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## THE APP THAT *CHANGED* TURF

How Twitter has become the dominant way to communicate, share ideas and network among golf maintenance professionals.

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# THE APP THAT CHANGED TURF

18

Twitter is disruptive, dismissed, essential, entirely free to use, unquantifiably important and, just shy of the 16th anniversary of its launch, more important than ever for the online turf community.

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Twitter has become the dominant tool for golf course maintenance professionals to network, communicate and share ideas.

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# THOUGHTS ABOUT TWITTER

I joined Twitter in 2011 as a complement to the print and digital coverage I provided while covering sports for the *Centre Daily Times* in State College, Pennsylvania. I was also working a hobby job on superintendent **Rick Pagett's** Penn State Golf Courses crew at the time. Thankfully, I never posted anything from the course. I mowed snakes and struggled to differentiate between a weed and disease. I would produce golf content in bulk a few years later.

In the last 11 years, I have developed stories, created competitive advantages for brands I represent, established a professional identity (authentic golf dork!) and strengthened relationships through Twitter. I couldn't imagine performing the job without the app, although I'm proactively bracing for a day when Twitter lacks relevance or no longer exists. That day doesn't appear to be coming soon. But grasping Twitter fundamentals should prepare me for the next big thing in industry communication.

Along the way, I have learned a few things about using Twitter (@GCIMagazineGuy) and social media for work. Some might apply to you.

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Job changes altered my content and timeline. The analysis, stats and anecdotes that Penn State football fans seek contrasts the needs of the golf maintenance community. Golf discussion occupies 95 percent of my feed. I left sports writing in 2014. I needed digital distance from my work past to develop current and future audiences. Twitter is a terrific way to support the property you once managed. But leave the actual posting about that property to your successors. It's not fair to them—or your current employer—to use your Twitter feed to promote what you accomplished at a past gig.

The same goes for switching roles in the industry. If you leave daily golf course maintenance for sales, focus on understanding and supporting current and potential customers via Twitter instead of touting your days as a superintendent. Share lessons from past experiences in private conversations.

Regularly perform follower audits. If you have a significant member or customer following, they immediately become your top priority. Never tweet down on any segment of your audience, especially those who pay your bills.

## SAY NO TO NEGATIVITY

There are idiots on social media, just like there are idiots on the roads you drive to work. Mute or ignore them. Engaging takes emotional energy. Save that spunk for stuff that matters. See something that bothers you on the course or Twitter? Step away and take a 15-minute “cooling off” period before responding or posting. In most cases, you'll move on to something else and forget about what bothered you in the first place. A superintendent we interviewed for this month's cover story told us he unfollows people who exude negativity on Twitter. Brilliant!

## WHAT ABOUT PLACES STUCK IN THE PAST?

I feel bad for industry professionals working at clubs that don't permit employees to share the glory of their work on social media. IMO, golf courses are the most beautiful landscapes on Earth. Posts demonstrating sunrise and sunset imagery, solutions to complex problems, and camaraderie around the course are powerful recruiting tools. Younger generations are unlikely to know or care about a course's place in a top-100 list, but they know what looks cool and rewarding. Social media bans limit reach-of-phone referral, which is becoming more effective than word-of-mouth referral. Understand a club's social media policy when applying or interviewing for a job.

## IT CAN BE FUN

Nearly every industry professional who embraces Twitter will tell you they are better agronomists, people managers and networkers through thoughtful usage of the app. If you take your use of Twitter seriously—but not Twitter itself too seriously—you'll probably have some fun, too.

I know I have. **GCI**



*Guy Cipriano*  
**Guy Cipriano**  
Editor-in-Chief  
gcipriano@gie.net

Vol. 54 No. 6

GIE Media, Inc.  
5811 Canal Road  
Valley View, Ohio 44125  
Phone: 800-456-0707  
Fax: 216-525-0515

**PUBLISHER**  
**Dave Szy**  
dszy@gie.net

**EDITORIAL**  
**Guy Cipriano**  
Editor-in-Chief gcipriano@gie.net

**Matt LaWell**  
Managing Editor mlawell@gie.net

**Terry Buchen**  
Technical Editor at-large

**GRAPHICS / PRODUCTION**  
**Jim Blaney**  
Creative Director

**Kaitlin Sellers**  
Advertising Production Coordinator

**SALES**  
**Russell Warner**  
National Sales Manager  
rwarner@gie.net • 216-393-0293

**CORPORATE**  
**Richard Foster**  
Chairman

**Chris Foster**  
President and CEO

**Dan Moreland**  
Publisher Emeritus

**James R. Keefe**  
Executive Vice President

**Kelly Antal**  
Controller

**Christina Warner**  
Audience Development Director

**Michelle Wisniewski**  
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**Maria Miller**  
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Marketing Director

**Nick Adams**  
Director, Digital  
Audience Engagement

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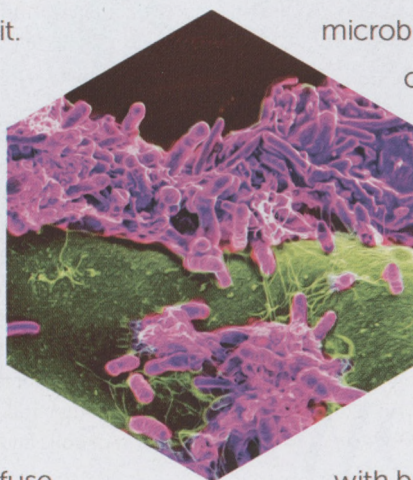


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# NOTEBOOK



## A #TURFHEADSGRILLING ROAD SHOW

**Want a chance for the Golf Course Industry team to grill for your team in 2023? Submit a recipe for the 2022 Turfheads Guide to Grilling.**

By Guy Cipriano

**D**on Bloom eats grilled food in the middle of ultramarathons.

"Cheeseburgers are the best at about mile 50," he says.

We'll take Bloom's word on this one. We'll also take grilling and life balance guidance from the western New York turf manager.

Bloom is the supervisor of park and golf course at Durand Eastman Park in Rochester, New York. His team maintains 10 miles of marked trails, an arboretum, picnic shelters and an 18-hole golf course where **Donald Ross** and later **Robert Trent Jones Sr.** worked.

Away from the park and course, Bloom trots through the woods

— and he's running a 100-kilometer race later this summer. Bloom also enjoys cooking and grilling for family, friends and co-workers. His passion for food brought *Golf Course Industry* and AQUA-AID Solutions to Durand Eastman on May 18 for a #TurfheadsGrilling cookout.

National sales manager **Russ Warner** served as the grill master, with a veggie assist from managing editor **Matt LaWell**. Entrées included pulled pork, hot dogs and, yes, cheeseburgers. Bloom submitted a wings recipe (he lives in western New York, after all) for the inaugural Turfheads Guide



Snap this code to submit a recipe.

to Grilling published in our December 2021 issue and Durand Eastman was selected as the site for a #TurfheadsGrilling cookout.

The #TurfheadsGrilling campaign returns in 2022. All are encouraged to

submit a recipe for the published guide. Everybody who submits a recipe receives #TurfheadsGrilling swag. Industry professionals whose recipes make it to print receive a spices and sauces kit and a chance to have us visit and feed your team in 2023.

Heck, you might even get to sign an autograph. Bloom's brother,





**Brian Bloom**, is a trained chef, yet the trained agronomist became the family's first published cook. "When the grilling guide came out, I autographed it and gave it to him," Bloom says. "He was pissed."

"Growing up, we cooked," Bloom adds. "We always had a lot of food in the house and friends would always come over before football or soccer games. I then cooked in college for roommates. I now cook almost every night at home. My brother went to culinary school and it's always a competi-



tion to see who can cook better."

Camaraderie isn't the only side benefit of cooking. Bloom started trail running with his father, **Doug Bloom**, in 2010. The pursuit has blossomed into Bloom running thousands of miles and burning millions of calories.

"I wish I would have started it earlier," he says. "I try to live a healthy lifestyle. I still eat like crap. But if I go for a run, I don't feel so bad about it. Make time for yourself. It's been a challenge to figure out how to work to live instead of live to work. Everything from family to your health improves if you figure out how to work to live and do something else away from the golf course. You'll figure out you'll enjoy the golf course a little bit more."

Bloom has one more item to determine over the next few months: the recipe he wants to submit for the 2022 Turfheads Guide to Grilling.

"I really want to figure out poor man's burnt ends," he says. "I have tried it a couple of times. It's not great ... yet."



## Tartan Talks 71

**David Ferris**, a central New York native, moved to South Florida in 1996 for a landscape architecture position. A year later, he landed his first golf course architecture job — and he has never left.



