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One of the nation's revered clubs is a golf newcomer. Why The Union League of Philadelphia is primed to become an industry innovator and leader.

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ABOUT THE COVER: Head superintendent Scott Bordner provided the photo of the construction at Union League National Golf Club. Architect Dana Fry is standing atop the human-created mound.

VOL. 33 NO. 11

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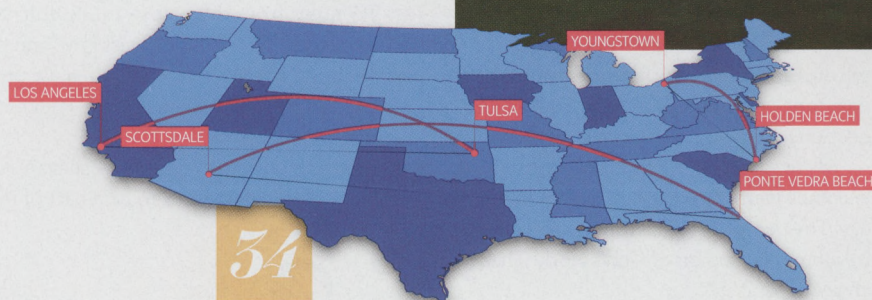
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NO RÉSUMÉ NEEDED HERE

Union League Liberty Hill superintendent **John Canavan** doesn't possess what many of his colleagues consider the backbone of their work history.

"I don't have a résumé," he says. "Never did."

Canavan is the first superintendent I have met who has never put his résumé in writing. I asked him while touring Liberty Hill earlier this year if he knows anybody else in the industry without one. He shook his head. "Different circumstances and situations," he says. "There are people looking to move on and up."

Canavan's relationship with the rolling land started long before The Union League of Philadelphia (cover story, page 14) purchased the 311-acre property from Chubb Insurance earlier this year and renamed it Liberty Hill. World War II veteran **Chuck Cadiz** introduced Canavan to the golf industry in 1982 by offering him a job on his Eagle Lodge Conference Center and Country Club crew. Canavan picked rocks from tees on his first day. It snowed two days later.

By the end of that season, Cadiz approached Canavan about attending school for turfgrass management. Canavan enrolled in Penn State and remained close to Cadiz. The pair attended conferences and trade shows together. Canavan enjoyed the work and the people. "It was just the fit for me," he says.

Cadiz retired in 1994 and Canavan replaced him as superintendent. Ownership changed and Canavan received an opportunity to be heavily involved in the construction of a new **Gary Player**-designed course on the site in the early 2000s. Eagle Lodge transformed into the ACE Club, a 7,500-yard aesthetically pleasing puncher with five acres of A-1 bentgrass greens, cavernous, white-sand bunkers and dramatic vistas. Regardless of the course's name, Canavan, who has never worked anywhere else, knows more about the land than any living human.

"I can also tell you a small, little detail," he says as we ride down the first fairway. "On our summer crew in 1982, we had a guy named **Warren Henderson**. He was on the crew because he was going to Arizona for golf course architecture and wanted to see as many golf courses as he could. In 2001, we hired Gary Player and who does he bring in as senior designer? Warren Henderson."

Construction on the ACE Club started in early September 2001. The course opened in 2003. While maintaining and improving the rolling and scenic land, Canavan helped raise two sons, both of whom graduated from law school. He lives just 2½ miles from the course in a scenic suburb less than 15 miles from Center City Philadelphia. He considers himself a "process guy" and he still relishes arriving to work before sunrise and the collaboration required to produce a daily product. Assistant superintendent **Alan Surrena** has worked alongside Canavan since 2006. Personal connections, like the one Canavan had with Cadiz, are one of the best parts of the job.

"My boss told me, 'You don't work a day in life if you enjoy what you're doing,'" Canavan says. "It becomes your hobby and that's how it has been for me. I'm totally blessed to be a part of it every day. The people I work with, the piece of land ... it's a humble version of God's work. That's how I always look at it."

Some words don't need to be on a résumé. They mean more through the calming voice of somebody who has lived them. **GCI**



John Canavan



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NOTEBOOK



THANK YOU

Lee Carr reflects on her wonderful experiences interviewing and writing about the great people in the golf industry.

In 2019, I walked into the *Golf Course Industry* office, met editor-in-chief **Guy Cipriano** and, in a nutshell, asked him to take a chance. I had never written about golf. I had worked course maintenance in high school, had a background in editorial work, published a children's book, fell innocently in love with all things Adam Scott golf and was totally into everything about the game.

Everything.

The tournaments, the tours, the

history, the architecture, the courses, the equipment, the global appeal and even the sometimes-confounding rules. I wanted to justify my golf habit and I wanted to do something beyond volunteering as a marshal (though I enjoy that, too — hello to the crew on Firestone South, Hole No. 6!). I wanted to somehow give back to golf.

Fast forward a few months and I'm sitting at Buffalo Ridge at Big Cedar Lodge in Ridgedale, Missouri, meeting with three outstanding professionals —

Steve Johnson, Todd Bohn and Curtis Keller — who were beyond kind and patient with my questions during my debut *Golf Course Industry* interview. I stuttered, stumbled and blushed. I really tried to understand “the grasses” and their work. Even though I had done my research, it would be impossible for me to match their expansive agronomic knowledge and I knew their time was valuable. My connection with *Golf Course Industry* could have been brief. But being born

in Springfield, Missouri, and raised as an adoring fan of Payne Stewart, I really wanted to write about Payne's Valley, and they helped me.

My father has always enjoyed golf, various members of our family play and my paternal grandparents were charter members of a nearby club. So, I fished for information and put something together. It turned out OK and next I wrote about industry authors and the turf program at Brenstville High School, where there are students who are young, eager and thriving. Then I wrote about the joint internship at Sand Hills and Ballyneal, and turf education options. I was learning about the labor supply, recruiting, and the pros and cons of working in turf management.

I continued covering various topics, including fitness, tees, turf selection and course renovation, and spoke with industry leaders. Big thanks to all of them. People respond quickly to calls and emails. I ask everyone to please volunteer some time to answer a few questions and maybe to send a few photos because I want to learn more about their work. They tolerate my curiosity and, at the risk of conveying a low sense of self-esteem, I find it remarkable that everyone makes time for it. The people I have worked with in this industry are incredibly giving, hard-working and justifiably deserving of praise.

Technology and advances in the field never stop and they fascinate me. There are hydronic systems to adopt and GPS machines to test. The benefits of biochar and nanowater are being researched in conjunction with universities and new cultivars are being created. Pollinator gardens, bioswales and even a farm and apiaries are all topics I have had the pleasure of exploring. I have three sons and I show them photos of a green struck by lightning, sunblock footprints,

drainage line patterns in melting snow and healthy environmental indicators. It's interesting, scientifically, and a joy to discuss. There is always something. They ask questions and we figure out the answers.

But what I started to learn while working on that first story, and what has become apparent in the time since, is that the people leading these maintenance teams are even more intriguing than the agronomic conditioning I was writing about. There are common characteristics you all share, and possibly a few imperfections — you know you have a hard time stepping away — but blended together, they are endearing and inspiring.

I love hearing about your day. I love hearing about what you do. I love your passive-aggressive Twitter threads and your adorable dogs and even the occasional slow-motion coring or time-lapse construction video. I love the way you solve problems and help each other.

This is your work and it is a privilege for me to learn about it. I relish the opportunity to cover this industry more than you can imagine and I can't do my work without you being willing to share yours. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for welcoming me and working with me, thank you for being you, thank you for all that you do for golf and for all that you do for those enjoying your properties. Your work may not always be appreciated or respected in the way that it should be, but you are accomplishing amazing things.

Please know that every single day, I very much appreciate working with you.

Lee Carr is a Northeast Ohio-based writer and frequent Golf Course Industry contributor. No, this isn't her last article. She's still just getting started!

TARTAN TALKS No. 64

Hills, deserts, flatland, wetlands. Bentgrass, Bermudagrass, zoysiagrass.

Trey Kemp finds an abundance of divergent work projects and golf experiences in his home state.

A native Texan based in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, Kemp joined the Tartan Talks podcast to

discuss life as the newest ASGCA member. In Kemp's case, it means constant visits to Texas golf courses.



▲ Kemp

Kemp estimates he's played or visited around 400 courses in the state. Texas supports 834 courses, according to the National Golf Foundation's 2021 Golf Facilities in the U.S. report.

"I have a long way to go, but I have seen quite a few," Kemp says. "Texas is such a big state. Some people have asked, 'Where are most of your projects?' And I'll say, '90 percent of the work is in Texas.' But one job can be in Amarillo and one can be in McAllen, and that's a 13-hour drive to get between those two spots. It's a big space. The variety of terrain and climates in the state just make the golf courses unique and different."

The ASGCA elected Kemp to become a member earlier this year and he attended his first annual meeting last month in Cleveland. He describes the experience on the podcast as well as the encounter that inspired him to pursue a career in golf course architecture. Download the episode on the Superintendent Radio Network page of Apple Podcasts, Spotify and other popular podcast distribution platforms.





Tripp Davis has completed a restoration on the Oaks Course at The International in Bolton, Massachusetts.

COURSE NEWS

Duininck Golf continues its 45-hole renovation at Cragun's Resort on Gull Lake in Brainerd, Minnesota, where the two championship courses designed by **Robert Trent Jones Jr.** — Bobby's Legacy Course and Dutch Legacy Course — will be modified as part of the work by Lehman Design and Duinick. "We didn't take these decisions lightly — to undertake such a major project and, especially, to put it in the hands of PGA legend **Tom Lehman** and acclaimed builder Duinick Golf," Cragun's Resort general manager **Eric Peterson** says. ... **Nathan Crace** has been commissioned by the Recreation and Parks Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) to begin planning renovations at historic City Park Golf Course in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The **Tom Bendelow**-designed nine-hole course will celebrate its official 100th anniversary in 2028. ... The **Gil Hanse**-designed Ballyshear Links at Ban Rakat Club in Thailand opened for member play after local COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were lifted, with a grand opening scheduled for early 2022. The course is an 18-hole homage and near-recreation of the fabled Lido Golf Club, a **C.B. McDonald** and **Seth Raynor** design that was considered among the world's great courses from the time it opened in 1917 until its quiet closure during World War II. ... **Tripp Davis** and Associates completed their restoration of The Oaks Course at The International in Bolton, Massachusetts. The renovation improvements included bunker restoration work with Davis' signature dripping lines, the regrassing of tees and laser-leveled tee boxes, and the addition of strategic new tees. The result gives the course the ability to play firm and fast. ... Troon has been selected to manage both The Golf Club at Fiddler's Creek, a private club in Naples, Florida, that features an **Arthur Hills**-designed championship golf course, and the Members Club golf facility at Grande Dunes, a master planned community in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, whose course was designed by **Nick Price** and **Craig Schreiner**. ... The City of New York selected Bobby Jones Links to manage Ferry Point Links in the Bronx. ... KemperSports acquired the **Greg Nash**-designed Corte Bella Golf Club in Sun City West, Arizona, the 17th club in KemperSports' private club portfolio.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Jason Straka was elected president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects at the organization's recent 75th Annual Meeting in Cleveland. A principal with Fry/Straka Global Golf Course Design with **Dana Fry**, ASGCA,



▲ Straka

Straka is devoted to environmental golf course design, his projects with Fry having won many environmental accolades. ... **Jared Taylor** is the new director of grounds at Mountain View Country Club in the La Quinta community in the Coachella Valley. ... **Clinton Southern** is the new director of construction and agronomy for Troon International, taking over from 20-year Troon veteran **Robin Evans**. ... Landscapes Unlimited promoted **Jake Riekstins** and **Brian Vitek** to the senior leadership positions of chief development officer and chief operating officer, respectively. ... **Brad Davis** is Munro's new regional account manager for the Southwest region.

INDUSTRY BUZZ

Aquatrols announced the expansion of its portfolio to include the new pre-emergent herbicide Basilisk UniTech and the new plant growth regulator Griffin UniTech. Both products feature UniTech formulation technology. Griffin UniTech is the company's first PGR. ... The **GCSAA** will seek data from superintendents regarding water use and conservation practices to support the profession and industry as part of the ongoing efforts to maintain necessary golf course management resources. A questionnaire will be sent electronically to superintendents at approximately 14,000 facilities. ... **Prime Source**, a division of **Albaugh LLC**, announced the EPA registration of its new Quintessential Herbicide. ... **Profile Products** acquired **Florikan**, a manufacturer, blender and distributor of controlled-release fertilizer to golf, turf, ornamental horticulture, agriculture and professional landscape markets globally.

Are standards for working in hazardous heat coming to your course?

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration started publishing an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and Indoor Work Settings on Oct. 27. Currently, OSHA does not have a specific standard for hazardous heat conditions and this action begins the process to consider a heat-specific workplace rule.

"As we continue to see temperatures rise and records broken, our changing climate affects millions of America's workers who are exposed to tough and potentially dangerous heat," said U.S. Department of Labor secretary **Marty Walsh**. "We know a disproportionate number of people of color perform this critical work and they, like all workers, deserve protections. We must act now to address the impacts of extreme heat and to prevent workers from suffering the agony of heat illness or death."

The Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking will initiate a comment period to gather diverse perspectives and expertise on topics, such as heat-stress thresholds, heat-acclimatization planning and exposure monitoring.

"While heat illness is largely preventable and commonly underreported, thousands of workers are sickened each year by workplace heat exposure, and in some cases, heat exposure can be fatal," said **Jim Frederick**, acting assistant secretary of labor for occupational safety and health. "The Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and Indoor Work Settings is an important part of our multi-pronged initiative to protect indoor and outdoor workers from hazardous heat."

Heat is the leading cause of death

among all weather-related workplace hazards. To help address this threat, OSHA implemented a nationwide enforcement initiative on heat-related hazards, is developing a National Emphasis Program on heat inspections and forming a National Advisory Commit-

tee on Occupational Safety and Health Heat Injury and Illness Prevention Work Group to provide a better understanding of challenges and identify and share best practices to protect workers.

Comments must be submitted at www.regulations.gov by Dec. 27, 2021. **GCI**



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HOW BIG ARE YOU WILLING TO GO?

Did the fact that Jack Nicklaus won only 18 majors in his career limit Tiger Woods' greatness?

It's a question Dr. Bob Rotella, the renowned sports psychologist, poses in the opening pages of his most recent book, "Make Your Next Shot Your Best Shot."

Rotella's question is not meant to set up a debate about which is the game's greatest player. Instead, his argument is that by setting his goal at Jack's total of 18 majors, Tiger may have placed his bar too low. "What if Jack had won 22 majors? Wouldn't Tiger's goal have been 22 and wouldn't he have won more than his current total of 15 by now?" he reasons.

