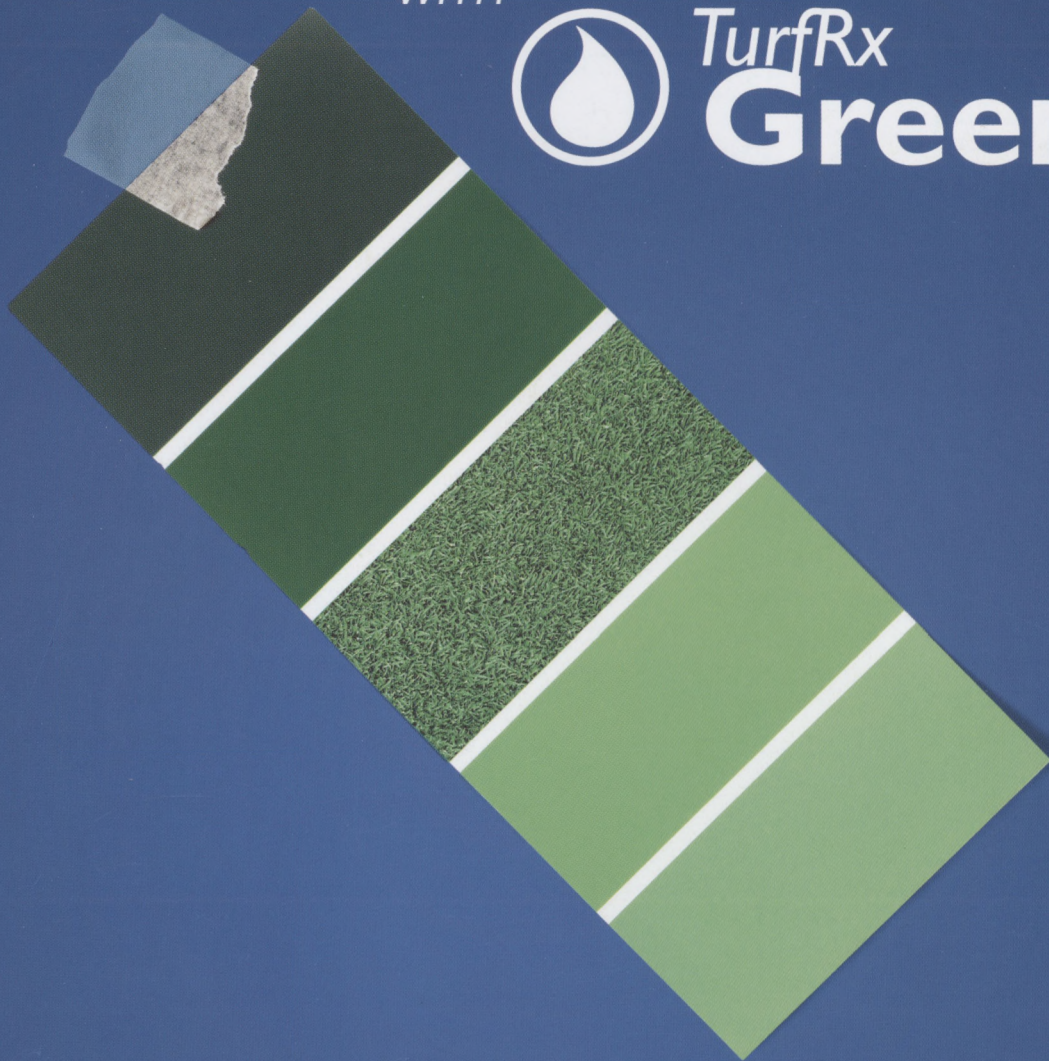
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