▲ Ferris

Ferris is celebrating 25 years of working with **John Sanford** in 2022. This year started with Ferris becoming a partner in the firm now called Sanford Ferris Golf Course Design.

"When you get into this profession, you realize how hard it is to get your foot in the door," Ferris says on the Tartan Talks podcast. "And once you get your foot into the door, you really don't want to leave. And it's not like the grass is greener on the other side. There's really no grass on the other side. I was very fortunate to go to work for John. The projects are amazing and he's fun to work with. I couldn't imagine it any other way."

The job will become especially fun this summer when Ferris and Sanford begin a renovation at Calvary Club outside Syracuse, New York. Ferris played the course often as a child. His uncle was a charter member and his father served as an assistant golf professional.

To learn more about Ferris's background and his work, download the episode on the Superintendent Radio page of popular podcast distribution platforms.





# Giving the big speech

By Rick Woelfel

**D**r. Devon Carroll had a powerful message for graduates at the recent University of Tennessee hooding ceremony: break down your big dreams into smaller dreams that can be pursued and achieved “One bite at a time.”

Carroll was chosen by the dean of the graduate school, **Dr. Dixie L. Thompson**, at

the conclusion of a process in which each department of individual schools within the university put forward the name of a student to be considered for the honor. Carroll received the invitation to speak in mid-March and spent the intervening two months considering the points she wanted to make in her five-minute address.

“I’ve given a lot of talks,” she says, “but this was probably the most difficult one I’ve ever had to prepare. It’s difficult to be personable and inspiring without being cheesy in five minutes, so definitely it was a lot of trial and error, and kind of revisiting the message and tweaking it over time to be sure that I had it just the right way.”

Carroll’s audience in Thompson-Boling Arena included 750 students — the largest class in the history of the university’s graduate school — along with 250 faculty members and around 3,000 friends and family members of the graduates. Another 3,000 viewed the ceremony virtually.

“Achieving a graduate degree is something really difficult,” she says. “I just wanted to remind our graduates that they’ve already achieved a massive accomplishment, and that in the future they have the skills and hopefully the confidence to continue pursuing other big goals.”

“The theme of my talk was the quote, ‘The way to eat an elephant is a bite at a time,’ and reminding the graduates that taking small bites and breaking goals down as small goals to meet bite by bite turns into big achievements over time.”

Carroll encouraged graduates seated in front of her to be open about their personal and professional goals.

“I challenge you to verbally share your bites [from the elephant],” she said during the speech. “Vocalize your goals, big and small. Tell your boss, a colleague, or a friend what your next step is and when you think you will take it. I found that these small, self-imposed deadlines have kept me accountable in taking the next bite of my elephant and making my goals more manageable.”

The graduates included Carroll, who received her Ph.D. in plant, soil and environmental sciences with a concentration in weed science from the Herbert College of Agriculture. She successfully defended




“With GreenActivator, I’ve noticed much lusher fairways. **For me, it was like mowing on a cloud because the grass was standing up.** The grass is thicker, but not higher, so the ball sits up better for golfers and improves playability. I get positive comments from golfers constantly.”



**Scott Rohlfen**  
Jesup Golf & Country Club  
Jesup, Iowa





her degree this past March and has accepted a position with Bayer.

Calling Carroll's academic record "distinguished" is an understatement. It includes a bachelor's degree in turfgrass science from Penn State, which she earned in just 2½ years, a master's degree

in agronomy from Penn State, and a second master's degree in agricultural leadership from Tennessee with a focus on opportunities for women in the turf industry.

Carroll, who was a guest on the *Wonderful Women of Golf* podcast last year,

is a staunch advocate for women in the industry.

"The sky's-the-limit-type messaging is really important," says Carroll, whose academic influences include Tennessee's Dr. Jim Brosnan and Penn State's Dr. John Kaminski. "One of the things I wholeheartedly believe in is that we're all capable of a lot more than we think we are. Sometimes you just need a nudge to get there and that's really what I wanted to communicate."

"Looking back, I always had Dr. Brosnan and Dr. Kaminski giving me that piece of advice. Certainly, that turned out well for me, so it's really exciting to be able to pass that on and hopefully inspire some of my colleagues and classmates to continue their successes."

Rick Woelfel is a Philadelphia-based writer and frequent *Golf Course Industry* contributor.

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# Katrin Wolfe

GCSAA MID-ATLANTIC FIELD STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

**K**atrin Wolfe has a passion for golf. She grew up in a golf family at the celebrated Sunnehanna Country Club in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and played collegiately at Penn State. After college, she worked in athletic administration. But when the GCSAA had an opening on its field staff, Wolfe decided to apply.

"There are a lot of similarities, a lot of transferable skills from my old job that I could use in this job," she says. "And my friends would say, 'This sounds like you.'"

Wolfe recently celebrated her first anniversary as the GCSAA's field staff representative for the Mid-Atlantic Region. The region she covers includes 17 GCSAA chapters. She discussed her responsibilities with **Rick Woelfel** on the Wonderful Women of Golf podcast.

"I always say that we're the liaison between the members of the chapters and the national organization," Wolfe says. "A little bit more hands-on, a little bit more of a connection. I think it's really awesome to be able to get directly to our members to provide our programs and services and to show how they work."

Wolfe, who is based in northeast Pennsylvania, notes the importance of connecting with the turf professionals she serves. "Sometimes, when you have a national organization, you don't feel like you're connected with them, because they're not where you are," she says. "Having field reps throughout country that connect directly with you and come to your events, you can actually see what the GCSAA is doing, and what it can provide for you as a member."

A common thread exists in Wolfe's conversations with superintendents and their teams. "We're working with labor issues and cost," she says. "Inflation is hitting the golf industry just like everything else."

Wolfe is pleased to see superintendents taking time to introduce students to the opportunities available in the turf industry.

"We're seeing our superintendents going out to schools to create mentorship and apprenticeship programs," she says. "A lot of what you hear is, 'I didn't know golf had that many opportunities for careers.' Or, 'I didn't know there were those opportunities to do golf as a career or be outside.' I think we're trying some unique ways to show the opportunities in golf and I think it's great when we show what we do on the golf course with superintendents caring for the course."

"It also expands into other spaces like working in the clubhouse, working on the food side working in the pro shop, or as a mechanic. We have a lot of great opportunities in golf and there are a lot of transferrable skills."

The continued growth of the First Green program enthuses Wolfe.

"We're hoping to have one field trip in all 50 states," she says. "That's our next goal. I think if you have the opportunity, to see it and experience it, you're going to want to have it at your golf course. I was lucky enough to do a First Green in Maryland (in April) with **Ryan Kraushofer** of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter at Westminster Golf Club," where Kraushofer is superintendent and general manager. "He's Mr. First Green. He does a wonderful job."

Wolfe particularly enjoys seeing the reaction of students who find themselves in a golf course environment for the first time.

"You see it with First Green," she says. "They see the equipment and they look at it like, 'That's so cool.' They're just rolling the green back and forth. You would think it's the coolest thing they've ever seen, and it may be. Their eyes light up. It's really amazing."

Wolfe gave up competitive golf for a time after leaving Penn State, but she has now competed in eight USGA championships. Before she assumed her present position, she has always had an appreciation for what turf professionals do and what they bring to the game.

"I love golf history," she says. "I love golf courses. I've been lucky enough to play a significant amount of these golf courses. I know the hard work that they put in." **GCI**



We're trying to show the opportunities in golf and I think it's great when we show what we do on the course with superintendents caring for the course."



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# The solution is out. Now what?

Alucion 35 WG insecticide is labeled for control against caterpillars.

BY  
GUY CIPRIANO

**T**he testing, tweaking, and talking doesn't stop once a new product reaches the golf market. In the case of Alucion 35 WG insecticide, the education process is still rapidly evolving as the transition from curiosity to plant protectant staple continues.

BASF launched Alucion 35 WG insecticide last year, expanding the company's golf insecticide portfolio from none to one. The company enters a new realm of the golf market with confidence, because of its triumphs developing turf fungicides and herbicides. The same people behind the development and positioning of innovations such as Maxtima fungicide, Navicon Intrinsic brand fungicide, Insignia Intrinsic brand fungicide, Xzemplar fungicide, Pylex herbicide and Tower herbicide are involved with bringing Alucion 35 WG insecticide to the market.

The confidence surrounding this insecticide swells when you consider BASF has a significant presence in the structural pest control industry. Dinotefuran and alpha-cypermethrin are Alucion 35 WG insecticide's active ingredient pairing. Both active ingredients have already been proven to work in solving structural pest issues.