The point, Rotella says, is that golfers should set incredibly ambitious goals for themselves. "A huge advantage of high goals is where you end up if you get it all, but another big advantage is where you end up if you don't get it all," he writes.

A 12-handicapper might set a goal of being a scratch player. If, after a year or two of hard work, belief, patience and discipline, he or she is only a 4-handicap, that's still an incredible achievement; and a 4-handicapper is better than 90 percent of golfers at most clubs.

Shouldn't the same kind of ambitious think-

ing and goalsetting apply to people other than athletes? To superintendents, GMs, F&B managers and directors of golf? And to the clubs and courses they maintain and manage?

It's that time of year, when we look ahead to next year's plans for course maintenance, capital improvements, F&B, amenities and member services. But before we close the 2022 plan, let's add another page — one for personal improvement. And let's get honest about our leadership skills and abilities:

- What are my strengths, and more important, where do I have weaknesses?
- How effective am I as a communicator?
- Am I a careful listener?
- Do I delegate the right tasks at the right times?
- Do my actions and words consistently inspire my team?

You'll probably have a few more questions like these. These kinds of questions deserve conscientious introspection. Find a quiet spot early one morning or after you leave for the day, away from the course where you can fill a few pages in a notebook with thoughts and reflections.

During this exercise, you'll find that some things rise to the top of the list. These are the areas where your personal goals and the goals

of the club or course intersect. These become your priorities.

Let's say the course plans to change from bentgrass to Bermudagrass greens, a project that's sure to elicit lots of heated discussion among members. And let's suppose that communication skills are an area of self-improvement that you know you want to work on.

Your BHAG (Bold, Hairy, Audacious Goal) might be that you're going to be the course's best communicator on this subject. That your written explanations in the club newsletter and your presentations to members will not only outshine those of your peers but also increase acceptance of the plan. That's an ambitious goal for someone who doesn't consider himself a strong communicator.

But you get busy ... you ask a member who teaches at the local college to critique your first draft of your newsletter story, you take an online class to polish your PowerPoint skills and you get your kid to help you shoot some video. And with the same dedication that Tiger has pursued Jack's record-setting 18 majors, with the hard work, belief, patience and discipline that Dr. Rotella says is critical to shoot-the-moon goals, it's one that's within your reach.

And if you come up a little short — maybe, in your honest opinion, yours is only the second-best communication effort among department heads, but it contributes to members' understanding and acceptance — you've still outshined most everyone at your facility.

Now it's time to set a new, even more ambitious goal. **GCI**

“It's that time of year, when we're looking ahead to next year's plans for course maintenance, capital improvements and member services. But before we close the 2022 plan, let's get honest about our leadership skills and abilities.”



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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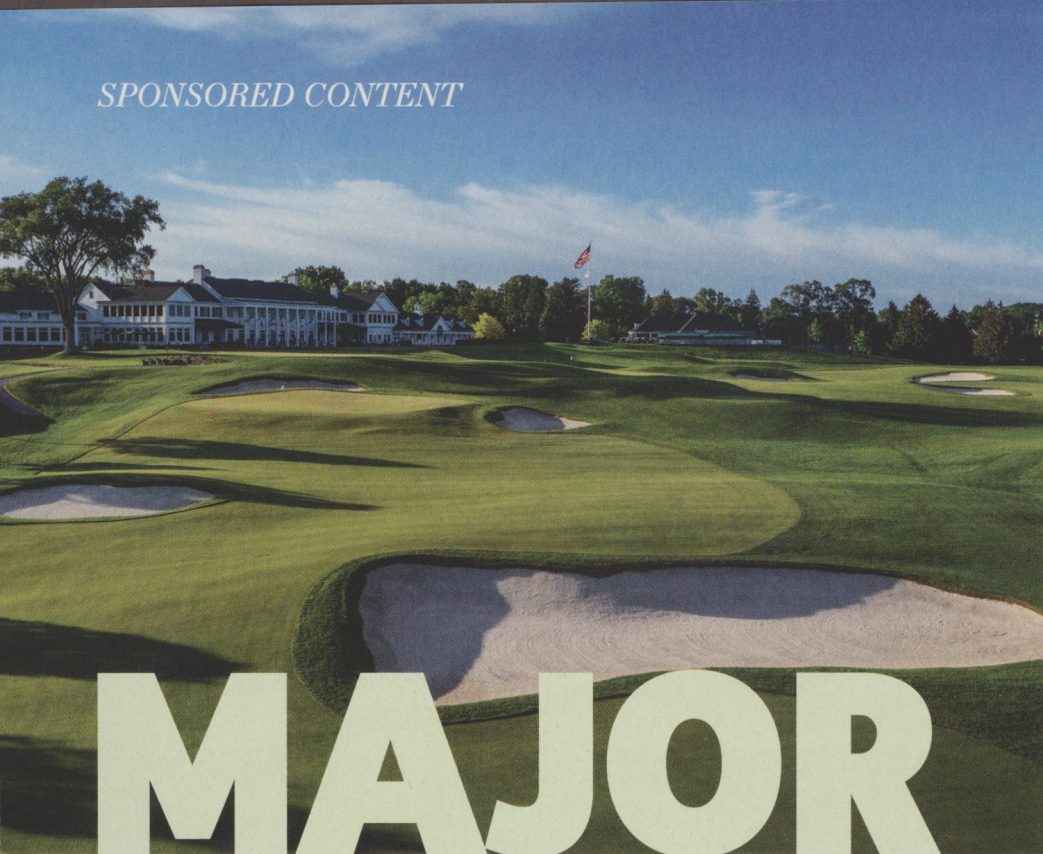
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MAJOR DECISIONS

Profile® Porous Ceramic Helps Bring Iconic Michigan Course to Championship Caliber

There are few courses in the world that get the opportunity to host major golf championships. Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield, Michigan, is among the elite. With over 200,000 square feet of bunkers and greens, Oakland Hills has the bones to host the biggest championships. But in recent years, the South Course began to experience slow drainage on the native push-up greens, leading them toward a renovation. The club also wanted to reconstruct the course back to the original 1918 Donald Ross design that could challenge professional golfers but remain playable for members.

SELECTING THE RIGHT PRODUCTS

Oakland Hill's director of agronomy, Phil Cuffare, consulted grounds crew team members at top courses around the country for help developing a greens mix that would have great physical properties and produce firm, fast conditions. He was introduced

to John Maeder, Profile Golf™ business manager, who advised employing Profile® Porous Ceramic (PPC) Greens Grade™, an inorganic soil amendment that allows for deeper rooting, increased drainage, nutrient retention and better water management.

"In the past you always had to rely on Mother Nature to produce firm, fast playing conditions and now with tech advances in agronomics, rebuilding the greens with PPC allowed us to take Mother Nature out of the equation," Cuffare said.

IMPROVING DRAINAGE

Oakland Hills began the renovation in October 2019. Contractors installed the greens mix with PPC over the next year. Prior to the installation, Oakland Hills push-up greens drained just 4 inches per hour. Today, the greens drain at 46 inches per hour.

"What we've created is consistent, firm, fast playing conditions instead of hoping for a dry stretch of weather. Anytime we would get anywhere from a half inch of rain

or greater, the playing conditions became very soft and weren't championship quality," Cuffare said. "With the new greens mix, we got an inch of rain and we didn't lose any firmness. It was incredible to see how fast they maintained after an inch of rain."

A GREENS MIX FOR THE FUTURE

The course reopened to the public in July 2021 to favorable reviews and predictions that the South Course will be in discussions for upcoming major tournaments. While time will tell if Oakland Hills is named among the elite, Cuffare feels the renovated course is in excellent shape and ready to take on the challenge, in part because of the enhanced greens mix.

"What PPC has done for Oakland and the rest of the great clubs in the country is unbelievable," Cuffare said. "It's created consistency and uniformity on a daily basis, our plant health is at a premium. We've created a greens mix that will withstand the test of time for the future."

Profilegolf

Project Summary:

- Oakland Hills Country Club
- Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

Director of Agronomy:

Phil Cuffare

Partners:

- Hanse Golf Course Design, Architect
- ISTRC, Soils Lab
- Osburn Industries, Sand Blender
- Best Sand, Sand Supplier

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- Eric Bauer, Director of Agronomy, Bluejack National

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— Jeff McFadden

By Guy Cipriano

BUILDING SOMETHING BIG

One of the nation's revered clubs is a golf newcomer. Why The Union League of Philadelphia is primed to become an industry innovator and leader.

Nobody can replicate the tradition of clubs possessing decades of golf history. With the right people and philosophies, modern versions of tradition can be created.

Nobody can transplant hills. With enough labor and money, a few can be built.

Scott Bordner stands atop a 76-foot, 10-inch hill early on a soon-to-be-sweltering June day and stares at the green turf, colorful plant palettes and blue ponds emerging around Union League National Golf Club. "This is my happy place," he says.

The view from the hill, which colleagues jokingly call Mount Fry, a reference to one of the course architects, illustrates why Bordner left an incredible position as superintendent at Chicago Golf Club in late 2019 to oversee the agronomics of a bold and supersized vision. Chicago Golf Club is a founding USGA member; Union League National is part of a club with less than a decade of golf experience.



Motivated people are builders, and enduring organizations find opportunities in overlooked markets. Once somebody visits the southern New Jersey hill and meets Bordner's co-workers, they begin realizing a golf tradition can be built within modern private club parameters.

Bordner is the head superintendent for The Union League of Philadelphia. The Union League has never hosted a national golf championship—or even many local events. The club will celebrate its 160th anniversary in 2022, the same year it unveils all 27 new holes at Union League National, a gargantuan project involving architects **Dana Fry** and **Jason Straka** on a sandy, southern New Jersey site five miles west of the beach and 80 miles from Center City Philadelphia. Established during the Civil War to support the Union and the policies of **Abraham Lincoln**, the Union League operated for more than 150 years as a revered downtown social club within walking distance of Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. The club's motto, *Amor Patriae Ducit*, translates to *Love of Country Leads*. A sign displaying the motto greets members at the Union League

Everybody just kind of looks at it and says, 'OK, here's what I think it could be. I want to be a part of it. Building top-100 clubs doesn't come around that often.'

— *Scott Bordner*

National entrance.

The Union League is primed to quickly become a private golf leader. Seeking additional member amenities, the club purchased the **Donald Ross**-designed Torresdale-Frankford Country Club in 2014. Renamed The Union League Golf Club at Torresdale, the course is 20 minutes from The League House, a historic structure occupying an entire downtown block. Ross designed the course in 1920. The famed architect was born in 1872, a full decade after the Union League's founding.

The Union League added a second golf property in 2017, purchasing

Sand Barrens Golf Club, a 27-hole course designed by Fry and **Michael Hurdzan**. Sand Barrens is now Union League National.

Earlier this year, the club acquired the ACE Club from Chubb Insurance. Renamed Union League Liberty Hill, the **Gary Player**-designed course is 12 miles northwest of Center City.

Instead of overseeing a team responsible for one course, Bordner leads an agronomy department projected to eventually surpass 100 employees. His team includes experienced and energetic superintendents **Patrick Haughey** (National), **Andrew Dooley** (Torresdale) and **John Canavan** (Liberty Hill). More golf and turf are on the way. Plans to add 9-hole, par-3 courses at National and Torresdale are solidified. And the bosses aren't stopping at one large, human-created hill. The Guaranteed Landscaping team constructing Union League National moved enough sand and dirt earlier this year to add a 60-foot hill to the course.

"Everybody just kind of looks at it and says, 'OK, here's what I think it could be. I want to be a part of it,'" Bordner says. "Building top-100 clubs doesn't come around that often."

The opportunity to build and grow is attracting talented turf managers to southern New Jersey and southeast Pennsylvania. Haughey left a job at famed Merion Golf Club to become the grow-in superintendent at Union League National, Dooley left a superintendent role at Berkshire Country Club for the Torresdale job, and **Mike Elliott** left nearby Pine Valley Golf Club (yes, *that* Pine Valley) to manage a large equipment fleet and train a new generation of turf mechanics and technicians.

"We hope to be the new Chicago Golf Club, the new Seminole, the new Pine Valley," CEO **Jeff McFadden** says. "We're creating tradition. We're not living on tradition, and

▼ Architects Dana Fry and Jason Straka and the Guartaneed Landscaping team have transformed southern New Jersey land to create Union League National Golf Club.



that's a big change for what makes us attractive. I'm a food and beverage individual who came up on the food and beverage side of the business. What am I going to do at Augusta National? Polish the silverware slightly better than it was before? Or am I going to start an entirely new tradition of excellence, new product, new service, new concept? I think that's what's attractive to young interns and college graduates."

BUILDING GOLF

The Union League will approach \$80 million in revenue this year, according to McFadden. Golf is a major reason for the club's growth and its entry into the game proved fortuitous. As the COVID-19 pandemic halted nearly all non-essential functions in Center City, golf-related activity at Torresdale and National kept members engaged with the Union League in 2020.

"Golf was our relief valve," McFadden says. "The more you are diversified, the more you are protected. The more you are diversified, the more you have at risk."

The Union League wasn't diversified when McFadden arrived as a 30-year-old general manager in 1998. The club supported facilities for downtown businessmen who enjoyed formal meals and sipping cocktails, but it offered little to women and children. Protecting the club's future required adding amenities, so the Union League purchased the former Torresdale-Frankford Country Club and immediately invested into significant golf course and clubhouse renovations.

"The clubs that are going to succeed are the ones that are going to be lifestyle clubs," McFadden says. "The Union League was your grandfather's club. Our vision is your granddaughter's club. We're building the club of the future. We're not reinventing the club for your grandfather. Golf is such a traditional club sport. Golf, squash, yacht, equestrian are still



CONTRASTING GROW-INS

No two grow-ins are similar. Just ask **Patrick Haughey**.

Less than a year removed from completing the grow-in of the East Course at Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, Haughey accepted the job as the grow-in superintendent at Union League National Golf Club in Swainton, New Jersey. Merion and Union League National are separated by 90 miles. But high-end private club expectations might be the only similarity between the jobs.

For starters, the work at Merion was conducted as part of a **Gil Hanse**-guided master plan. Architects **Dana Fry** and **Jason Straka** crafted plans for Union League National after being selected for the project in early 2018, but in-the-field decisions have altered the vision over the last 3½ years.

And then there's location. Union League National rests in southern New Jersey's Pine Barrens, which feature an abundance of sugar sand.

"There was a lot more planning and executing the plan at Merion," Haughey says. "Here, Dana will change stuff on you and move things everywhere, so you have to be more on your toes. As far as growing the grass on different soil, the sand is a very clean sand with no nutrients. It's very hard to grow on. I wouldn't say it's harder than Merion, but it's just a different challenge and it's taught me a ton. When I left that grow in, I thought I had seen a lot. I then came down here and it was like I hadn't seen anything. It humbled me more to the industry."

Haughey joined head superintendent **Scott Bordner**'s turf management team in 2020. Bordner relies on Haughey to manage the "chaos" on a 240-acre site where construction and daily play occur simultaneously.

"We're renovating and we're maintaining and that's why I knew right away we needed help," says Bordner, who arrived in late 2019. "I jumped on Twitter and Instagram and tried to show people what we are doing. Bringing in somebody like Pat has been a complete 180, because he just came off a renovation. I have learned more from Pat than Pat has learned from me."

Haughey says patience, especially on putting surfaces, is a key to a successful grow-in. "It's a waiting game and that's what we are trying to teach members."

pretty important amenities and part of the tradition and activities for private clubs. Moving into the golf world gave us an ability to get a canvas large enough not just to do golf but to do other amenities on the golf campus.”

Selling the golf vision fell to **Sean Palmer**, a young, energetic Penn State graduate who left a job as a senior assistant professional at Merion to become the Union League’s director of golf.

As the club renovated the Torresdale clubhouse in 2015, Palmer managed a temporary pro shop from a structure he called a “tin can” next to the pool. Earlier that year, Palmer walked around the PGA Show in Orlando, repeatedly answering the same questions from peers. “It was the same

conversation over and over, ‘Where did you go?’ ‘The Union League.’ ‘What’s that?’”

Six years later, Palmer, who oversees golf programming and strategy at all three courses and serves as the general manager at Liberty Hill, is leading one of the fastest-growing operations in private golf. “In 2015, if you told me we would be sitting here with three golf courses, I’d have thought you would be crazy,” says Union League National general manager **Jacob Hoffer**, who left a job as an assistant professional at Inverness Club in 2015 to join Palmer’s team at Torresdale. “I don’t know if anybody anticipated the rate that it would grow.”

Observing the success of The Bungalow, a private restaurant the club owned in the beach community

of Stone Harbor, New Jersey, and analyzing the surrounding golf market indicated to McFadden, Palmer and other club officials that the demand existed for an elite private course near the south Jersey Shore. In short, families with expensive summer homes had limited golf options. Their search led them to Sand Barrens, a flat public course with an abundance of land. Construction on the three new nines — named Me-

all predicated on being successful. I don’t think we would have a golf course of this magnitude and this greatness if we had shut down and tried to build it all within 24 months. We were able to dip our toe in the water and people believed in us. Of course, we had the Torresdale legacy going for us, we had The Bungalow legacy and people said, ‘We believe in what you are doing.’”

The club parlayed golf triumphs at

Torresdale and National to add Liberty Hill, a sprawling 311-acre property with an expansive golf course, hotel and conference center. The three golf facilities occupy spacious footprints, feature unique layouts and aesthetics, and form a triangle around Center City. The Union League has added more



ade, Sherman and Grant after Civil War generals—commenced in 2018, with the club opting to leave a mix of new and old holes open throughout construction.

Initially, club officials wanted to close the course for at least two years as it rebuilt all 27 holes, but a portion of the membership wasn’t enthusiastic about losing golf access for multiple summers. Completing work over parts of five years while keeping holes open during the peak summer months allowed the club to show members progress. The compromise and excitement surrounding new holes led to an altered vision for the land.

“The scope of the project just got bigger and bigger,” McFadden says, “and the scope of the investment got bigger and bigger. But it was


than 750 golf members since purchasing Torresdale in 2014, according to Palmer. Total membership exceeds 4,000 and the club has devised a 10-year master plan to invest more than \$100 million into facilities.

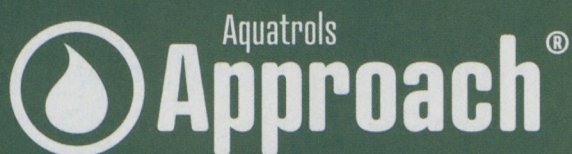
“We are taking risks that nobody else in the country is taking,” McFadden says. “People all want to do what we are doing, but they don’t have the guts to do it. I speak to thousands of people a year and they say, ‘We’re going to do that, it makes all the sense in the world.’ Then I go back three years later, and it’s, ‘We don’t have the guts to put it all together, we’re going to keep our 18-hole golf course and our ballroom and our restaurant and our pro shop.’”

BUILDING TURF TEAMS

Supporting the golf growth requires

► The Union League of Philadelphia purchased the former ACE Club earlier this year and renamed the course Union League Liberty Hill.

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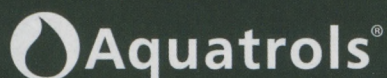


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COVER STORY

finding, developing and retaining an abundance of quality employees. When all 27 new holes and the short course are completed, Union League National could require a turf maintenance team exceeding 50 employees. The property encompasses 240 acres thanks to the club continually purchasing surrounding land. Bordner estimates another 60 employees will be needed to maintain Torresdale and Liberty Hill.

That math can be overwhelming. Providing the conditions members expect will require more than 100 total turf employees dispersed across three contrasting sites. Union League National is a sandy site with bentgrass playing surfaces and intricate native plantings; Torresdale is a Golden Age design with bentgrass/*Poa annua* greens, tees and fairways; Liberty Hill is a 19-year-old course with an abundance of bentgrass.

Bordner's network helped him fill two key positions and created an unexpected turf reunion. In 2009, Merion hosted the Walker Cup. Director of golf course operations **Matt Shaffer** had a talented staff with Bordner as a superintendent and an abundance of rising turf managers, including Haughey and Dooley. The enthusiasm extended into the golf shop, where Palmer was learning under golf professional **Scott Nye**. A decade later, Palmer convinced Bordner to leave a great job for the Union League. Bordner then sold Haughey and Dooley on making similar career jumps.

Haughey spent 11 years at Merion before arriving at Union League National last year. "I did the grow-in at Merion and really liked it," says Haughey, referring to the club's East Course restoration. "I saw what was going on here and I really wanted to be a part of it. I wanted to get in



Top: The Union League Golf Club at Torresdale agronomy team

Middle: Sean Palmer and Jeff McFadden

Bottom: The Donald Ross statue at Torresdale



on it early.”

Dooley had held a desirable job as the superintendent at Berkshire Country Club in Reading, Pennsylvania, since 2012. “I liked it at Berkshire,” he says. “The members were great to me.

It was a good job. I even said to my wife at one point, ‘We could potentially live here the rest of our lives as far as careers go.’ She responded, ‘You don’t want to get anything better? You don’t want to try something else?’ That’s the whole reason I came here. I knew there was a lot of momentum, not only at Torresdale, but with the whole club.”

At Liberty Hill, Bordner has a superintendent with a strong connection to the property. Canavan started working on the site in 1982 — and has never left (see *No résumé needed here*, page 4). Canavan became the superintendent in 1994 and played a pivotal role in the club’s transformation from Eagle Lodge Conference Center and Country Club to the ACE Club in the early 2000s. Canavan has experienced numerous ownership changes in his career and exudes positivity. “There’s such a buzz about what the Union League is doing with their golf courses and their plans,” he says. “They are taking something that was an ‘A’ and making it an ‘A-plus.’ There’s nothing but excitement.”

With three proven, personable and passionate superintendents in place, Bordner has shifted his attention to hiring assistants, technicians, and full-time hourly and seasonal employees. The Union League has already overcome one hiring obstacle: name recognition.

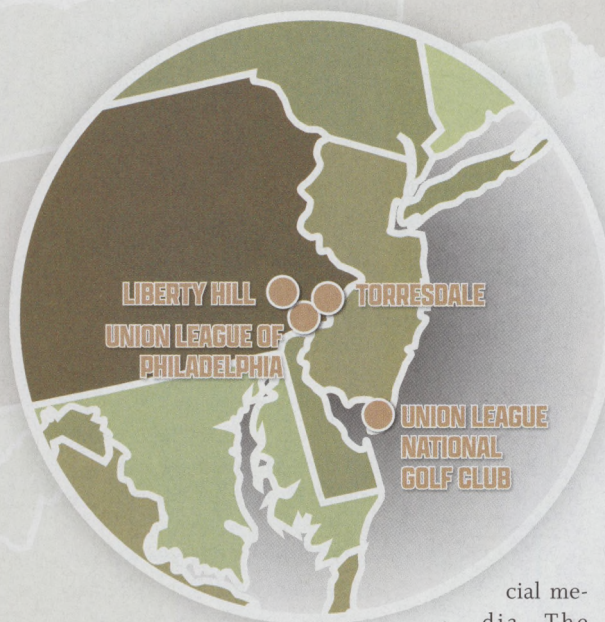
The buzz surrounding the club and ongoing construction at Union League National is attracting assistant superintendents and interns from regions beyond Philadelphia. Assistant superintendents **Ross Burgess** and **Ryan Moore** learned about Union League National via stunning imagery posted on so-



Top: The Union League National Golf Club agronomy team

Middle: Jason Straka, Manny Cisneros and Tim Malone

Bottom: Tee marker at Union League National



cial media. The opportunity for motivated employees to learn from different personalities and manage grasses in different environments presents recruiting advantages. “The networking opportunities just within this operation,” Bordner says, “should be better than any operation out there.”

A career development and educational program called “Union League University” and opportunities for internal advancement present a recruiting advantage. The average tenure of a Union League employee is 18 years, according to McFadden. “If you look at our hiring, we start with the young folks and we keep promoting from within,” he says. “Buying and building three additional golf courses has given us a lot of room for growth in a whole bunch of areas ... golf, agronomy, food and beverage, club management, membership, you name it.”

Competition for hourly employees in Philadelphia and southern New Jersey remains fierce. Hiring challenges are amplified at Union League National because of the seasonal summer tourism season in southern New Jersey. Bordner’s management team at Union League

National currently conducts its limited indoor work from a cramped trailer. A maintenance facility is part of the master plan, although Bordner’s preference is to construct onsite employee housing first to help attract seasonal workers.

“There’s so much money spent here in such a short window,” he says. “We can at least give people six-month work when other places can only give them three-month work. We’re talking about building housing for 36 to 40 employees. To me, that’s more important than the maintenance facility. That will help us bring in people, whether it’s H2B workers or interns.”

Herb Phillips understands the seasonality of the market and magnitude of having a national-caliber private club in southern New Jersey. A southern New Jersey native, Phillips landed a job at Cape May National Golf Club upon graduating from high school and has spent most of his adult life working on the region’s golf courses. He had two superintendent stints and then left the industry for a year to work as a carny on the Wildwood boardwalk. “I would be staring at the beach and ocean thinking, ‘What am I doing?’ he says. “You’re screaming at the top of your lungs for kids to come and play your games. It was wild.”

Phillips heard what was happening at the former Sand Barrens and applied for a job. He’s now Union League National’s irrigation technician. A self-described “irrigation nerd,” Phillips relishes everything about being involved with Union League National, which he considers the “biggest thing to happen in Cape May County, in my humble opinion.

“I’m stoked to be back in golf,” he says. “I felt like as a carny I was doing the same

routine day in and day out. If you aren’t that guy, you’re going to want to come back to where you belong. I tell people this is what we do, this is who we are.”

Bordner is also experiencing hiring wins in unlikely places. One of Union League National’s rough mowers is the former CEO of a major corporation who owns a home near the beach.

BUILDING A COURSE

Tim Malone is responsible for the crew building the hills. Malone owns New Jersey-based Guaranteed Landscaping, a 33-year-old company with a golf construction division. Anywhere from 20 to 30 of his employees have been at Union League National every workday since construction started Feb. 3, 2018. They are involved in one of North America’s biggest golf construction efforts since the pre-recession boom era.

Malone recaps everything that happens on site in a daily journal. (The recaps are so meticulous he even noted a magazine editor’s visit in the June 23, 2021 entry.) So far, his team has moved more than 1.4 million cubic yards of dirt, relocated “hundreds of thousands of grasses,” transplanted trees from flat areas to human-created hills and crafted 24 acres of ponds to transform a flat site into a stunning golf landscape. Malone communicates several times every week with Fry and Straka, co-principals of Fry/Straka Global Golf Course Design. Their Sunday conversations set the construction agenda for the upcoming week.

“Even when I’m not here, I’m working on this project,” Malone says. “It’s that big and there’s that much to do.”

The stakes are also high for Fry and Straka — and at least one of the architects visits the site weekly.

It’s like building a house one room at a time.”

— Jason Straka



The Union League selected the pair to guide the work in early 2018. Construction started immediately. “When they hired us, we came in and we had to do some detailed planning,” Straka says. “They were like, ‘That’s great, but we want you to start construction next week.’ From that point 3½ years ago on, it was build, plan, build, plan all at the same time.”

Work started on the holes near the clubhouse, thus giving members instant visuals of the project’s potential. “It’s like building a house one room at a time,” Straka adds.

Calling the site busy might be an understatement. As members play open holes, crews are hauling dirt and sand, shaping features, and installing plants selected via extensive study of the region’s wild-

life areas, parks, golf courses and a former military base. Bordner and Haughey’s team are responsible for preparing the course for daily play while growing bentgrass on pure sand. The latter is much harder than it sounds because of how fast water and nutrients percolate through the profile.

Enormous expectations accompany the hustle. “When you’re moving dirt to the extent we are moving dirt, I look at it like a 100-year vision,” McFadden says. “I want to make something world-class. If you look at all three nines, we will be the greatest 27-hole golf course in America. No one set of two nines will outshine the other.”

At times, building can be overwhelming. That’s why climbing hills

◀ The Union League Golf Club at Torresdale is a Donald Ross-designed course that opened in 1920.

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COVER STORY

► Construction at Union League National Golf Club has been ongoing since 2018.

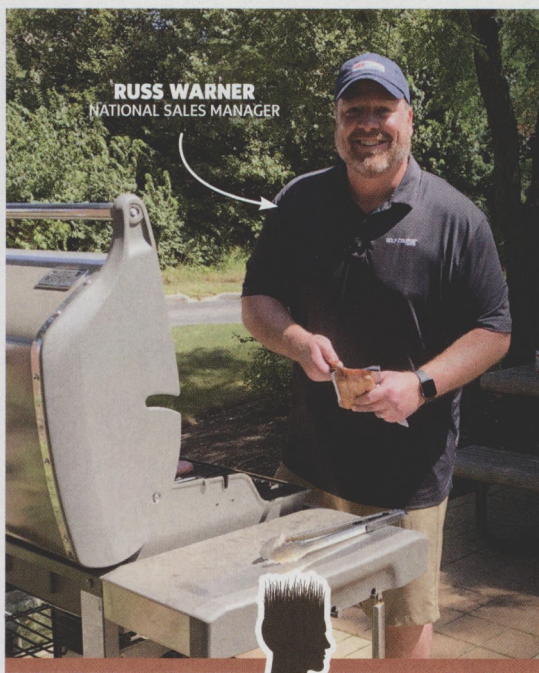
that didn't exist a few years ago becomes therapeutic.