"BASF has a strong and large portfolio with a lot of expertise in insecticides on the pest control side of our business," says BASF technical service specialist Jen Browning, PCA. "What we did was bring one of our innovative active ingredients with our next-generation pyrethroid, which is alpha-cypermethrin. We combined it with dinotefuran to create a dynamic combination that delivers both contact and systemic activity.

"BASF also works to ensure superior formulation technology, so our products are easy to work with," she adds. "They are going to be buffered

well for a variety of mixing scenarios and tank mixing partners, but we are also harnessing that expertise from the pest control side to make these active ingredients work well together on the ground and then deliver longevity."

The Pacific Northwest-based Browning has played a central role in helping BASF bring its insecticide technology to the golf market. From multiple years of testing to last year's early adoption period, she has taken plenty of notes along the way, as researchers and superintendents discovered uses for the insecticide on golf turf. And the research doesn't stop simply because a solution is available for sale in many states. BASF continues to partner with university and private researchers and superintendents after unveiling a new solution.

"Once you launch a product, people start asking questions that you haven't thought of such as, 'What would happen for a particular pest



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if I put this out in this sequence in my program?’ Or, ‘I want to know exactly how long the residual would be if I tank mix it with this product,’” Browning says. “So, you start drilling down and asking fine resolution questions after launch. That tends to be what we focus on in years 2 and 3 after we introduce a new product to the market.”

Alucion 35 WG insecticide is labeled for control of billbugs, chinch bugs, ants, armyworms, cutworms, and sod webworms. It is also labeled for suppression of annual bluegrass weevils (ABW), mole crickets and European crane flies. BASF defines commercial control of an insect as reducing individuals by 80 percent or more and commercial suppression as reducing individuals by between 70 percent and 80 percent.

“We’re between suppression and control with ABW,” Browning says. “We have seen better than suppression in some trials, but we’re staying with suppression because it’s a difficult pest and you don’t want to overpromise. With mole crickets, there’s control if the timing is right. We will end up staying with suppression on that, because that’s one of those ones where you do need a programmed approach and sometimes you need a few applications to really get control of larger populations and some species.”

According to Browning, Alucion 35 WG insecticide, can be used wherever turf exists on a golf course, and different regions will find different uses for



Alucion 35 WG insecticide offers protection against nuisance ants.

it. “In some places where they have low insect pressure and hard winters, Alucion is going to be the only insecticide application they make per year versus places, especially in the South, where they have a long insect season. It’s going to be one application of many in those areas,” Browning says. Alucion 35 WG insecticide can be applied wall-to-wall once a year, or a course may choose to make spot treatments, recording where the applications have been made.

How the insecticide controls ants depends on the type of ants present. “Alucion controls foraging ants, but it’s not a colony treatment,” she adds. “When people have heavy ant pressure, because they have large colonies underground, that’s where they are going to need colony treatments and a programmed approach.”

Understanding more about Alucion 35 WG insecticide and further boosting confidence in how it can help golf courses requires an abundance of feed-

back from customers. So far, Browning says, the feedback has been “good,” especially when it comes to control of armyworms (see sidebar), cutworms and chinch bugs. More feedback on more insects

will help subsequent users hone their applications.

“We love to get feedback,” Browning says. “When superintendents use a product and tell us their results plus anything else they want to share with us, from efficacy to mixing to packaging, we value that. And it can be very collaborative, particularly if they let us know about what additional pests they are interested in. We can do more research on pests that are on the label today. Or if there are pests not on the label that they would like to know about, that can help inform us about future studies and additional insects that we can add to the label.”

Uses for Alucion 35 WG insecticide will evolve, similar to how superintendents alter their turf maintenance practices. Expect the testing, tweaking, and talking by BASF to continue well past 2022. “Confidence in the trust we will be there every step of the way,” Browning says. “We’re there with the data, we’re there when they use it for the first time, we’re there when they call afterward to let us know what they thought.”

## Alucion 35 WG insecticide and armyworm

**A**rmymworm caused considerable turf damage and stunned superintendents in cool-weather regions last fall. By the end of the insect’s destructive 2021 run, BASF had more armyworm-related data on Alucion 35 WG insecticide’s effectiveness against the pest than it expected to receive in its first year in the turf market. The insecticide launched a few weeks before widespread armyworm outbreaks.

“We were pleased to see it perform well against armyworm,” says BASF technical service specialist Jen Browning, PCA. “We knew from our research it was going to be a strong performer. We just didn’t know that armyworm was going to be such a focus in 2021. It’s so variable with pests, depending on which ones had the right season the previous year for maximum reproduction and how many survived over the winter. Is this year going to be chinch bug year? Or is this year going to be ABW? You never know exactly what you’re going to get.”

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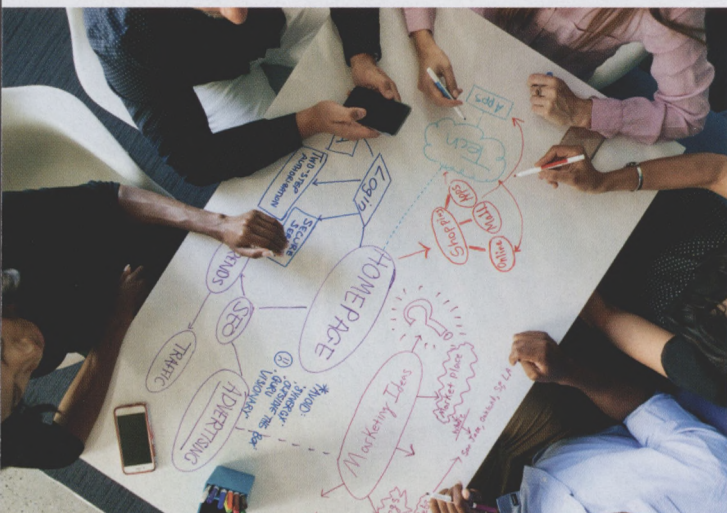
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# IDEAS TAKE TEAMWORK

**K**ey to being a great superintendent is being a good leader. And key to being a good leader is acknowledging and embracing the good ideas from others on your team. If you think you're the only one with good ideas or don't encourage, credit and embrace the good ideas coming from others, you're hurting your course, your staff and yourself.

If all the good ideas are yours, then you're probably doing a bad job encouraging others to contribute. If all their ideas are bad, you're probably not properly communicating what their jobs are and what's expected of them. If they're not contributing any ideas, they are scared of you. Those situations are problems you need to fix, pronto! You, the course and the crew all benefit only when work is a collective effort. Real improvement only comes when good communication is coupled with innovative solutions, solid decisions and shared credit.

One of the greatest leaders — and hockey players — I've ever witnessed, **Mark Messier**, said, "People cannot only act in different ways, but they can think in different ways than I ever imagined. From there I realized that intolerance is often due to a person not being able to recognize this fact."

In other words, not only is each of us unique, how we think is unique. How can you secure and implement the best ideas from your team?

**LISTEN. NO, REALLY LISTEN.**

- Finding a great idea starts with being open-minded and willing to listen to all input.
- A new idea might sound foolish at first, but that is not a reason

to immediately shut it down. Use it as a springboard, a first step to finding a better idea buried inside.

- You're not the only one who should listen; your staff should too. Then when ideas are shared among the group, get them bouncing off each other, looking for more and better ideas.

**NEVER SETTLE ON ONE  
THOUGHT**

- One idea or a single way of accomplishing a task may not be enough.
- Multiple thoughts from your team will contribute to creativity and opportunities for success.
- As the leader, steer your team toward a common destination.

## LOOK IN UNUSUAL PLACES

I experienced this firsthand during my years at the USGA when then-executive director **David Fay** challenged staff to search “high and low” for the next big thing, no matter where it came from.

- A good leader always attempts to cultivate attention and curiosity.
- The next “big idea” could come from anywhere, even something as everyday as watching an old movie or poking through the kitchen cupboards.
- Unusual places can also mean people. Believe it or not, someone in the pro shop might have a good idea regarding course maintenance. But you’ll never know if you don’t ask.

## SUPPORT YOUR STAFF

A senior advertising executive once said that a new idea "can be killed by a sneer or a yawn." That means along with remaining open-minded you must watch your body language, facial expressions and other physical reactions.

That same ad exec added that “pragmatic people often shoot down the creative ones who keep generating ideas.” Again, that means being open-minded, but especially if you’re more of a “get it done” person than a “what’s a better way to get it done?” person. And if you don’t have any “big thinkers” on your team, you might want to find some.

## PERSONALITY VS. PURPOSE

Can a great idea come from someone you dislike or don't respect? Of course! Don't let your first response be dismissive or you may miss an opportunity.