"This spring, when guys were getting frustrated and nothing was getting filled in because it was a colder spring, I printed out some pictures from a year ago," Bordner says. "The before and after pictures ... it's crazy. You have to pat yourself back and see how far you have come to stop the frustration. We want to get there as fast as possible. Sometimes the view from the top of those hills just puts you back into a good place." **GCI**

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



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TURF
REPORTS

DISEASE CONTROL **PRESENTED BY BAYER**





DISEASE CONTROL PRESENTED BY BAYER

The Environmental Science business of Bayer is proud to sponsor the following report on turf disease management practices. This year, depending on your location, Mother Nature delivered hurricanes, flooding, temperature extremes and drought. Add in the "Covid effect" in terms of increased golf rounds and it was the perfect recipe for stressed turf and disease outbreaks.

Without a doubt, anthracnose was rampant this year on annual bluegrass greens. While disease symptoms tend to be expressed in the heat of the summer, control strategies should be implemented starting in the spring. Cultural management practices include maintaining mowing heights) 0.125 inch, spoon feeding nitrogen weekly, topdressing frequently with light sand, and avoiding moisture stress. Fungicide applications should be initiated in the spring when 2" soil temperatures taken daily at 11 a.m. average 65-68°F for five consecutive days. Consider applying a broad-spectrum fungicide like a DMI to not only control anthracnose, but also other diseases like fairy ring, brown ring patch, dollar spot and summer patch. This application timing is also effective for *Pythium* root rot, which is one of those diseases becoming more and more prevalent across the country. Including a *Pythium* fungicide in these tank-mixes will help minimize damage later in the year.

Shifting to fairways, the summer brought about the typical culprits in dollar spot, brown patch, and gray leaf spot. All three diseases are incited under similar environmental conditions of warm, humid weather with periods of extended leaf wetness. Cultural strategies include mowing or rolling to remove dew, maintaining nitrogen levels to allow for turf growth and recovery, and avoiding soil moisture extremes. Preventative fungicide programs are always best and should be initiated in spring or early summer to keep inoculum levels below damaging thresholds for brown patch and dollar spot. Gray leaf spot can be devastating in late summer, so preventative applications should start in late June or July.

To help battle these problematic diseases and more, this summer, Bayer added a new solution to its strong portfolio of fungicides with the launch of Densicor®. Featuring the active ingredient prothioconazole, Densicor is an exciting DMI fungicide that was built to tackle the toughest diseases across the golf course while providing remarkable turf safety. It offers both preventative and curative control for up to 28 days of dollar spot, brown patch, anthracnose, gray leaf spot and Microdochium patch/snow mold and other challenging diseases. In total, Densicor controls 13 different cool- and warm-season diseases. And it features all the qualities you need in a great fairway fungicide including a single, ultra-low use rate and convenient packaging while also delivering powerful efficacy for greens applications. You can learn more about this new game-changing technology at es.bayer.us/densicor.

Again, Bayer is honored to support the following turf disease management report based on a survey administered by *Golf Course Industry*. If you have questions regarding disease control on your course, our Green Solutions Team of turfgrass technical specialists are just a phone call, email, or text message away, as is our nationwide team of area sales managers. Reach out if we can be of assistance!

Zac Reicher, Ph.D.

Rob Golembiewski, Ph.D.



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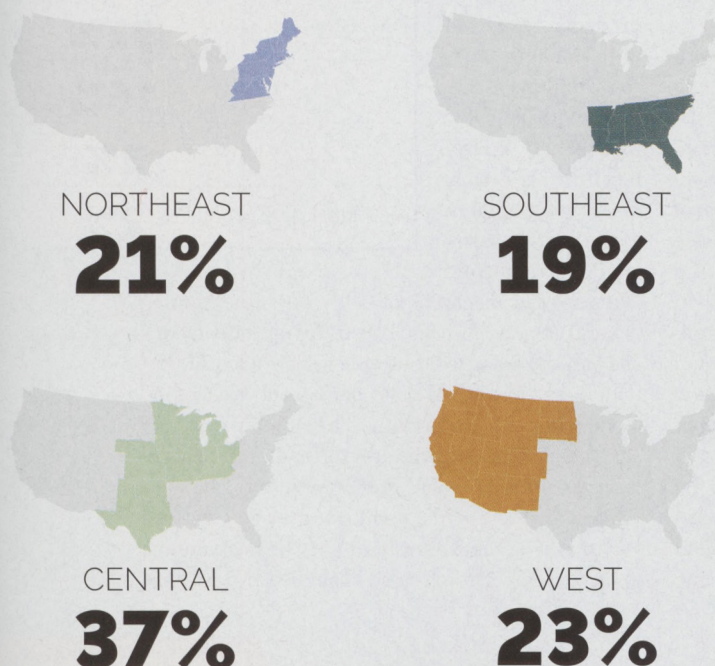
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Examining disease concerns, fungicide usage and budgets

Controlling disease on playing surfaces represents a major part of an agronomic program — and we have the numbers to prove it. *Golf Course Industry* partnered with Bayer to accumulate data on various aspects of disease control programs. What diseases keep your peers on their best scouting and control behavior? How much are golf facilities spending on fungicides? How are greens treated compared to fairways? Answers abound on the following pages. To execute this report, *Golf Course Industry* collaborated with Signet Research, a New Jersey-based independent research firm, on a 20-question survey sent to 4,317 print and/or digital subscribers holding the title of superintendent, director of agronomy or assistant superintendent. The survey was distributed via email on four occasions from Sept. 9 through Sept. 21. Results are based on 250 returns and the confidence level is 95% with a sampling tolerance of approximately +/- 6.2%. The survey is the third of three “Turf Reports” studies published in 2021. Bayer also sponsored the ABW and white grubs control report in the September issue.

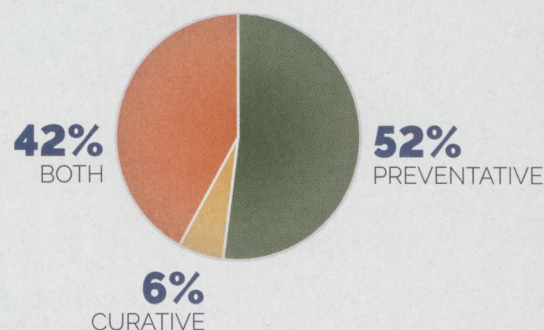
Where is your course located?



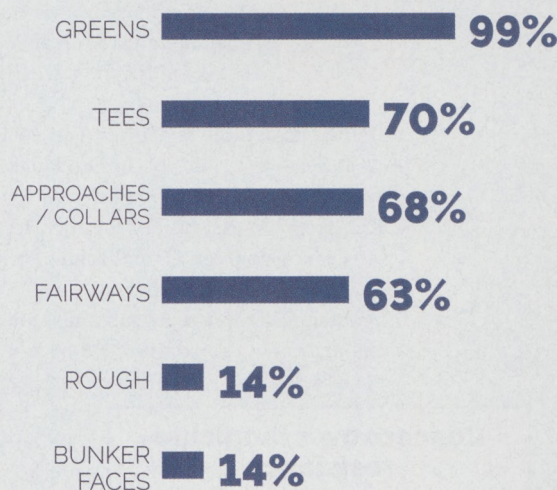
DISEASE CONTROL PRESENTED BY BAYER



Description of your fungicide program



Areas of course treated for disease with fungicides



Annual fungicide budget

LESS THAN \$5,000	10%
\$5,000 TO \$9,999	6%
\$10,000 TO \$14,999	7%
\$15,000 TO \$29,999	14%
\$30,000 TO \$49,999	14%
\$50,000 TO \$99,999	27%
\$100,000 TO \$249,999	18%
\$250,000 TO \$499,999	4%



STORIES BEHIND THE SURVEY

Superintendents discuss how they approach, develop and tweak their disease control programs.

BY JOHN TORSIELLO

Golf Course Industry contacted several superintendents around the country to get their take on their personal disease control programs. Here's what they had to report.

Delmar Israel, the director of golf course operations at Stone Canyon Club in Oro Valley, Arizona, considers multiple factors when developing a disease control program. Past history, weather, seasonal turf type, chemical applications and cultural practices are all major influences in his strategy.

"As an annually overseeded golf course, we grow both warm- and cool-season grasses and both at the same time much of the year," Israel says. "On our greens we utilize a number of different fungicide products during overseed grow-in to combat damping off, *Pythium* blight, *Pythium* root rot, take-all root rot and rapid blight. All of the irrigation utilized during overseed grow-in to ensure

germination produces an environment for disease pressure. Utilizing different fungicide products immediately following germination is key for a successful overseed as well as protecting our base TifEagle turf."

Throughout the winter and early spring, Israel applies products "more for our TifEagle base than our overseed turf," with *Pythium* root rot and take-all root rot the two main diseases he applies preventative fungicides to control.

"Proper water management is key as well to limiting disease pressure," he adds. "We utilize moisture meters and hand watering to ensure greens have adequate but not excess moisture. We also perform bi-weekly sand topdressing applications as well as monthly solid tine aerifications to promote healthy turf and gas exchange."

In the spring, Israel "shifts gears and wants the TifEagle turf to become dominant over the overseed *Poa trivialis* variety." As watering needs increase due to higher temperatures, rapid blight becomes an issue

How many members of your team are involved in creating and executing your spray program?

1	43%
2	37%
3	15%
4	3%
5 OR MORE	2%

Concern over fungicide resistance

1 – NOT ALL CONCERNED	19%
2	13%
3	29%
4	25%
5 – VERY CONCERNED	14%



due to a reclaimed water source that is used for irrigation being high in salts. He utilizes “flushing” as a way of stripping salts and bicarbonates from the soil profile.

“Our sand topdressing applications also change to weekly as we lower mowing heights to promote TifEagle dominance on greens,” Israel says. “Obviously, temperature and rainfall can alter our conditions and timing of all of our cultural and various application processes. But in a desert climate we usually have predictable weather consistency.”

Fairways, tees and low-cut areas at Stone Canyon are treated with three applications of tebuconazole from late November through mid-January to combat take-all root rot. Spot applications are made for rapid blight in the spring if necessary.

“Again, water management is key to us limiting conditions for disease development,” Israel says. “The deep solid-tining we perform in the summer months along with core aerifications promotes a better environment for healthy turf, which leads to less impact of pathogens.”

At Boca Del Ray Golf & Country Club in Delray Beach, Florida, superintendent **Joe Hubbard** strives to keep the course as disease-free as possible. “Fortunately, we are a Bermuda-based golf course with only three large zoysia tees. That means less disease pressure based on our grass species.”

Historically, Hubbard adds, the course’s 40-year-old push-up Tifdwarf Bermudagrass-contaminated greens with seashore paspalum and encroaching 419 Tifway Bermudagrass had “mass disease” problems. “Once I arrived, we were able to totally change the programs from repeated quick multiple release nitrogen fertilizer applications, extremely heavy scheduling of irrigation and fungicide weekly applications, to a more stable best management practices minimalist program I have had huge success at many clubs before,” he says.

For Bermudagrass courses, Hub-

FAIRWAYS

Frequency of treating fairways with a fungicide during growing season

29%
EVERY TWO WEEKS

21%
EVERY THREE WEEKS

15%
MONTHLY

6%
EVERY OTHER MONTH

25%
BASED ON WEATHER MODELS

4%
NEVER

What are your top three disease concerns on fairways?

DOLLAR SPOT	52%
BROWN PATCH	32%
ANTHRACNOSE	16%
PINK SNOW MOLD	15%
SUMMER PATCH	15%
FAIRY RING	15%
PYTHIUM BLIGHT	13%
SPRING DEAD SPOT	8%
GRAY SNOW MOLD	8%
GRAY LEAF SPOT	7%
TAKE-ALL ROOT ROT	7%
LARGE PATCH	6%
*OTHER	3%
PYTHIUM ROOT ROT	2%
MINI RING	2%
NONE OF THE ABOVE	19%

Other responses include: Bipolaris leaf spot

Number of fungicides in your fairway rotation



33%
NONE



18%
1 TO 2



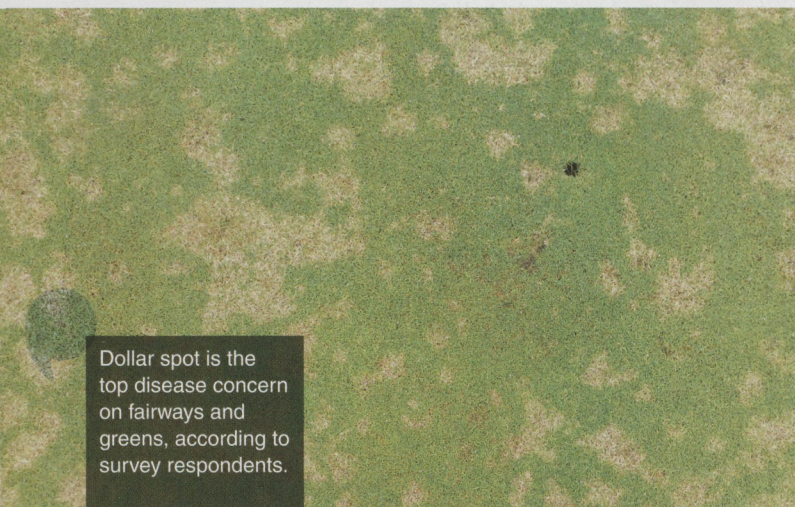
28%
3 TO 4



15%
5 TO 6



6%
7 OR MORE



Dollar spot is the top disease concern on fairways and greens, according to survey respondents.

bard urges colleagues to “stay on your cultural practice of keeping the greens on the dry side, verticut what your grass species can handle on a regular basis, topdress as much as your turf can tolerate and use 50 percent or higher slow-release fertilizer, which I usually do with a 1-0-2 ratio on the majors (example 12-0-24).”

Hubbard addresses the causes of disease outbreak, then puts out fungicides based on timing and pressure. “I stay with standard fungicides and rotate some of the newer ones that cover multiple diseases with lower rates,” he says. “Even though we are limited

fall,” he says. “We then follow it up with curative treatments if we see anything pop up during wet spells. We’re always careful about what time we water greens. We’ll talk to our chemical rep in the winter about what products we will rotate each year. Our close relationship with our chemical rep is probably the most important factor in our success.”

At Sweetwater Country Club in Sweetwater, Texas, superintendent **Ronnie Kingston**’s disease program consists of just greens. “The program is based around historical key diseases, cost and timing,” he says. “Our main

in our budget for chemicals, our program works.”

Matthew Ayer, director of agronomy at the Country Club of Mobile in Alabama, applies fungicides on four acres of the course’s Mini-Verde Bermudagrass greens. “We only apply preventatives in the spring and

diseases are *Pythium* blight, take-all root rot, leaf spot and dollar spot. I use a lot of broad-spectrum products along with a few specialty products. On the cost side, I use generics for everything except *Pythium*. I usually spray on a preventative 14-day schedule March through the middle of June and middle of September through November. I do curative applications on the other months.”

Todd Kauffman, director of golf maintenance and purchasing for BOYNE Golf in northern Michigan, says the disease control program at the Inn on Bay Harbor starts first thing in the spring. “There are applications based on soil temperatures to help control diseases. Knocking down the fungus early can be a big help throughout the summer in keeping a disease under control. Spraying for *Poa* seed-heads on greens is also a timing spray to avoid a bumpy putting surface.”

Greens represent the most important part of Kauffman’s preventative control program. “We spray our greens every 14 days and target the most prominent diseases we have had issues with in the past,” he says. “We also do a lot of cultural practices and water management to avoid disease, things like verticutting and dew removal to help reduce disease pressure.”

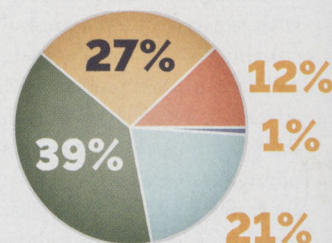
GREENS

What are your top three disease concerns on greens?

50% DOLLAR SPOT	42% ANTHRACNOSE	26% FAIRY RING	26% PYTHIUM ROOT ROT	23% BROWN PATCH
23% PYTHIUM BLIGHT	22% PINK SNOW MOLD	16% TAKE-ALL ROOT ROT	10% OTHER	7% GRAY SNOW MOLD
7% SPRING DEAD SPOT	7% GRAY LEAF SPOT	3% MINI RING	2% LARGE PATCH	2% NONE OF THE ABOVE

Other responses include: Algae, bipolaris leaf spot, rapid blight, Waitea patch

Number of fungicides in greens rotation



NONE ■ 1 TO 3 ■
4 TO 6 ■ 7 TO 8 ■
9 OR MORE ■



The combination of plant protectants and cultural practices have been successful in reducing disease. “A good program can be very time-consuming,” Kauffman adds, “but the end result for the health of turf and guest satisfaction is priceless.”

Mike Kitchen, superintendent at Teton Pines Resort & Country Club in Wilson, Wyoming, admits he is fortunate. “The only disease issues

we have are snow mold, Waitea patch and a little necrotic ring spot,” he says. “We focus most of our disease control efforts on greens, tees and fairways. We start our snow mold control efforts on greens and tees in late August.”

Kitchen makes six applications on tees and greens for snow mold and another application for Waitea patch on greens around July 1. “It’s not terribly time consuming. It takes one worker about three and a half hours for each application for greens and tees, and one person 12 hours for treating fairways.”

Kitchen adds, “Our programs are very successful and 100 percent necessary. Without it, there is no golf in the mountains.”

Kurt Jensen, superintendent at Warminster’s Five Ponds Golf Club in southeastern Pennsylvania, also says greens are the most important piece of property on his course. “I spray them on a weekly basis from early May through early November. Depending on the weather from November to March, I might spray the greens once a month. I rotate the fungicides depending on the time of season and the severity of the weather.”

The more humid and hotter it gets, the more expensive the sprays get, according to Jensen. “I will use a combination of fungicides,” he adds. “The disease, insect and weed pressure reaches its max in late June and July. Mother Nature dictates how and what I spray.” Once a month, Jensen applies a fertilizer soil spray with a wetting agent on the greens.

This is not to say that tees and fairways are unimportant to Jensen. “The tees are under constant pressure,” he says. “The goal is to spray the tees and fairways every 14 to 17 days. Usually, whatever I’m spraying on the tees, I’m also spraying on the fairways. I keep it simple, a generic systemic fungicide and an inexpensive contact fungicide. I don’t have a lot of options with a tight budget. The surfaces get a lot of fertilizer, granular and foliar.”

Stephen Hicks, superintendent at

Projected 2022 fungicide budget compared to 2021

20% OR MORE INCREASE	2%
10% TO 19% INCREASE	16%
1% TO 9% INCREASE	33%
THE SAME	47%
1% TO 9% DECREASE	1%
10% OR MORE DECREASE	1%

Bull’s Bridge Golf Club in South Kent, Connecticut, utilizes check plots to help him understand disease pressure and prevalence on the course. Dew removal practices are used as much as possible.

Fairway drainage installations at Bull’s Bridge have also been key in disease management. “Our wettest hole is now the first one we can mow after a saturating rain event. It is the foundation to our plant health program.”

Hicks keeps an “open ear” to learn of new products from peers and academic research, and he modifies his program accordingly. “In the off-season,” he says, “our spray records are reviewed along with notes and journal entries to re-imagine and look for new solutions or cost savings.”

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

Frequency of treating greens with a fungicide during growing season

16%
WEEKLY

47%
EVERY TWO WEEKS

14%
EVERY THREE WEEKS

5%
MONTHLY

1%
EVERY OTHER MONTH

16%
BASED ON WEATHER MODELS

1%
NEVER

Frequency of tank mixing fungicides



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Nick White
Golf Course Superintendent

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*Dollar spot, brown patch, anthracnose, gray leaf spot and snow mold were the five most common diseases according to a national survey among golf course superintendents.

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WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T GET THE JOB

Tis the season ... for job searches, interviews and career development. Many of you will be looking to advance your careers during this offseason. One question: Are you willing to put in the work necessary to land a new position?

There could be lots of reasons you want a change of position: a new board, new ownership or a new management company; general career advancement; a call from a recruiter; an intriguing lead seen on a national or regional job board. Or it could just be time.

Applying for a new job is exciting, and you'll no doubt have dreams of better pay, more notoriety, more responsibility. But you need to be prepared for not getting the job. And you need to consider rejection in many forms, not just someone else getting it but more demeaning outcomes such as applying and never hearing back.

How you react to rejection is reflective of you as a person. What happens next is the true test of your character.

When you don't get the job, the first thing to do is assess your efforts. Did you give it your all?

Let's agree that your résumé, references and portfolio were up to date and complete. Did you really fit what they were looking for? Was it specified that a "head" superintendent (versus an assistant) was desired? Is your current job and experience well out of the club's geographic zone? Did you have the knowledge and experience specified, particularly when it came to type of turf?

Maybe you got an interview but didn't get the job. Why not? There are countless variables or triggers that can impact a selection committee, from how you walked into the interview room to eye contact, personal grooming (sweating, hair, dress) and body language. Yes, every little thing counts.

And let's be honest. It's often a numbers game: There are many more qualified assistants and head superintendents than there are open positions.

As soon as you learn of the club's decision, make sure

to thank everyone involved you met in the process. Club officials, management, board members, the consultant if there was one. Anyone with whom you came in

contact. And not a text, either; write a real thank you note.

If you're sure you excelled, don't hesitate to reach out to the general manager or to the headhunter (give it a couple of weeks) and ask, for future reference, what you might do to improve. It's not what you did wrong, it's learning how you can excel in the future.

Legally, they may not be able to give you specifics, but it's worth asking. Just bear in mind that once the process is done, many club managers are as spent as you are and won't feel like rehashing or critiquing. Don't press them. Ask nicely once and move on.

It's perfectly natural for you to experience a letdown: Think of it as post-interview stress syndrome. Especially if this isn't the first time you've lost out. Focus on the positives. While it will be disappointing that change isn't in your immediate future, turn the experience into incentive to bring your current club renewed energy and hard work. Be ready for the next opportunity that comes your way. And remember, while it might not be your dream job, you still have your present position.

Whether you're applying for a job or you've been contacted, there are some important steps to take:

- Update your résumé so it's current
- Call your personal references and make sure they are still willing to provide a glowing

MORAGHAN continues on 55

“Applying for a new job is exciting, but you need to be prepared for not getting the job. How you react to rejection is reflective of you as a person. What happens next is the true test of your character.”



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

Trans

LOS ANGELES

SCOTTSDALE

THROUGH

What mentality is required to shift geographic locations in the middle of your career? Three experienced leaders share moving motivations and revelations.

By **Lee Carr**

itions



What is the first thing you do when you move into a new home? Decide where to put the bed? Find your toothbrush? Stock the fridge? Maybe you plan carefully or just make it all happen. Approaches vary but course concentration, management perspective and a flexible mentality have helped three respected leaders shine as changing locations has contributed to their growing success. And they're more than willing to share guidance on how to make a big career move work with their peers.

For **Russ Myers**, the superintendent at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa, Oklahoma, shifting to a new property and relocating is about more than a geographical change.



▲ Myers

► Learning how to maintain different turfgrass species and varieties represents an adjustment facing industry professionals who uproot their lives for new jobs.

“For me, it’s a desire to be on the world stage,” Myers says. Previously, he worked at Augusta National Golf Club, Card Sound Golf Club in Key Largo, Florida, and the Los Angeles Country Club. “I like that my work is scrutinized at a high level. I want to be where people care about what I do and it really matters.”

When he starts in a new position, Myers concentrates on the property as opposed to rushing to join professional organizations or spending time networking. “I focus mostly on the golf course and know the other stuff will take care of itself. Each club has been different for me and I let things happen organically,” says Myers, who returned for a second term at Southern Hills after working at LACC from 2010 to 2016. This approach has empowered Myers to see the potential in different opportunities and to be able to live and work in some very different regions.

Myers likes morning meetings with everyone together, or checking in with everyone in the evening. That was more difficult at LACC due to crews moving in different directions (sometimes through a tunnel under Wilshire Boulevard) to maintain two



tion when team meetings weren’t possible. It was different because it had to be, but it worked.

He also worked with **Gil Hanse** at LACC for the restoration of the North Course and, in 2019, Hanse renovated and restored Southern Hills to its 1936 **Perry Maxwell** design. Southern Hills added a hydronics system to help condition the greens, which are Pure Distinction bentgrass. Myers enjoys classic courses and is acutely aware that a course is so much more than a pristinely manicured space. What matters is how people feel while they are enjoying the three-hole short game area, a driving range, a bunker-chipping green and 27 beautifully designed holes.

The members at Southern Hills are enjoying an exciting stretch of golf. The club recently hosted the Senior PGA Championship and will host the PGA Championship next year for the fifth time, the only course to have that honor. The members love

“The biggest challenge for me is to enhance the atmosphere of the club and promote a culture that embraces its own history,” Myers says. “That’s what no one can replicate and you don’t have that luxury at a lot of places. What you can do at a place like Southern Hills or LACC or Augusta National is recreate 100 years of the history of what was there and the experience that everybody had. You can only try to share that with the next generation by giving them a similar experience. That’s what keeps me loving to be here.”

Myers manages with that goal in mind. Sometimes his management style is more authoritative and sometimes responsibilities and leadership are more widely distributed, depending on what the short- and long-term situations demand. Myers recognizes talent, such as with **Roy Bradshaw**, who has been the assistant superintendent and is now the equipment manager. Bradshaw has been with Southern Hills for 36 years and no matter the duration of the stay, Myers develops talent at every level. Being perceptive regarding work opportunities, what the course needs and how his staff is productively managed has helped Myers develop his own potential while serving the properties for which he works.

Jeff Plotts, director of golf course operations at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, started in the Atlanta market, moved to TPC Southwind in Memphis, Tennessee,

Property Considerations

Consider this a property pop quiz — but, good news, there are no wrong answers.

People: Are you aware of the current management style at the new property and how you will handle any changes? What are the local labor laws? What is the staff structure, retention rate and general attitude of the current crew? Who are the regular golfers playing the course?

Land: Are you familiar with the type of turf on the new property, or any maintenance for unfamiliar or unusual features? Are you ready to learn about different pests, weeds and wildlife? Are you comfortable problem-solving for practices such as overseeding, or a winter shutdown of the irrigation system that may be new to you?

Climate: Is the area subject to earthquakes, wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes or anything else that’s extraordinary? What are the weather patterns in the area and are you ready for changes in humidity, extreme temperatures, or more or less daylight? Maybe a different growing/golf season?

courses while also respecting stringent local labor laws. Myers unified the crew with technology that helped track and distribute assignments and technology that aided communica-

championships and Myers enjoys hosting them but what he says he enjoys most is “providing classic, traditional golf. That’s my focus day in and day out.”

Life Considerations

Relocating will be about more than taking a new job. Think through these aspects of your world.

Connected: How can you stay connected to your family and friends and the things that matter to you no matter where you are? You can keep your current phone number, listen to your favorite radio stations online, and make contact more easily than ever but think about how time zone shifts and distance affect communications or possibilities for a visit.

Healthy: Are there any doctor appointments you can have before you go so that you have time to gather information and get recommendations when you get to your new location? There are going to be ups and downs, so embrace the challenge and remind yourself that it's natural to have some highs and lows. Anticipate a learning curve. Moving can be expensive. Stay financially healthy by considering the costs of living alongside your shiny new compensation package.

Happy: What are your recreation options (besides golf!)? Get involved with your new community and don't just go back and forth to work. Check out different restaurants, places of worship, the local sports scene and community events. Expect visitors, don't forget to smile and remember all the great opportunities and reasons you chose to move in the first place.

then to TPC Scottsdale in Arizona before arriving at TPC Sawgrass. "It's nice to see different parts of the country and you can learn something at every location," he says. "People worry that if you grow warm-season grass you can't grow cool-season grass and



▲ Plotts

vice versa, but superintendents are educated and experienced enough to grow grass in any environment. Determine the nuances of each zone and solve the problems. It's not something people should be intimidated about."

Nor is Plotts intimidated about settling into a new environment. "You have to learn the things that are going on and be involved, and that helps on the golf course, too," Plotts says. Becoming familiar with local restaurants and hotspots and participating in community activities not only enhances local knowledge but also helps facilitate recruiting. With more than 100 staff members, the managers at TPC Sawgrass are always recruiting.

The Stadium Course, home to The Players, and Dye's Valley Course, both created by **Pete Dye** and both extremely popular, boast 36 holes to

maintain. A good organizational structure is essential. "We have an assistant superintendent on each golf course and a landscape superintendent, and I want those people actively recruiting all the time," Plotts says. Staffing is something they think about every

day. Even if positions aren't available, TPC Sawgrass will make room for dedicated and interested applicants so they remain fully staffed when people naturally move on.