- You don't have to like someone to like their idea. Put away your prejudice and consider the idea rationally and dispassionately.
- Don't fall back on "consider the source." This may end up hurting you and your staff.
- Someone doesn't need to have an agreeable personality to come up with ideas you can agree with.

## TAKE YOUR EGO OUT OF THE GAME

Do not stop others from being their best because their ideas are better than yours. Swallow your pride, listen and remember the ultimate objective.

I learned the hard way that my ideas aren't always the best, even though I still think they are! **GCI**



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





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# THE APP THAT *CHANGED* TURF

How Twitter has become the dominant way to communicate, share ideas and network among golf maintenance professionals.

By **Guy Cipriano** and **Matt LaWell**



**T**he most disruptive golf maintenance innovation unveiled in the last 16 years doesn't possess reels or blades. It doesn't directly thwart pests or disease. Distributors don't sell it. Some industry lifers dismiss it. Newbies can't recall a time performing the job without it.

Unexpected friendships have been forged because of it. A few relationships have been ruined because of it, too.

The cost? Nothing.

The ROI? Unquantifiable.

The staying power? It's still here.

Launched on July 15, 2006, by the San Francisco-based podcasting company Odeo, a messaging service called Twtr morphed into Twitter, a platform with more than 200 million daily active users. The origins of Twitter's rise among golf maintenance professionals and turf enthusiasts extends to 2008-11, when early adopters created accounts and started sharing course imagery and practical ideas with peers. *Golf Course Industry* opened its account in 2008 and partnered with Aquatrols on the first #GCITweetUp and Super Social Media Awards in 2012. @GCIMagazine reaches more than 19,000 followers and the awards are celebrating their 10th anniversary.

Followings grew rapidly from 2013 to 2018, as industry influencers emerged throughout the United States and the world. Twitter has democratized the industry, giving instant voices and networking opportunities to innovators and turf enthusiasts once overlooked by publications and associations. Neither budget nor course status are barriers to entry.

"It makes the entire industry a smaller network," The Union League of Philadelphia director of agronomy **Scott Bordner** says. "Whether you ever meet somebody or not, there a lot of people who post what they are doing on there all the time and you kind of get a feel for who they are."

Followers are more prevalent than posters. The number of global industry users who post at least once per month hovers around 6,000, according to Asian Turfgrass Center founder **Dr. Micah Woods**, who conducts annual turf Twitter studies. A trio of superintendents — Hazeltine National's **Chris Tritabaugh** (@ct\_turf), Royal St. George's **Paul Larsen** (@PaulLarsenRSG) and Carolina Golf Club's **Matthew Wharton** (@CGCGreenkeeper)—each have amassed more than 8,500 followers. The thoughtful and creative content shared by Tritabaugh, Larsen, Wharton and their peers are spreading the golf maintenance message to outsiders, elevating profiles of superintendents and their teams.

"The people who do it right and have a big following of their membership ... my gosh," Michigan GCSA executive director **Adam Ikamas** says. "How big of an opportunity is that to be in front of your members at their leisure at any given time with short bits of information, especially with new members coming in who are very likely to be Twitter users?"

Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok are also on phones, tablets and desktops. None of them are embraced like Twitter, the 280-character-or-less, use-whenever-you-go app that has changed how the turf community networks, shares ideas, recruits, communicates with customers, promotes work and spreads the greatness of golf.

Perhaps Standard Golf director of marketing **Matt Pauli** sums it up best: "It is the social media channel for superintendents and the turf industry."



## SUPERINTENDENTS ARE BUSY (AND SHARING) PEOPLE



A Mississippi kite spotting. The arrival of a new pump station panel. The green-up of sod along bunker slopes. More sod work on newly leveled tees. Tree trimming.

One week in May. One effective way for director of turf care and grounds **David Levin** (@DavidBLevin2) to show The Palencia Club (@PalenciaClub) members what happens around the course. Levin opened a Twitter account in 2015, two years before he took the top turf job at The Palencia Club, a private course in St. Augustine, Florida. Behind-the-scenes agronomic posts fill his feed. The posts are a powerful public relations tool for Levin and his team. "If I post all these little things, people wonder: 'How do I get that much

done in a day?'" he says.

Colleagues understand the work it takes to prepare a golf course for play. But they might not realize a 50-50 mow on greens can save labor without sacrificing playability or turf health. Levin shared this idea on Twitter in 2019. Multiple superintendents, including one at a tournament-level Texas course, contacted Levin about the practice. "Nowadays, with labor down, you have to think of different ways to accomplish things," Levin says.

Twitter is full of labor savers. Levin has learned of equipment such as a speedseeder by following Florida-based St. Johns Turf Care. "I would have never known those things save a ton of time without seeing them on Twitter," he says. "We're probably going to buy one." When Levin integrates new equipment or plant protectants into his operation, he frequently shares it on Twitter, a gesture suppliers and distributors appreciate. "Some of these guys, if they see you are going to do a little bit of advertising

for them and post a picture, they might be a little bit quicker to tend to your needs," he says.

## DIGITAL JOB INTERVIEW



What is the most you ever gained thanks to a tweet? For **Chad Braun**

(@CBraunEM), the equipment manager at Town & Country Club (@TCC\_CLUB) in Saint Paul, Minnesota, the answer is simple and astounding: His job.

Braun says superintendent **Bill Larson** (@tcturf) "called me up — he actually first reached out to me through direct message on Twitter — and said, 'I absolutely love what I see in your equipment fleet, and I want you to bring that mantra over to Town & Country Club,' and that's what we did."

Geography helped Larson's interest and Braun's mobility—he already lived in the Twin Cities and had worked the previous 23 years at Prestwick Golf Club (@PrestwickMN) in nearby Woodbury — but without his now-13-year-old Twitter account, Braun would have never stood apart from the rest of the digital crowd. His library of more than 7,000 categorized iPhone photos helps him diagnose all sorts of equipment questions and share information with equipment managers and technicians across the industry.

"I'm a firm believer that a picture's worth a thousand words, and since we're limited with our words on Twitter, I like to be detailed with my pictures," Braun says. "If someone has an issue, I can usually



## Numbers to know

**436 million:** Monthly active users on Twitter, give or take

**6.66 million:** Followers of @TigerWoods, the most-followed individual golfer or golf account on the platform (as of June 1)

**17,165:** Followers of @AELTCGroundsman, a member of the Wimbledon groundstaff and likely the most followed individual turf pro account in the world

**15,784:** Followers of @paul\_pburgess, **Paul Burgess**, former groundsman for Blackpool, Arsenal and Real Madrid, longtime FIFA pitch consultant, and likely the most followed sports field maintenance pro

**15,666:** Followers of @iTweetTurf, **Dr. John Kaminski**, the director of the Golf Course Turfgrass Management Program at Penn State and likely the most-followed North American individual turf pro

**11,881:** Followers of @GreenkeeperMiss, **Anna Nilsson**, deputy head greenkeeper at The Belfry Brabazon and likely the most-followed golf course maintenance professional

**10,167:** Followers of Golf Therapy columnist @BradleySKlein

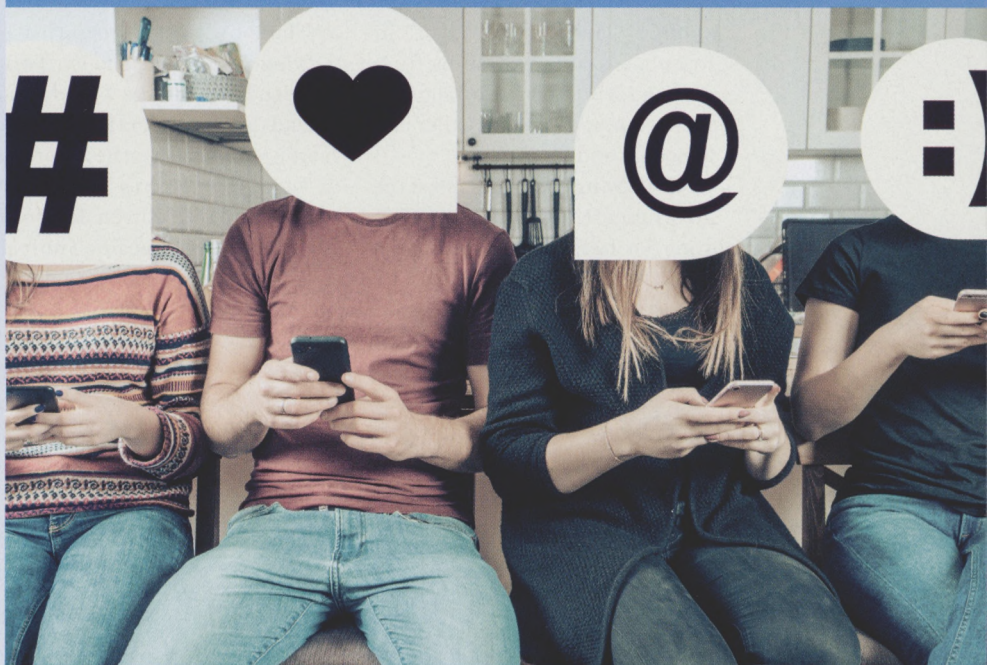
**808:** Likes on America's Greenkeeper columnist **Matthew Wharton's** (CGCGreenkeeper) March 2021 tweet championing his wife, **Darless**: "Well, today's the day! After 6 rounds of chemotherapy Mrs. Greenkeeper has surgery in her battle against breast cancer! Thank you all for the endless love and support you've shown!" — the most for any tweet that includes the #TurfTwitter hashtag



find a picture to reply. When I post my own tweets, I'll normally take the best four or five pictures and go from there.

"I kind of use Twitter like a blog. I like to promote professionalism on our side of the industry, and I like to share what I do and what we do as equipment managers." Braun has noticed some EMs opting for "short, little videos now, and I think that's just phenomenal."

One fringe benefit of Braun's move across the Twin Cities? "Bill told me, 'It's going to be good for a few hundred followers,' and he was right. I probably picked up about 300 followers after I started here. He always pushes me to tweet, too: 'You should really tweet that. People need to know that!'"



## ON AN ISLAND, BUT NOT ALONE



**Carol Turner** started her turf career long enough ago that, at least for the first couple years, Twitter did not exist.

Turner worked from 2004 to 2006 at Bigwin Island Golf Club (@bigwinisland) in Baysville, Ontario — including a construction stint when she was 18 — back when a flip phone was still considered top of the line. She remained off Twitter throughout the next seven years as she worked in landscaping and as a personal trainer. "I had Facebook," she says. "I never really understood Twitter or knew anything about it. I didn't get the idea of followers. It seemed kind of weird to me." But three months after jumping back onto the course — at Lambton Golf &



## YES, YOU CAN RELATE!

By Cassidy Gladieux

Gone are the days when social media is used to connect with long-distance friends and loved ones. It's still used for that. But Gen Z has successfully tapped the endless possibilities that social media offers and, in turn, changed the way that brands, companies and people interact with one another.

In fact, for some, social media is their job. Influencers and brand representatives get paid to use social media while others use it to find jobs, read the news, learn new hobbies or to simply be entertained. So, whether the "older generation" wants to admit it or not, the apps are not going away. It's more important now than ever to know and learn how to interact with younger generations through social media to grow your brand, whether that be personally or professionally.

Where should you even go to experience a professional connection or interaction with Gen Z? Well, basically anywhere online. But it's important to strategize how you go about it and to know your audience.

**LinkedIn** is the first platform most think of when hearing "professional interaction." It's popular in its way to find jobs and connect with employers. It's sort of an unspoken rule that you're on your best behavior using this app and to put your best foot forward. Connecting through LinkedIn may not be the most popular or authentic way to connect with Gen Z, but you will be taken the most seriously here.

**Twitter** is another option, although a little trickier because the tone can be so varied throughout the app. Many of the younger generation uses Twitter as a news- and opinion-sharing platform. You will likely get a better sense of what they truly believe and value here. On the other hand, many people are not consciously using Twitter professionally. Therefore, you might find their pages to be unprofessional and without a dedicated purpose.

**Facebook** is likely the social media platform the most people are familiar and comfortable with. However, when trying to connect with Gen Z, there are better platforms, like **TikTok**. Sure, there are plenty of pointless and silly videos on the app, but 60 percent of TikTok's users are Gen Z, according to data collected by Wallaroo Media. If you are connecting with the right ones, the newest social networking app can prove to have the biggest payoff.

If you are struggling to connect with or relate to the younger generation, try switching up your strategy. Maybe you were taking Twitter too seriously, or maybe you were overlooking TikTok. Regardless, you've already nailed the first step — wanting to connect!

*Cassidy Gladieux is a Kent State University senior participating in Golf Course Industry's internship program.*



Country Club (@lambtongcc) in Toronto — and transitioning from what she described as working jobs to developing a career, Turner had signed up and logged on.

“Phil Song was the assistant superintendent there and he was using Twitter,” Turner says, “so a bunch of us got into it, tweeting things like sunrises or mowers.” She figured out how to use the app for work, winnowing out most personal tweets, and by the time she moved to Ladies’ Golf Club of Toronto (@LGCToronto)

in Thornhill, @greensgurl was thriving. She has developed Twitter friendships across Canada and around the globe over the last eight years, many with other women in turf, like Kendra Kiss (@kendrakissgolf), Karen Rumohr (@megolftoo) and Lesley Thomas (@les8thomas).

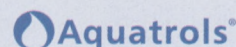
“It made it feel more like a community, and it makes it more fun,” Turner says. “Obviously, social media isn’t all good, but 20 years ago, I wouldn’t have known there were a bunch of people out there

willing to help me. There’s a whole community of people who want to congratulate you, or check in on you, and it just makes you feel really good.”

Turner received plenty of congratulations earlier this year after she was promoted to superintendent at Bigwin Island following the retirement of Kevin Schultz. “I don’t feel like I’m alone,” Turner says. “No matter what problem comes up, I always have someone to call. And I really hope I can help people, too.”

## Terrific tweeters

Golf Course Industry and Aquatrols have partnered on the Super Social Media Awards since 2012 as part of the annual #GCITweetUp. Let’s relive our list of winners.



### 2022

**Kaminski Award:** Paul Larsen, Royal St. George’s Golf Club, Sandwich, Kent, England,

**Best Overall Use of Social Media:** Jennifer Torres, Westlake Golf and Country Club, Jackson Township, New Jersey; NC State Turf Pathology Team, Raleigh North Carolina

**Best Twitter Feed:** John Reilly, Longboat Key Club, Longboat Key, Florida; Jeremy Boone, Springdale at Cold Mountain, Canton, North Carolina

**Best Use of Video:** Mike Rollins, SIP, In the van, Everywhere USA

**Best Idea Shared:** David Jones, Club at Indian Springs, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, “Value of playing other golf courses”

**Conservation Award:** Isaac Breuer, A.L. Gustin Golf Course, Columbia, Missouri

### 2021

**Kaminski Award:** Drew Miller and the Brentsville District High School Turfgrass Management Program, Nokesville, Virginia

**Best Overall Use of Social Media:** James Bledge, Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club, Deal, Kent, England; Ryan Cummings, Elcona Country Club, Bristol, Indiana

**Best Twitter Feed:** Dan Grogan, The Sagamore Club, Noblesville, Indiana; Jeff Sexton, Evansville Country Club, Evansville, Indiana; Thad Thompson, Terry Hills Golf Course, Batavia, New York

**Best New Program:** Morgan Creighton, Women

in Turfgrass Management, Alberta, Canada

**Best Idea Shared:** Trey Kemp, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Dallas-Fort Worth, #GolfCourseAerialoftheDay

**Rookie of the Year:** Matt Shaffer, happily retired

**Conservation Award:** W. Craig Weyandt, The Moorings at Hawks Nest Golf Course, Vero Beach, Florida

### 2020

**Kaminski Award:** Tyler Bloom, Sparrows Point Country Club, Baltimore

**Best Overall Use of Social Media:** Carolinas GCSA Assistants, Liberty, South Carolina; Bill Bergin, Bergin Golf Designs, Atlanta

**Best Twitter Feed:** Maggie Reiter, University of California Cooperative Extension, Fresno, California; Michael Vessley, Culver Academies Golf Course, Culver, Indiana

**Best Video:** Rush Creek Turf, Maple Grove, Minnesota, “Maintenance Monday”

**Best Idea Shared on Social Media:** Trent Manning, Ansley Golf Club, Ansley, Georgia, “Dew Roller”

**Conservation Award:** Lesley Thomas, Scarborough Golf & Country Club, Toronto, Ontario

### 2019

**Kaminski Award:** Jason Haines, Pender Harbour Golf Club, Pender Harbour, British Columbia

**Best Overall Use of Social Media:** Craig Boath, Carnoustie Golf Links, Carnoustie, Scotland;

Jessica Lenihan, Hayden Lake Country Club, Coeur d’Alene, Idaho

**Best Twitter Feed:** Paul Van Buren, Kanawha Club, Manakin-Sabot, Virginia; Scott Ramsay, The Course at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut