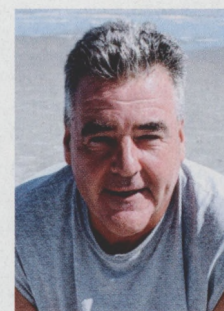
"At the end of the day, you can pick me up and put me anywhere there is a golf course. The characters are all the same but the names have changed," Plotts quips. There are some leaders within the TPC network who actively change courses and there are others who choose to stay in one region or even at one property. Situations vary and Plotts proactively let **Cal Roth**, the PGA Tour's now-retired senior vice president for agronomy, know that he enjoyed working for the Tour and was open to moving.

"As in anything, if we tell ourselves that we can't do something or we're not going to like something, then generally we won't," Plotts says. "If

you're open-minded and go anywhere with the mentality that it's going to be successful, chances are it's going to be pretty good for you. Moving makes you stronger within the industry. It teaches you different angles, not only from an agronomic perspective, but from a managerial perspective and just as a person."

Plotts acknowledges that a big part of being comfortable in a new zone is that your family has to be comfortable, and immersion with the community helps. "Don't get up, go to work, come home, get up and go do it again. Create the opportunity to get involved in your church, have an opportunity to grow within the community, not only for yourself and your family's sake, but because extracurricular activities will make you feel more comfortable," he says. "And at local chapters and courses around town, when you meet people from other facilities, don't be fearful to ask for help or ask, What am I seeing here? What's going on here? What do you guys do in this environment during this time? People are willing to share. There is no reason someone can't go into any region and be successful, but you have to have the willingness to move."

Tim Cunningham, the superintendent at Lockwood Folly Country Club in Holden Beach, North Carolina, lived in Ohio for 52 years and endured as a die-hard Cleveland sports fan, so when he thought about moving, he yearned only for better weather, a nearby beach and fresh shrimp. That's not strictly true, but he and his wife *had* always discussed relocating to the Carolinas. Cunningham worked at Weymouth Country Club and The Country Clubs of Fox Meadow, both in Medina, Ohio, as well as at Youngstown Country Club in Ohio, where **Col. John Morley** was the first superintendent.



▲ Cunningham



▲ Opportunities to work at TPC Sawgrass are attractive to industry professionals willing to move to advance their careers.

Cunningham moved before he was certain of what his next job would be and he didn't know if he wanted to stay in the golf industry. He took a crew job at Tidewater Golf Club in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, "and the bug hit me again," Cunningham says. Soon after that, he got a call from **Jim Noel**, a former superintendent from the Cleveland area who was the greens chairman at Lockwood Folly, about an opening for the superintendent position. The rest, as they say, is history.

Moving requires belief in yourself and the confidence to know that you can navigate a new job, the challenges of a new area, and regional differences in beliefs or habits—that's all mental. When Cunningham moved, he didn't know anyone, but he got involved with his local chapter, met neighbors and was "like a sponge," he says. "Frustrating me to no end, I wondered why

things I previously had done didn't work." As he conversed with locals and his peers, the work got easier. He also read a lot and his staff and club colleagues have been tremendous.

Clinton Weeks has been a vital, knowledgeable assistant superintendent and **Chris Green** keeps the machines and cutting units fine-tuned as the equipment technician. (Green cheers for the Pittsburgh Steelers, which makes for lively autumn shop talk.) **Dan McGougan** is the current green chairman and with his background in agriculture and as an educator in horticulture, he has been very supportive with both agronomic issues and in sharing the golf course history of Lockwood Folly.

When Cunningham joined, there were significant challenges. It's a 300-acre residential golf community, previously a hunting preserve, and it's about 33 years old. The irrigation

system needed work, equipment upgrades weren't accounted for, the property was heavily wooded, and some topdressing used previously about eight to 10 years ago is now prohibiting root growth that is clearly visible in the soil profile.

Member-owned and -operated, the Lockwood Folly board volunteers its time and it has made a commitment to the course. This 18-hole layout designed by **Willard Byrd** borders both the Intracoastal Waterway and Lockwood Folly River and just about every one of its 26 ponds has an alligator. The members are helpful, especially with divots and hurricane clean-up—which is good, because three hurricanes hit during Cunningham's first two years. Staffing hasn't been a problem and they are working on the right nutrient combination for their Sunday Bermudagrass greens.

Cunningham had to adjust his



management style to be successful. Some differences from his work in Ohio include overseeding; using the irrigation system all year; accounting for travel and package play; different pests, wildlife, and weeds; sandy soil compared to clay and loam (which holds nutrients better but also doesn't drain as well); and working steadily all year round. There are more tourists and with a lot of his family traveling in from Ohio, there are fun

and frequent visitors to host in their sunny residence.

You have to "be willing to learn, be yourself and always believe in yourself. It's OK to be uncomfortable at times. Be open to that in your career," Cunningham says. The challenges of warm-season grass and other elements of turf maintenance that he wasn't as familiar with have been invigorating. Lockwood Folly is moving in a great direction, the staff and members are

hanging some photos. Pictures make a house feel more like a home. Course concentration, perceptive management and a flexible mentality go a long way toward a smooth transition. Myers, Plotts and Cunningham have benefited as leaders in turf from their willingness to go somewhere different. Move, grow and enjoy it. With some photos on the walls, your loved ones will welcome you home, wherever that may be. **GCI**

happy, and so is Cunningham.

So, in addition to stocking the fridge, finding your toothbrush and setting up your trusty bed, try

◀ Jeff Plotts moved from the Arizona desert to northern Florida to lead the turf team at TPC Sawgrass.

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PS Form 3526-R, July 2014

IT'S ALL ABOUT TIMING

IMPRESSING GOLFERS WITH CLEAN PLAYING SURFACES AT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW SEASON REQUIRES AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO EFFECTIVELY CONTROL SNOW MOLD.

The final droplets of the calendar year are exiting spray nozzles. So, what's next?

It's time to wait out the winter. Snow mold can be a destructive nuisance appearing at the wrong time. What happens beneath snow or rain in the winter months doesn't emerge until the following spring. Impressing golfers at the start of a new season requires calculated fall application timing.

"Like with so many diseases that we battle in turf, make sure you are putting an application out before you start getting pressure," says BASF senior technical specialist Kyle Miller. "Make

sure that timing in late fall is preventive and your application goes out just before you are expecting any permanent snow cover. After that, there's not a whole lot that you can do."

A snow mold application marks the end of the spray season for turf teams in parts of the country where it gets wet and cold. Notice a certain word missing from the previous sentence? There's a prominent type of snow mold that doesn't require snow to become a problem on playing surfaces. Color can help a turf manager identify pink snow mold, also frequently referred to as *Microdochium* patch or *Fusarium* patch, which is caused by

the pathogen *Microdochium nivale*. Symptoms are expressed as pink, white or tan patches.

"Pink snow mold can occur in a lot of different geographies, north to south" Miller says. "One of the things about pink snow mold is that you don't have to have snow cover to get it. Disease symptoms may appear in the spring because you have this sporodochia on infected leaf blades. When you get sunlight on it, it shows up really pink."

Miller adds that pink snow mold can occur as far south as Florida and can be an issue on both warm- and cool-season grasses. The disease also presents a concern along stretches

of the West Coast from Southern California to upper Washington. Cool, but not in Miller's words "super cold, and damp weather," can make turf susceptible to pink snow mold. The disease can be developing under the feet of golfers enjoying winter rounds. "It does like wet conditions," Miller says. "That's why in the spring we can see it in a lot of the areas, even moving south, because we might have cool and wet weather."

The other prominent type of snow mold is more associated with, well, winter. Caused by the pathogen *Typhula incarnata*, gray snow mold needs a minimum of 60 days of snow cover to develop, according to Miller. Color can also help a turf manager identify gray snow mold, because symptoms are expressed via gray and white patches. "The bottom line," Miller says, "is if you have snow



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Snow mold can damage playing conditions and hurt aesthetics as golfers return to the course in the spring.



cover longer than two months, you're going to have conditions favorable for gray snow mold. It needs to be continuous. We can't have a 30-day window of snow cover and then another 40 days of snow cover later on in the winter. That wouldn't be long enough to incubate that snow mold to express itself." A third and more aggressive pathogen, *Typhula ishikariensis*, causes speckled snow mold, which requires 90 days of snow cover to develop, according to Miller.

Gray and speckled snow mold can become an issue in parts of the Upper Midwest, where prolonged snow cover creates ideal conditions for winter pursuits such as snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. The same conditions, though, might not

be ideal for early and even mid-spring golf if proper snow mold control tactics aren't deployed.

Cultural control practices are limited, Miller says, beyond developing a fertility program to ensure playing surfaces don't enter winter overly lush. The more lush the turf, the more susceptible it becomes to snow mold pathogens.

Miller recommends superintendents begin thinking about snow mold applications and fungicide selection as early as mid-summer. Sure, that might seem early. But the shift from summer to winter can happen rapidly, especially considering the number of items on late summer and fall to-do lists.

"Make sure that your timing is such that you don't get caught

with snow coming down before you have your application on the ground," Miller says. "Don't wait too long, because if you're spraying onto snow-covered turf, that fungicide is not going to get to the target."

The purpose of a late-fall application is straightforward. "We're trying to stop a very, very high amount of that inoculum so that we don't see symptoms in the spring," Miller says. In areas with severe pressure, Miller adds, two applications on high-value surfaces such as greens can provide added protection: a first application around 45 days before snow cover, followed by a second application 30 days later.

Options for reducing disease severity are abundant, with multiple chemical classes and active ingredients providing control. Researchers, manufacturers and turf managers have spent decades honing snow mold programs.

"We have been battling snow mold for a lot of years now and companies like BASF have put together recommendations on products, most applied in combinations or as pre-mixes, that are well proven with research throughout the snow mold belt," Miller says. "There are a lot of products out there that are very good on snow mold, and they can give you a very nice, clean surface in the spring once snow cover is melted off."

Miller calls Insignia® SC Intrinsic® brand fungicide (active ingredient: pyraclostrobin) and Trinity® fungicide (active ingredient: triticonazole) "foundational" snow mold products within the BASF portfolio. "Those two products, when tank mixed, are very effective on snow mold," he says. "In the severe areas, we would like to add other products to help them along,

but those are the two core BASF products that have shown excellent results on snow mold."

When it comes to the final spray of the calendar year, turf teams only have one opportunity to make a clean first impression with golfers at the start of the new season.


"It's important to understand when snow mold is going to be more severe, when it is going to be a little less severe, and understand some of the conditions that can occur during the winter months to predict what we can expect the following spring," Miller says. "When we have a winter where we have a lot of warm weather and a lot of rainfall, we're probably not going to have nearly as much pressure because it's not under snow cover. However, fungicides may not last as long under warmer conditions, so we have one thing working for us and one thing working against us.

"Most importantly, it's all about the timing and using products that have been proven in research trials. A lot of times the answer might not be one or two fungicides. It might be a combination of two, three or maybe four fungicides depending on where you are located and the level of pressure that you see in that particular region." ■

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Salaries

SUPERINTENDENTS ARE UNDERPAID

It's taken me a while to figure this out, but I have come to the conclusion, after many years watching them function in the field, that the vast majority of golf course superintendents are not paid what they are worth.

Mind you, I have never asked directly of anyone what his or her salary is. But you find out a lot as a journalist and a consultant, and can surmise based on generic data what compensation levels are. Not that averages are much help, because the salary variance state-by-state and region-by-region is so great. The GCSAA reported this year an average superintendent's salary as \$97,354. This surely overstates the real average, since the poll was taken of GCSAA members only, with a 43 percent return rate — a sample that is biased toward the industry's upper-tier courses.

Any industry-wide average obscures the massive difference in compensation between those in South Dakota and those in New Jersey. The variance is at least as great in a state like New York, where there are massive market differences between courses deep in the Adirondacks and those out on the far end of Long Island.

It's also easy to get carried away with those at the upper echelon. A helpful reminder: for every superintendent grossing \$300,000 a year, there are probably 300 who are earning under \$50,000.

The level of compensation should be based on a metric of value — namely, how much someone produces, measured in terms of an asset they oversee that produces a sum of capital. It's an economic issue based on market principles, not on some notions of tradi-

tion, power or one's love of the game. Yes, it is — or can be — great working outdoors with a certain freedom from hourly or daily drudgery and in a natural environment that is continually engaging. But it's also exhausting labor, recurring stress, and requires having to answer to people who mistake having strong opinions with knowing what they are taking about.

How to measure a superintendent's worth? It's not just a matter of accepting the offer that's on the table. Boards and managers who present a “take it or leave it” approach to contract terms are simply abusing their power and making bad business decisions that turn employees into adversaries, leaving a sour taste all around that does not contribute to a productive or long-lasting culture of service.

Far more sensible would be looking at how a well-maintained golf course produces revenue and enhances the overall financial picture of the facility. At most courses, golf is the biggest revenue stream and the greatest center for operating profit, far outpacing tennis, food and beverage or the pool. Clubhouse operations are notorious as financial sinkholes. No matter how good the hamburger or how smooth the pickleball courts, when it rains, the parking lot is empty.

Let's try out a formula, say 8 percent of the golf operation as the basis for compensation. A municipal facility grossing \$2 million, about \$1.5 million of that from golf, would suggest a salary of \$120,000. At a major private facility grossing \$8 million, \$4 million from

golf, compensation of \$320,000 seems reasonable. The problem comes at the bottom tier, where a discounted operation grossing \$800,000, three-quarters in golf, would yield a salary of only \$48,000. The solution here is to have a floor of 8 percent as a minimum, for starters, so that at the very least a superintendent could receive a wage respecting their talents and ability to run a valued operation.

Right now, the maintenance side of the industry feels to me like baseball in 1974, before free agency, when owners held all the bargaining power and the valued labor was reluctant to assert itself. Obviously, golf is somewhat different, because superintendents are free to move, not tethered by a reserve clause that prevents them from negotiating with other bidders.

Superintendents tend to be conservative politically and culturally, and I think this holds back their willingness to confront people of wealth and power when it comes to securing their fair share. This is not an argument for unionization. That would never work in a golf industry characterized by massive differences in individual skillsets, conditions of employment and markets. But it would help everyone if more superintendents were gutsier in making their case for better compensation based on their market value and the value of the product they produce.

Perhaps, as in baseball, what superintendents need is an agent who would present the board or owners with a case for fair compensation based on actual value. **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).

MAINTENANCE



CONSEQUENCES OF
MORE

Superintendent Ron Furlong's team at Avalon Golf Links has been forced to topdress earlier in the morning because of increased play.

Ron Furlong combines personal observations and conversations with peers to explore how increased play is affecting management techniques and turf health.