**Best Blog:** Tyler Bloom, Sparrows Point Country Club, Baltimore, Maryland; Kevin Komer, Stowe Mountain Resort, Stowe, Vermont

**Best Use of Video:** Ontario GCSA, “Today in Ontario”

**Conservation Award:** Matthew Gourlay, Colbert Hills, Manhattan, Kansas

### 2018

**Kaminski Award:** Matthew Wharton, Carolina Golf Club, Charlotte, North Carolina

**Best Overall Use of Social Media:** Ian Andrew, Ian Andrew Golf Design, Brantford, Ontario; St Andrews Turf Team, St Andrews, Scotland

**Best Twitter Feed:** Steve Hammon, Traverse City Golf & Country Club, Traverse City, Michigan; Steve Wright, Pine Tree Golf Club, Boynton Beach, Florida

**Best Blog:** Chris Harriman, Cattail Creek Country Club, Glenwood, Maryland; Richard Johnstone, Nairn Dunbar Golf Links, Nairn, Scotland

**Best Use of Video:** Atlantic Golf Course Superintendents Association, “Deep Roots”

**Megaphone Award for Hurricane Recovery:** South Texas Superintendents

**Conservation Award:** Paul Carter, The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay, Tennessee

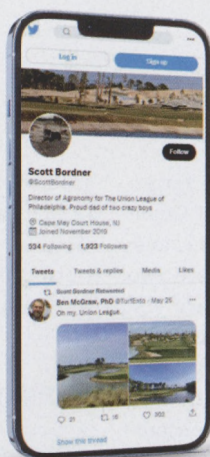


## EVERYBODY'S NOW ASKING



One tweet helped Union

League National Golf Club, a gargantuan construction project in southern New Jersey, become an eventual industry social media star. It also helped The Union League of Philadelphia director of agronomy



Scott Bordner (@ScottBordner) sell a talented employee on a grand golf vision.

The tweet originated from a giant dirt hill being constructed in the middle of the 27-hole course. Bordner turned the view from atop the hill into a 360-degree video into one of his first Twitter posts.

"That's actually what hooked one of our assistants, Ryan Moore," says Bordner, who opened his account in

late 2019 to increase awareness for the Union League of Philadelphia's growing golf efforts. "He contacted me—and I think it was over Twitter, too—saying that he was going to be at his sister's place in New York and he'd love to see what's going on, because he loved the video."

All 27 holes at Union League National (@ULNationalGC), a multi-year transformation of the former Sand Barrens Golf Club guided by architects Dana Fry and Jason Straka (@FryStrakaGolf) are scheduled to open this summer. The project

## 2017

**Kaminski Award:** Chris Tritabaugh, Hazeltine National Golf Club, Chaska, Minnesota

**Best Overall Use of Social Media:** Kyle Callahan,

Victoria National, Newburgh, Indiana; Steffie Safrit, TPC Piper Glen, Charlotte, North Carolina

**Best Twitter Feed:** Matthew Marsh, Santa Ana Country Club, Santa Ana, California; Sean McCue, The Country Club at Castle Pines, Castle Rock, Colorado; Mike Richardson, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas; Jesse Shaver, Gull Lake Country Club, Richland, Michigan

**Best Blog:** Brian Stiehler, Highlands Country Club, Highlands, North Carolina; East Lake Golf Club Agronomy Team, East Lake Golf Club, Atlanta

**Best Video:** Phil Scully, Granite Golf Club, Stouffville, Ontario, "It's Your Course!"; Georgia GCSA, "Golf is Greenspace"

## 2016

**Kaminski Award:** Paul Carter, The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay, Harrison, Tennessee

**Best Overall Use of Social Media:** Rick Tegtmeier, Des Moines Golf and Country Club, West Des Moines, Iowa; Joe Wachter, Glen Echo Country Club, St. Louis

**Best Twitter Feed:** Eric Bauer, Bluejack National, Montgomery, Texas; Paul Koch, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin; Patrick Reinhardt, Georgia Southern University Golf Course, Statesboro, Georgia

**Best Blog:** Joel Kachmarek, Tacoma Country & Golf Club, Lakewood, Washington; Brad Novotny, Hillendale Country Club, Phoenix, Maryland

**Best Video:** Graeme Roberts, Camberley Heath Golf Club, Surrey, United Kingdom

**Megaphone Award for Outstanding Advocacy:**

Mike Huck, Irrigation and Turfgrass Services, Orange County, California

## 2015

**Kaminski Award:** Steve Cook, Oakland Hills Country Club, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

**Best Overall Use of Social Media:** Matthew Wharton, Carolina Golf Club, Charlotte, North Carolina; Pat O'Brien, Hyde Park Golf and Country Club, Cincinnati

**Best Twitter Feed:** Scot Dey, Mission Viejo Country Club, Mission Viejo, California; Kevin Hicks, Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Club, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Jason Hooper, Quilchena Golf & Country Club, Richmond, British Columbia

**Best Blog:** Joey Franco, Brookstone Golf & Country Club, Acworth, Georgia; Adam Garr,

Plum Hollow Country Club, Southfield, Michigan

**Best Video:** Georgia GCSA, "Stewards of the Land"

## 2014

**Kaminski Award:** Micah Woods, Asian Turfgrass Center

**Overall Social Media Program:** Nick Christians, Iowa State University; Adam Ikamas, MiGCSA

**Best Use of Facebook:** Gary Grigg, Idaho/Florida; Jason Chennault, Turfgrass World

**Best Blog:** Jason Haines, Pender Harbour Golf Club, Madeira Park, British Columbia; Jason VanBuskirk, Stow Acres Country Club, Stow, Massachusetts; Tom Vlach, TPC Sawgrass, Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

**Best Use of Twitter:** Randy Samoff, Champions Golf Club, Houston Texas; Ellie Parry, TurfJobs, Loughborough, Leicestershire, England; Justin VanLanduit, Briarwood Country Club, Deerfield,

Illinois; Cale Bigelow, Purdue University  
**Best Multimedia:** Adam Garr, Plum Hollow Country Club, Southfield, Michigan; Rick Brandenburg, NC State

## 2013

**Kaminski Award:** Bill Brown, Hartefeld National Golf Club, Avondale, Pennsylvania

**Outstanding Blogger:** Andrew Hardy, Pheasant Run Golf Course, Sharon, Ontario; Dan Meersman, Philadelphia Cricket Club, Philadelphia; Brian Boyer, Cinnabar Hills Golf Club, San Jose, California

**Outstanding Use of Twitter:** Chris Tritabaugh, Hazeltine National Golf Club, Chaska, Minnesota; Matthew Gourlay, Colbert Hills, Manhattan, Kansas

**Special Achievement in Video/Other:** PACE Turf LLC, San Diego, PACE Turf YouTube Videos; Steve Biehl, Naperville Country Club, Naperville, Illinois; GCM Blogging World

## 2012

**Kaminski Award:** Darren Davis, Olde Florida Golf Club, Naples, Florida

**Best of Blogs:** Chris Tritabaugh, Northland Country Club, Duluth, Minnesota; Steve Cook, Oakland Hills Country Club, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan; Bill Brown, Hartefeld National Golf Club, Avondale, Pennsylvania

**Innovative Use of Twitter:** Greg Shaffer, Elcona Country Club, Bristol, Indiana; David Phipps,

Stone Creek Country Club, Oregon City, Oregon  
**Excellence in Video:** Justin Ruiz, Indian Summer Golf & Country Club, Olympia, Washington





has generated attention from the turf community and beyond.

"A lot of it is because of social media," Bordner says. "We have had a lot of people come visit the golf course and ask if they can post pictures. Everybody wants to see what's going on here. It's been fun."

Twitter has helped the Union League of Philadelphia (@Union-LeagueGolf) promote other golf events and programs, including its Union League University employee training program and the 2022 PGA WORKS Collegiate Championship at

Union League Golf Club at Torresdale (@TorresdaleGolf) and Union League Liberty Hill. The weeklong PGA WORKS event attracted two dozen turfgrass maintenance volunteers, many of whom learned of the volunteer program via Twitter.

"I think we have put ourselves on the map," says Bordner, who encourages employees to post thoughtful images and videos on Twitter, Instagram and other social media apps. "Going to Liberty Hill and Torresdale for the tournament and talking to the volunteers, everybody is asking

about what we are doing at Union League National. And they are asking me about things like Union League University. People are seeing what we're doing."

## SHARING THE SCIENCE



**Dr. Mike Richardson**  
(@ArkansasTurf)  
directed silly

glances toward a former University of Arkansas Ph.D. student for spending too much time on a seemingly silly app.

"I just kept looking at it, going 'Why are you wasting so much time fooling around on Twitter?'" says Richardson, a professor in the university's horticulture department. "In the end, I have probably wasted 10 times as much time as he has fooling around on Twitter."

Richardson, whose first social media experience came via Facebook, opened a Twitter account in 2014. He quickly discovered the app offered professional opportunities that Facebook didn't provide. Twitter allowed Richardson to reach new audiences and expand his personal network, bringing increased attention to his team's scientific research of Transition Zone turfgrass problems and solutions. "At its core, it's really about developing a professional network," he says.

The network of close to 5,000 followers includes hundreds of turf managers, including golf course superintendents whom Richardson might not otherwise reach without Twitter. Predicting what posts will receive widespread response is an inexact science. One of Richardson's



## Meanwhile, on Facebook

**G**ary Grigg grew up on a potato farm. He received a job offer in the potato industry while completing a master's degree in agronomy at Michigan State. The job offer was rescinded before Grigg completed his studies, leaving him scrambling for post-graduate work in the late 1960s.

Grigg's father prodded him to meet a group of investors building a golf course with noted Michigan architects **Bruce Matthews Sr.** and **Jerry Matthews**. Grigg needed work, but he knew little about the profession. "I told them I didn't know anything about turfgrass, and the reply was, 'It can't be harder than growing potatoes,'" Grigg says. "I found out it was maybe not harder from the agriculture standpoint, but it was harder from not knowing the industry."

A past president of the GCSAA who achieved legendary status for helping build and maintain golf courses, Grigg wanted a comfortable interaction setting for people with questions similar to the ones he asked when transitioning from potatoes to putting greens. He started a professional Facebook group for a dozen industry friends in 2010. He then opened the group to agronomists, superintendents, greenkeepers, technicians, assistants, students, interns and well-intentioned industry professionals. The private *Golf Course Maintenance* group has swelled to more than 17,300 followers representing 112 countries.

"It goes back to when I became a superintendent in 1968 with a master's degree in agronomy, no experience and nobody to ask questions to," Grigg says. "I figured there were enough people out there who had experience and they'd be willing to share it in the Facebook group."

The group operates under rigid rules:

- Vendors can join the group but commercial posts are prohibited.
- The group is solely for turf employees, although Grigg approves general managers who double as superintendents.
- Conversations must be work-related. Fishing, college football and weekends plans are discussed elsewhere.
- Bad language, memes and GIFs aren't permitted.

"I never thought it would grow like it did," Grigg says. "I'm not sure that Facebook is the right place for it, because Facebook doesn't understand professional groups. They send things to the people who are already members, saying, 'Add your friends to this group.' I have to sort all those people out."

Follower growth has tapered in recent years. But the conversation remains robust. During one weekend last month, questions about effective earbuds for working on the course, dollar spot outbreaks and equipment malfunctions were posted — and answered.

"It's very rewarding," Grigg says. "I get a lot of comments and personal messages thanking me for the group. If somebody asks a question and somebody jumps on them about it being a dumb question, I'm quick to say, 'Hey, you can ask any question you want in this group. Don't worry about it.' Early in my career, a professional group to me was to call my neighbor golf courses. I made a lot of mistakes."

— Guy Cipriano





go-to topics is ultradwarf Bermudagrass greens management in the Transition Zone. His posts warn of potential perils, especially in harsh winter conditions.

Perils also exist if somebody in Richardson's positions relies too much on Twitter.

"Whatever I'm promoting, or if I'm doing something to highlight the research that we are doing, it still must be backed up by the good science," he says. "It can't be me thinking that it's now my scholarship. My scholarship can't be that I have a bunch of followers on Twitter. I still have to share work in the scientific publications, the trade industry journals or whatever the case might be to backup what I'm doing on Twitter."

There's nothing silly about that thinking.

## THE BRAND



**Matt Pauli** (@mattpauli) represents an industry brand. The brand

he represents, Standard Golf (@StandardGolf), is 112 years old. Venerable brand. Faster ways to reach customers than the print-it-and-wait era.

Pauli joined Standard Golf as its director of marketing in 2014. Early in his tenure, he established a corporate social media strategy focusing heavily on Twitter.

"If you're doing something in print, you have to get that done a month in advance," Pauli says. "Twitter



## TIMELINE

**MARCH 2006:** Former CEO **Jack Dorsey** sends the first tweet: "just setting up my twttr"

**JULY 2006:** The first version of Twitter launches publicly

**OCTOBER 2008:** @GCI magazine joins the fray (though our first tweet seems to be lost to time)

**MAY 2009:** The cover of *Golf Course Industry* asks, "Is social media right for your career?" We highlighted Facebook, LinkedIn and ... blogging (but not Twitter)

**JANUARY 2011:** The @GCSAA account debuts

**FEBRUARY 2012:** *Golf Course Industry* launches #GCITweetUp outside the Golf Industry Show in Las Vegas (and we're still running with Aquatrols — see you next year in Orlando!)

**APRIL 2012:** *Golf Course Industry* publishes "Twitter 101" — a practical guide for superintendents to maximize the app

**JANUARY 2013:** The Toro Company launches the @ToroGolf Twitter account

**FEBRUARY 2013:** *Golf Course Industry* introduces the Super Social Media Awards, recognizing top industry tweeters and other social media leaders (see *Terrific tweeters*, p. 20)

**JULY 2013:** The #GooberGate catfish scam prompts Turf Twitter to reconsider online identity (I mean, seriously, who *pretends* to be a golf course superintendent?!)

**SEPTEMBER 2016:** Superintendent **Chris Tritabaugh** (@ct\_turf) and a team of Hazeltine National Golf Club (@Hazeltine) turf employees and volunteers use Twitter during week of the Ryder Cup as a forum to showcase the work of golf maintenance professionals

**JANUARY 2018:** Dr. **Micah Woods** (@asianurfgrass) releases his first "Turf Twitter" analysis examining the influence of more than 6,000 active accounts within the industry

**JANUARY 2021:** #TurfheadsGrilling lights a flame with its social media debut



MAY 2009



APRIL 2012



JULY 2013



allows you to get a message out that's timely and you can reach a pretty big audience. It gives marketers more tools to be able to reach people."

When the COVID-19 pandemic intensified in March 2020, Standard Golf created a line of no-touch products and pandemic-related signage. Courses needed the products immediately to remain open. Twitter helped raise immediate awareness for offerings such as no-touch cups and personal bunker rakes. Initial product brainstorming commenced in mid-March 2020. A few products were completed by April 1.

"But how were we going to let the golf industry know about it?" Pauli says. "Twitter was a way to get out the message with pictures and videos. The best thing about Twitter is that if you create something of interest or something people think is useful, then they share it with their followers and friends. It gets out quick."

Industry companies face a delicate balance on social media. Do they use it as a sales tool? Do they use it to increase brand and product awareness? Do they use it to better understand an industry they serve?

"We use it for a lot of things," Pauli says, "but to sell directly is not one of those things. We certainly listen. Standard Golf has always wanted to be the friend of the superintendent and the industry. How do we help the superintendent do the job? We do introduce products through Twitter, and we have learned of new products from watching and seeing superintendents doing things."

#### THE VIEW FROM ASIA



**Dr. Micah Woods**  
(@asianturfgrass)  
leads the Asian  
Turfgrass Center,

which he established in 2006 to



## Need another platform?

Facebook remains the most popular social media app in the world. No surprise there. But believe it or not, Twitter is not second on the list. No, despite the best efforts of #TurfTwitter, the app that long ago featured the Fail Whale whenever servers came up short is 15th globally and 10th among those headquartered and used in the United States and North America — behind Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook Messenger, Snapchat, Telegram and Pinterest. With about 436 million monthly active users, it just barely tops Reddit.

Are any of those other platforms ideal for the turf community?

Reno Aces head groundskeeper **Leah Withrow** logged on to TikTok during the 2020-21 offseason, when "we were bored, we still couldn't go out, and the winter weather in Nevada was crappy." Since then, she has vaulted to the top of an admittedly small group of #TurfTok regulars. Withrow uses the app more as a video editing tool, a place to mesh together days or weeks of progress videos and share her and her crew's work.

"All I'm doing is taking videos I already have on my camera roll — time-lapsing mowing patterns or doing edgework — and then finding a sound or some music to collage it all together," she says. "That's 70 percent of it. The other 30 percent is just scrolling through TikTok, hearing a sound and thinking, 'I could probably dub that and make it relatable.'"