T

he numbers don't lie. The silver lining to this darn worldwide pandemic — which is closing in on its two-year anniversary — at least as far as the game of golf is concerned, has been the historic boost of play most courses have experienced. Play has been up, revenue has been up, and the game of golf is thriving.

But what has this boom meant for superintendents — and specifically the ability to maintain their golf courses with so much play?

At the golf course I work at in western Washington, Avalon Golf Links, 2020 was one of the more profitable years the 27-hole daily fee course has ever had. And how has 2021 fared? Even better. Perhaps when it's all said and done, the best year ever.

However, record rounds played don't come without a price. Obviously, I know some of the problems so much play has meant for me personally, but I thought I'd reach out to a few other superintendents, to see if they are experiencing some of the same issues, or even maybe some different ones of their own.

One person I reached out to was a past assistant of mine, **Mike Votipka**, who is now the superintendent at Lake Padden Golf Course in Bellingham, Washington. The biggest thing Mike has noticed as far as detrimental effects from the pandemic has been the timing of maintenance. It's the new challenge of getting things done with so many golfers out there. "Our staff has had to start at least 90 minutes ahead of the first tee time each day to get more done than in the past," he says.

This is something I've had to do at Avalon as well: start earlier (usually in the dark) and try to get as much done as possible ahead of play. Although this has always been the maintenance philosophy of golf courses, it's never been more important than it is now with so much play. Staffing up with more crew members in the early hours has been crucial.

Mike mentioned that evening maintenance was also something he had to do at times this past summer.

"On several occasions, staff members came in after the last tee time for maintenance behind play — especially something we would do before next day tournaments," he says.

Andy Jorgensen is the CGCS director of golf maintenance operations at On Top of the World Communities and Related Entities in Ocala, Florida. Traffic-related issues are the biggest problem stemming from increased play Andy has noticed. "The winter of 2020-21 was really hard for us," he says. "We got hit with a triple threat: single-rider golf carts, increased rounds and colder than normal temperatures. Traffic really became an issue in several spots.

"Due to product shortages, we resorted to making our own rope stakes. These issues highlighted the need for cart path installation and increased aerification. To recover, additional fertility was applied and aerification ramped up."

Even in North Dakota, which has seen few restrictions during the pandemic, **Chris Strange** has noted a



▲ Jorgensen



▲ Kennelly



▲ Votipka

MAINTENANCE

► Turf wear caused by cart traffic is leading to adjustments in maintenance practices.

significant uptick in play at Minot Country Club, where he is the superintendent.

"We have definitely been busier since the pandemic," he says, "and our membership has grown significantly. As well, the tournament schedule in 2021 was much fuller than 2020, as charities and organizations came back to the course. Par 3 traffic for divots and ball marks has significantly increased, and my short gap wedge par 3 requires extra fertilizer to keep up with the beating it has been taking."

I agree with Chris about divots on par-3 tees, especially tees that are perhaps slightly underbuilt on shorter par 3s. Keeping grass on small tees with excessive play has become one of the great challenges for us at Avalon. One thing we've found that helps is putting different colored markers together at the same distance on the par-3 tees a few days each week, so less area on the tee is destroyed daily. Moving markers off their regular tees occasionally to give those tees some time to come back has been beneficial.

▼ Heavy use on par-3 tees has tested the creativity of superintendents over the past two years.

Chris has also noticed the now-common problem among many superintendents that finding the time to perform daily maintenance duties, specifically mowing, has become a greater challenge.

"With the new members, the course is generally busier at all times of the day," Chris says. "Where we used to have some slow midweek mornings when we could mow the entire course, we have had to adjust to mowing less acreage per day."

Chris has noticed the same traffic problem many others are encountering as well. "Cart traffic combined with design that funnels that traffic to small areas has been a challenge," he says. "We've had to sacrifice areas and resod at the end of the season."

Chris also brought up an interesting point I hadn't considered much, but one that I think deserves some



thought. "I'm not sure if it's because of the pandemic, but we now have a large number of golfers that prefer to play alone," he says. "The singles that like to rip around the course in two hours are always keeping us on our toes. And after you let a few of those golfers play through your morning maintenance, it really impacts the amount of work you can get done before normal play catches you."

Tim Kennelly is the superintendent at Baltimore Country Club in Maryland. He has also seen a huge spike in play since the onset of COVID-19. He also points to cart traffic as the single biggest issue for him related to increased play.

"This was especially true in 2020 with single-rider mandates," Tim says. "Last summer, in our location in the Transition Zone, we were hot and wet, and this meant cart restrictions numerous days a week — not so much due to excessive soil moisture, but high-traffic volume."

Like other superintendents, Tim has found the small tee design at the 36-hole Baltimore Country Club to be rather problematic.

"With players playing it forward more and more, our tees are simply too small for the traffic we have seen during the pandemic," he says. "Our solution, on our West Course, we have begun re-grassing with improved varieties of Bermudagrass, and this has been well-received. And on our East Course, a plan has been developed by golf architect **Keith Foster** to enlarge, expand and in some cases reposition tees to meet the short- and long-term




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MAINTENANCE

► More play means earlier start times for Mike Votipka's team at Lake Padden Golf Course.

needs of the membership. Forward tees have also been built in a few select locations.”

Generally, the most common problems with increased play seem to be cart traffic, tee wear, and mowing and maintenance gaps. I think one thing many of us have noticed in managing our courses through this high-volume period has been how some design flaws have been exposed or are becoming outdated.

Small tees, poorly routed traffic areas, and even poorly spaced irrigation have been an issue for many with increased compaction and traffic. Record rounds have made many superintendents launch renovation projects, or at least to consider renovation for certain areas or aspects on their course.



Although superintendents may be frustrated at times with so many people on the golf course, we should all be embracing this boom, no matter the cause. Tim puts it best: “Golf has certainly been enjoyed by all, especially those entering the game.”

Perhaps the best thing superintendents and their crews can do to welcome (and retain) these new players

to the game is to find solutions to these new complications and issues that have cropped up due to heavy play and keep providing the best courses we possibly can. **GCI**

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

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By **Guy Cipriano**

COMPACT AMENITY

The 12-hole Saddle at GlenCove represents a personal project for a veteran of western North Carolina maintenance and development.

The most exciting project in a career filled with big pursuits close to his western North Carolina hometown means **Jerry West** relishes spending time at a compact course that begins and ends at an “entertainment barn” strategically routed within an “adventure wellness community.”

West is the director of operations at Old Edwards Club and his numerous responsibilities include guiding a development with few peers. The Saddle at GlenCove has matured nicely beneath Shortoff Mountain and Cowee Ridge. Opened in late 2019, The

Saddle is a 12-hole, 1,601-yard, par-3 course designed to connect generations of golfers.

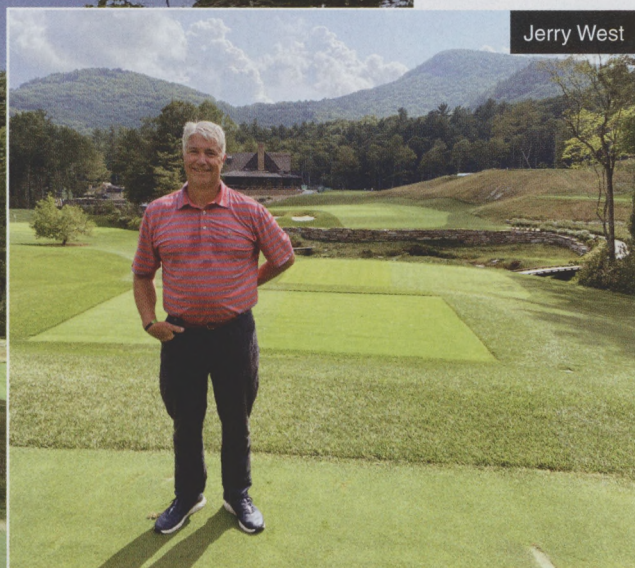
Raised in Franklin, a small western North Carolina community less than 30 miles from Cashiers, home of Old Edwards Club and The Saddle, West’s relationship with the region’s courses started via accompanying his father to work. The older West was a contractor whose plumbing assignments often involved interior installations and repairs at golf facilities. West became intrigued by the courses, so he started working on them as a teenager.

Golf developments dot the Cashiers-Highlands area and West helped build the 18-hole

Old Edwards Club course within the Highlands Cove development. West occupied a major part in the project and a boulder named “Sitting Rock” featuring a plaque thanking him for his “energy, passion & love of this property” sits to the right of the 10th fairway.

The **Tom Jackson**-designed course debuted in 2009. West never envisioned the responsibility Old Edwards Club owners **Arthur** and **Angela Williams** delegated to him less than a decade later: oversee the development of a par-3 course created to help sell real estate.

“I would have never dreamt something like this would be possible,” West says while sitting on an Adirondack chair near a firepit overlooking a waterfall and rock wall fronting The Saddle’s 118-yard second hole. “My first question would have been, ‘Why?’ Everybody once wanted a big course; nobody wanted a



Jerry West

short course. I was so mistaken. The popularity and response of this ... it's going to change golf and how people approach the game."

The first 33 cottage units surrounding the 16 acres The Saddle occupies sold during their first year on the market, according to West. A 30-buyer waitlist for the final eight cottage units followed the initial sale. Yes, West and his bosses learned, a short course can resonate with prospective homebuyers.

Designed by South Carolina-based architect **Beau Welling**, who has co-designed par-3 courses with **Tiger Woods** at Bluejack National and with **Gil Hanse** at PGA Frisco, The Saddle opened in late 2019 after more than a year of clearing the wooded property, shaping the Golden Age-inspired green complexes

and growing in 13.6 acres of turf. The Landscapes Unlimited team building the course and the Old Edwards Club crew responsible for maintaining it endured 11 feet of rain in 12 months after the August 2018 groundbreaking. Heavy rain represents the norm in western North Carolina, a region Welling compares to an "elevated rainforest" ideal

for stunning aesthetics. "You'd think all that rain is a negative for golf," says Welling, whose Greenville, South Carolina, office is less than two hours from The Saddle. "But it makes the foliage so spectacular. It's so green and verdant. It's a spectacular part of the world that more and more people seem to be discovering."

A superintendent by training, West has spent three decades handling weather extremes and absorbing the surrounding beauty. He oversees around 100 employees responsible for operations and maintenance throughout the 800 acres owned by Old Edwards Club. Superintendent **George Mancuso's** team includes 27 employees who handle the 18-hole course and The Saddle from the same maintenance facility.

An eight-worker crew maintains The Saddle to the same standards as an upscale regulation course. The turf palette consists of 007 bentgrass greens, L93 bentgrass teeing areas, fairways and approaches, and a fescue/bluegrass rough blend. The course has 12 bunkers and around two acres of native areas planted with a blend of hard, sheep and red fescues. A 9-hole putting course and short game practice area are also part of the grounds. Welling designed the course to promote the ground game, thus giving players of all abilities, especially those at the beginning and the end

of their careers, an opportunity to enjoy the experience. A pond on the second hole and wetlands on the ninth hole are the only forced carries on the course.

"If you can't hit the ball in the air, there's still a way for you to get to the green," Welling says. "For the most part, we try to let that ground game be something that's available. And it's not just the tee shot. It's also the recovery shot. There's a lot of bentgrass around the greens, so we used the idea that the ball can be played along the ground for a missed shot to recover, whether that be with a putter, 3 iron, hybrid, 9 iron or whatever."

West has observed various player combinations ranging from grandparent-grandchild pairings to teenagers spending evenings outdoors with friends. The course is walking only, parts of it are lighted, and three-, four- and five-hole routings reside within the 12-hole footprint.

Connecting generations sparked the methodology behind one of the biggest decisions of West's career—naming the course. A saddle is the lowest point between two mountains and a view of the one between Shortoff Mountain and Cowee Ridge emerges on the 12th tee. The scenery convinced West to name the course The Saddle because the land also connects generations.

"In doing all the golf course construction and renovation that I have done, I have never done anything as personally impactful and meaningful as this," West says before a guided tour of the course on a sunny August afternoon. "When you get out there and start walking around, you're going to be like, 'No way does that exist.' It's that cool."

Fortunately, The Saddle exists. And it just might be cool enough for other developers to consider using short courses to attract homebuyers seeking active lifestyles.

"I think you're going to continue to see them, especially if you can append them into existing golf operations," Welling says. "It just makes so much sense. It's a new market, new activity, new revenue. There's a desire for fun, interactive, still on green, real-grass experiences. I don't think we are at the end of this. We might be at the beginning." **GCI**



▲ Welling

A NEW SOLUTION

TWO SUPERINTENDENTS DEVELOPED A DIFFERENT PGR SCHEDULE FOR A DIFFERENT LABOR SITUATION. WHAT'S THE PGR SOLUTION FOR YOUR COURSE?

By **Matt LaWell**

The national labor shortage has upended supply chains, cleared store shelves before they were ever stocked and shuttered restaurant seating areas. But who could have imagined a year ago — or even this spring — that it would also spark some golf course superintendents to increase how much plant growth regulator they apply on tees, greens and fairways?

Brian Smoot and Todd Vermillion both lean on PGRs — they have for years — but this year especially, with high school and college students returning to school after a year of classes on their laptop, and with few applicants for full- or part-time work, they are searching for and holding onto every new solution.

A developing PGR schedule is among those solutions.

"I'm probably using more as we see the employee pool changing," says Smoot, who recently celebrated his 16th anniversary as the superintendent at Crosswinds Golf Club in Plymouth, Massachusetts. "It's much, much harder to hire people and I'm probably using more PGRs now than I ever have."

Each application has the same amount in the tank, Smoot says, but he applies his mixture more frequently. "On greens and approaches, every 14 days. Tees used to be 19, 20, 21 days, now it's every 14 days. Fairways, every 17 days. We went from cutting fairways three times a week to two times a week and when we cut, we're not even cutting any grass." His summer crew of 20 is down to seven full-timers and four high schoolers who work a shift or two most weekends.

"Obviously, as the weather changes, we'll go to once a week. When we get to November, we'll cut once a week."

Vermillion works in a different state and a different time zone — this is his fifth season as the superintendent at Glenview Park Golf Club in the competitive Chicagoland market — but his answer to PGR application schedules is similar.

"I rely so much on the growth regulators to really help us out due to the lack of labor in our market at times," Vermillion says. "Sometimes I can find a lot of guys, sometimes I can't." He worked with a crew of 12 this summer. That total shrunk to below nine by fall.

"It's a huge deal for me to be able to slow that grass down because it's hard for me to get back out on the golf course and really put a second mow on stuff," Vermillion says. "If I'm able to slow the grass down and only have to mow

fairways two or three times a week, or less, that's a benefit for me. Especially in the springtime, I lean on those growth regulators both on my greens and my fairways to really help slow the grass down and to keep it to where I can reduce my mowing schedules."

Glenview Park averages 38,000 to 46,000 rounds a year, and "if the weather stays good," Vermillion says, "there's a chance we're going to get to 50,000 this year. It's putting a little bit of stress on the golf course with that many rounds coming through."

Both Smoot and Vermillion use Cutless in their PGR mix and rotation. Smoot started tank mixing in early 2006, just a few months after he started at Crosswinds.

"I got here in November of '05 and it was surprising how much *Poa* was already here on a two-year-old golf course," he says. "I wanted to prevent more from coming and I wanted to eliminate what was here. That was my No. 1 concern, right from the get-go. If you have this brand-new golf course, what are we doing growing *Poa*?"

Smoot says he "went after it aggressively" and near the end of the season, "saw the *Poa* starting to get weaker." His main concern that first season was developing four or five greens that "were totally lost, down to dirt. My main concern was healthy turf — I didn't care what kind it was."

After that first season, there was "no doubt at all" about continuing to use Cutless. He noticed a decrease of *Poa* on the original 18 holes and none at all on the new nine holes he was growing in. "To this day," he says, "I still use that chemistry on greens and approaches. My goal is to keep the turf manageable where we're not going out and chasing clippings all the time."

After a career at private clubs, Vermillion went not only public but municipal in 2017 when he joined Glenview Park. He does not think about the course as a stereotypical municipal, though. "I look at our club as a private club," he says. "It's not just show up, mow and go home."

The turf selection, for instance, illustrates the commitment to providing a high-quality product. "I have Pure Distinction on all my greens and I have PureFormance — which is a blend of Crystal BlueLinks and PennLinks — on my fairways and my tees," he says. "That was one of the biggest things I sold when I was hired back in 2017, was really promoting bentgrass growth and reducing that *Poa* infestation. I have my problem areas, just from foot traffic, that give us a challenge, but it allows me the opportunity

to really give our community private club conditions."

Vermillion will normally "hit it at some pretty high rates" — 16 or 18 ounces per acre — "to cut down the mowing yield, the clipping yield" at the start of the season, "to give us an opportunity to focus on other things that are happening on the golf course. I use Cutless MEC on my greens and come out on pretty high rates there, too. I'll back off those rates about mid-season, then I'll dial it way back to just a few ounces an acre, just enough to help maintain some of our mowing schedules.

"That's my opportunity to really slow that *Poa* down — really kick it right in the teeth and allow that bent to take off."

The applications are normally "stretched out to two or three weeks," Vermillion says. "A lot just depends on my traffic schedule and my events schedule. There's no one answer throughout my summer."

Are Smoot or Vermillion's PGR approaches right for you and your course? They *could* be, according to SePRO research manager Dr. Kyle Briscoe.

"Every course has an individual environment, so you really can't make blanket recommendations with PGRs," says Briscoe, who has been on the road at courses across



the country about three weeks every month since May. "When I talk with superintendents, I start with,

'What's your objective? Is it *Poa* conversion? Do you have more *Poa* than you would like and you'd like to get back to creeping bentgrass? Is it *Poa* maintenance? Or is it just strictly regulation? There are various ways to look at it."

Much of Briscoe's recent research has focused on how various PGRs interact with PoaCure, a pre- and post-emergence grass herbicide for selective control of annual bluegrass and roughstalk bluegrass in golf course turf that was granted EPA registration in December 2019. Even if you apply PoaCure four times over the course of a season, Briscoe says, "What are you going to do after that? You're still going to have seeds in the seed bank. You're still going to have *Poa* germinating. And you're still going to have to manage that *Poa* over time. You're

not going to use PoaCure and then not use a PGR — specifically a PGR that's targeted at *Poa* suppression." Research with Dr. Cale Bigelow of Purdue University has indicated that "you really need flurprimidol" — the active ingredient in Cutless — "in the system to keep that *Poa* suppressed."

"PGRs are just interesting because you're using them to manage turf but they're not required," Briscoe says. "Fertilizers, fungicides, insecticides, you *need* those or you're going to lose turf. That's not necessarily the case with PGRs. PGRs are beneficial — color, quality, *Poa* suppression, less mowing, less clipping volume — so there has to be a little bit of a different mindset."

A different mindset for a different kind of turf problem. Who could have imagined? ■

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	Harpoon Granular
Floating and submersed weeds	SonarOne
Enhancing disease management program	Zio Fungicide
Dollar spot	Soteria Fungicide

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MORAGHAN *continued from 33*

- assessment of your abilities
- Study up on the new club, read its history, check the website, conduct due diligence
- Polish your portfolio, update course photos
- Think about how you'll look to the interviews. Consider shaving the beard, losing weight and taking the suit out of the closet to make sure it still fits.

If you are applying for a job (versus being personally contacted), what happens after you send in your credentials? Likely, you'll sit and wait. And it is very possible that you'll never hear back.

Nothing is worse than no response. It's a pet peeve of mine not hearing anything — and waiting. All you really want is acknowledgement that your material has been received.

Well, you might not get it. But you won't be alone. It's not unusual for some jobs (and you can figure out which ones they are when you apply) to generate hundreds of résumés. Assume the club is likely to only interview five or six candidates.

When you still haven't heard — but after some deep thinking on your part about whether you're really a good candidate for the position — feel free to follow up. Ask for the status of the search or the schedule for candidate interviews. Just because you're in a rush don't assume they are. Maybe the current superintendent is retiring and a long goodbye is planned. Hard as it is, be patient.

How long should you wait before inquiring? If you sent

in a blind submission, I think three to four weeks. If they reached out to you, two weeks is a fair timeframe. Don't be afraid to ask if the recipient of your background packet needs additional information. If you still get no response, you're probably not in the running.

One final thing to consider: Your current club. Where you're working now can't help but matter in the interview and selection process. What you have to weigh is if it matters so much that it's overshadowing your attributes and positive characteristics. Yes, it does happen.

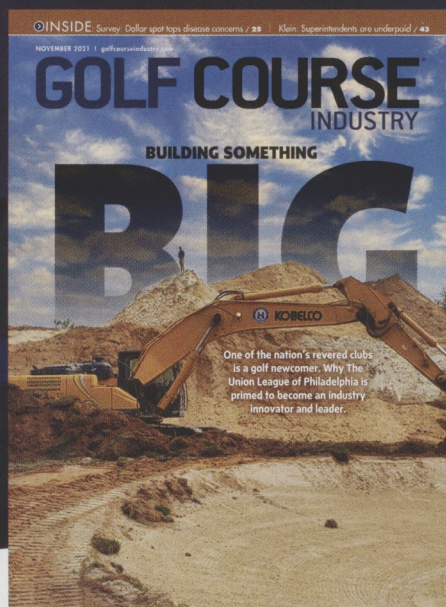
If you think your current club is holding you back, consider a step down to take a job at a more prominent club. Put in a few years there and try again. Name clubs are eye candy to recruiters, and "stealing someone" from a fancy course appeals to the ego and vanity of certain private club members.

Also, start to market yourself and increase your visibility: Become a panelist at an industry conference, get involved with a local (or regional or national) organization, enhance your social presence (appropriately), start a blog, practice your presentation skills in front of a mirror. And network.

Right now, the supply of qualified candidates is much larger than the number of open positions. This should change in the next few years as many superintendents at top clubs around the country look to ride off into the sunset.

Will you be ready — and able — to take their place? **GCI**

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

WHEELBARROW TRAILER

I was visiting the **Tom Kite**-designed 36-hole Coco Beach Golf Club in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico, a few years ago and spotted this unique trailer being used by a landscape maintenance company while driving to the San Juan airport. The 10-cubic-foot True Temper Wheelbarrow's handles and single front wheel and bracket were removed. The current wheels with pneumatic tires, axle, metal tongue piping/hitch, and metal steel strapping and pipe supports were bolted/welded together. It's a nice, inexpensive idea using what appears to be all recycled parts and materials.



HIDING VISIBLE GREEN'S DRAINAGE PIPING

AGD Systems green's drainage piping on 6-foot centers do an excellent job of providing subsurface drainage on push-up constructed greens. The McCall Golf Club in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, has seven greens with this system. During drought or when the greens are playing firm, fast and dry, the drainage piping trenches are visible, which the membership does not like to see. To solve this situation, superintendent **David Visocan** and chief of maintenance **Mario Delligatti** had their staff aerify with 3/8-inch diameter coring tines, along with 1/2-inch diameter deep coring tines, both procedures done twice per year. A Scotts AccuGreen 1000 Drop Spreader was modified with a thin piece of sheet metal, held in place with duct tape, so the material-flow was only a little wider than the drainage trench lines themselves. 70 percent Earthworks Renovate Plus and 30 percent Profile Soil Amendment blended together were applied into the aerifier holes in two directions after each



aerification with the spreader flow calibrated all the way open. The amendments are then lightly broomed in. Earthworks 10-2-5 is applied at .25 lbs/N once a month along with the normal fertility program. This is the second season using this procedure and the membership has not said anything about them since. The spreader and materials were in inventory and it took about one hour for the modification. **Jim Nagle** is the club's renovation architect.



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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HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

I loved growing up in rural, southwestern Virginia. Castlewood was nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains and the rolling terrain stretched as far as the eye could see.

I was fortunate enough to visit Scotland and the home of golf, St Andrews, in January 2019 and I was immediately enamored with the landscape. I could easily recognize why emigrated Scots would choose to settle in my neck of the woods centuries ago.

When I received an invitation earlier this year to return to Scotland, I did not hesitate to ask my wife for permission. It had been 20 months since I last traveled to the 2020 Golf Industry Show, and those 20 months had been filled with the pandemic and my wife's battle with breast cancer. Perhaps she needed a break from me as much as I just needed a break!

In 1964, famed golf writer **Herbert Warren Wind** penned *North to the Links of Dornoch* for *The New Yorker*. Golf has been played on the links land in Dornoch since 1616. The golf club was formed in 1877 and in 1886 **Old Tom Morris** was "invited to survey the links and lay out a more fully planned golf course!"

Also, Dornoch is the birthplace of **Donald J. Ross**. Born November 23, 1872, Ross was nearly 14 years old when Old Tom improved the links, and he would go on to apprentice under Old Tom in St Andrews before emigrating to the U.S. and becoming our most prolific golf course designer of the Golden Age. I had to

make this pilgrimage.

Now, with this much build-up prior to arriving, I had the highest of expectations I have ever had for a golf course. Many times, I have walked away unimpressed with other highly touted courses simply because my expectations were too lofty.

But not this time! My first round at Royal Dornoch was played in a steady rain. Course manager **Eoin Riddell** messaged me: "Think you're going to get wet! 14 mm" — a little more than half an inch — "in the last couple of hours and not stopping, welcome to Scotland!" At least Eoin was kind enough to include a laughing emoji.

The rain stopped and we had a couple hours before dinner, so three of us went back out and walked the course. We walked to more closely inspect the landscape, turf, conditioning and architecture.

It was cloudy and cool as we made the trek past the second green and through the gorse to the third tee. Holes 3 through 6 continue outward and then we made the climb up to the plateau where No. 7 resides.

And there the whole course stretched out below our feet, and it was now basking in the golden glow of the late afternoon sun. I knew then there was not a finer piece of ground for golf anywhere in this world. The beautiful contours are simultaneously unbelievable and indescribable and for the first time in I don't know how long, I felt at peace.

I Facetimed Mrs. Greenkeeper standing on the edge of the

seventh fairway. I flipped the camera and told her you must see this. When my trip was over, I made four trips around Royal Dornoch with golf clubs in tow, but the journey without them will hold memories for a lifetime.

A little more than 16 miles north of Dornoch lies the village of Brora. And Brora is home to a golf course on the North Sea redesigned by five-time Open champion **James Braid**. The golf course is mostly unchanged from Braid's 1924 handiwork and my round there was a golf experience unlike any other.

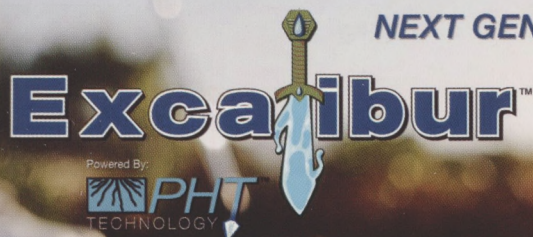
Head greenkeeper **James MacBeath** and his team maintain the closely mowed areas of the links while nearly 100 head of sheep graze and maintain the rough. Small electrical wires encircle the putting surfaces to keep the sheep and cattle from wandering onto the greens.

As I looked out over the course and the surrounding landscape as far as the eye could see, I could envision the same terrain back home in Russell County, Virginia — minus the North Sea, of course. I felt totally at home on Brora's links and was overcome with emotion.

I do not believe in reincarnation, but Mrs. Greenkeeper frequently tells me I am an old soul. When I stop to think about the things that pique my interest, I understand what she means. It was a long journey home, and this weary traveler was happy to be back in his bed, but my heart remains in the Highlands. **GCI**

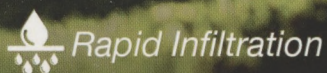


MATTHEW WHARTON, CGCS, MG, is the superintendent at Carolina Golf Club in Charlotte, North Carolina and past president of the Carolinas GCSA. Follow him on Twitter @CGCGreenkeeper.



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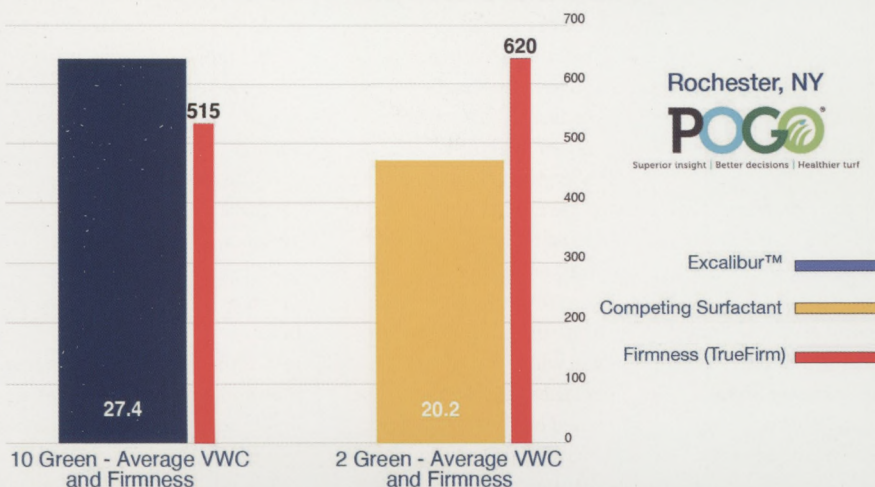


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