Withrow (@leahlou2 on Twitter, @leahlou775 on TikTok) seems to discover "little life hacks" whenever she logs onto the app, but her social media efforts have paid off in more measurable ways, too: A pair of students at the University of Nevada, Reno discovered her TikTok videos, contacted her, interviewed for positions and are now a part of the part-time gameday staff.

"I know so many kids would be interested in turf management," Withrow says. "Putting it on a platform for high school and college kids who are figuring out what they want to do for the rest of their lives, I just hope that brings more curiosity and more excitement toward the turf industry."

**Donovan Maguigan** opts for an even more popular app — at least globally. The superintendent at Springdale Golf Club in Princeton, New Jersey, since December 2018, the photography buff signed up for Instagram back in 2013. It has been a big part of his social media schedule ever since.

Maguigan (@McBuckeyeAT on both Twitter and Instagram) owns a decade-old Nikon but normally snaps with his iPhone and has been incorporating more drone shots. A club committee even asked him for some of his favorite shots to redecorate the clubhouse.

Why has a visual industry not embraced a more visual social media platform?

"There's less transparency on Instagram," Maguigan says. "Instagram really does have that (feeling): This is your best life, your perfect version of everything. Instagram could use a healthy dose of people being more transparent. You can carefully curate photos and still show the struggles and the challenges that we face in this industry. Your membership and your players have to understand that it's not all mowing lasers and perfect dew patterns. There is stuff out there that's a challenge every day, and Instagram is a good medium to showcase that."

For the turf community, Maguigan says, "I think Instagram will have more staying power than TikTok, but as far as how the world goes, I think TikTok will surpass Instagram."

And what will it take for TurfTok to rise to the top of the social media hierarchy?

"It's just going to have to be the younger generation doing it," Withrow says. "Until the (older) guys kind of filter out and the younger guys who have grown up with social media and are more comfortable with social media replace them, I don't think you're going to see a lot of (people on TikTok)."

— Matt LaWell



provide technical information to golf and sports field managers in Asia. His travels are extensive. His zest for sharing lessons from his travels and academic research are immense.

The Thailand-based ATC operates from the GMT+7 time zone. Woods is 11 hours ahead of EDT when he's home. His evenings coincide with the beginning of your day. Woods is from Oregon. He studied turfgrass management at Oregon State University and Cornell University. Twitter shrinks his academic world.

"I can keep up on things that are happening in the United States better with Twitter than I could without it," Woods says. "It might not be that way forever. There might be something that comes up to take its place. At the moment, I find it quite useful."

Woods opened a Twitter account on Jan. 1, 2011, because a late 2010 blog post about nutrient availability and cation exchange received a boost in web traffic after industry veteran **Dave Wilber** (@TurfgrassZealot) shared the link on the app. Woods wanted more industry professionals to see his work. Twitter proved ideal for driving traffic to the Asian Turfgrass Center website. His posts now reach 7,500 followers, allowing Woods to share blog entries, observations, research and podcasts to a global audience. Forty percent of the Asian Turfgrass Center's web traffic originates from Twitter, according to Woods.



"I'm interested in turfgrass management, grass selection and things like that on a global scale," he says. "It's nice for me to be able to have this app that I can do a quick scan and see what a lot of people all over the world are doing. But the primary thing I want to do is to be pushing information like a publisher. I really enjoy writing and sharing my ideas. I want more people to read my website."

#### TWITTER AND THE ASSOCIATION



Twitter hasn't destroyed industry associations. In fact, effective usage of

the app might be strengthening associations committed to a social media strategy.

Don't have time to leave the course and head to Kalamazoo for a monthly meeting? Twitter can partially replace the technical talk — or spark interest in attending next month's meeting in Battle Creek. Executive director **Adam Ikamas** (@AdamIkamas), CGCS, operates the social media accounts for the Michigan Golf Course

Superintendents Association (@MiGCSA). The association has more than 2,600 Twitter followers, the second-largest following of any GCSAA chapter. Ikamas implements what he calls an "octopus" approach to chapter communication. Twitter is one of the largest and most active tentacles of the strategy.



## Most popular social media platforms

|                    |                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Facebook           | 2.91 billion monthly active users |
| YouTube            | 2.56                              |
| WhatsApp           | 2.00                              |
| Instagram          | 1.48                              |
| Wexin              | 1.26                              |
| TikTok             | 1.00                              |
| Facebook Messenger | 988 million                       |
| Douyin             | 600                               |
| QQ                 | 574                               |
| Sina Weibo         | 573                               |
| Kuaishou           | 573                               |
| Snapchat           | 557                               |
| Telegram           | 550                               |
| Pinterest          | 444                               |
| <b>Twitter</b>     | <b>436</b>                        |
| Reddit             | 430                               |
| Quora              | 300                               |

Sources: Statista, company data, We Are Social, Hootsuite, DataReportal, Kepios



"I want our members to interact with the chapter in some way, small or big, every day," Ikamas says. "Is that putting on a hat with our logo? Is that putting a sticker on the back of your truck? Is that coming to an event for 24 hours? Or is that seeing something on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or getting the magazine? I want us to be constantly available without being intense. You couldn't do that before Twitter or social media."

Content on the MiGCSA Twitter feed ranges from humorous GIFs to event recaps. Ikamas uses his turf sense — he was the golf course superintendent at Crystal Mountain Resort & Spa (@CrystalMountain) before joining the MiGCSA full-time

in 2011 — to retweet member-driven ideas and inspiration on the feed. Monitoring Twitter discussion on current topics such as mental health helps determine programming and educational focuses, making the chapter more meaningful to members.

"It's a live look into the market you are serving," Ikamas says. "To not pay attention to that is such a disservice to your business. What else are you doing that's more important than listening to what's happening in real time?"



## LITTLE APP, BIG WORLD



Who knows what Dr. John

Dempsey might be doing today had he never signed up for Twitter and created his popular @J\_J\_Dempsey account in November 2010? Still working as the course manager at

Royal Curragh Golf Club (@RoyalCurragh\_GC) in Kildare County, Ireland? Researching turf in general isolation and obscurity? "I probably would just be doing

COVER STORY CONTINUES ON P. 46



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## Tips and tricks

**“Y**ou really have to be careful about what you post. You have to look at your photos real closely. I’ve seen people post pictures of spray rigs tipped upside down in ponds. You don’t want to do that. That’s going to get the EPA after you. And if you have a vehicle up on a jack in your shop, there better be jack stands under it. You have to think about who can see what you’re posting — and maintain professionalism.” — **Chad Braun** (@CBraunEM), equipment manager at Town & Country Club (@TCC\_CLUB) in Saint Paul, Minnesota

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# The omnipresent weed

Crabgrass is early to germinate and almost always lurking. Controlling it requires honing the fundamentals.

By **Guy Cipriano**



**C**onsider crabgrass the anywhere, everywhere weed. North or South. East or West. Pick a turfgrass species or variety. Name a playing surface.

Anybody reading this article has likely encountered crabgrass on a golf course. Don't feel bad. Sports field managers, landscape contractors, sod producers, homeowners

and grounds employees in all sectors encounter crabgrass, too. "You hesitate to say it's a cosmopolitan weed," says NC State University assistant professor Dr. Travis Gannon, "but it's prevalent across basically all turf sites. It's more of an issue in some sites than others."

Crabgrass can hurt playability and aesthetics during key parts of the golf season. "It's the earliest summer annual grass to germinate and emerge

as well," Gannon adds. That timing coincides with tournaments and tourism periods at warm-season courses and the shift to peak-season green fees at cool-weather courses. Unsightly playing surfaces at the wrong times drive potential business elsewhere.

Soil temperatures are an indication that crabgrass is ready to appear. The "textbook definition" of conditions required for crabgrass emergence, according

to PBI-Gordon Southeast scientist Dr. Eric Reasor, includes three to five days of mean soil temperatures of 55 degrees and above. By comparison, goosegrass emergence occurs when soil temperatures reach between 60 and 65 degrees.

Visual hints of crabgrass emergence also exist. Reasor suggests observing the flowers around you to determine the commencement of crabgrass season. "Daffodils are early emergers," he says. "When you see them, that's an indication that, 'Hey, things are starting to wake up out there.'" If daffodils aren't found in your neighborhood or course, monitor areas around cart paths, south-facing slopes and large, bare areas that receive abundant sunlight. Forsythia blooms are another indicator that crabgrass emergence is imminent.

Crabgrass and goosegrass resemble each other early in germination. As crabgrass matures, it develops a fatter, wider leaf blade than goosegrass and other weeds, according to Gannon. Crabgrass competes intensely with desirable turf varieties for surface space. And that competition varies depending on turf species and variety.

"Because crabgrass is a sum-



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mer annual, it's going to thrive in heat, whereas bentgrass, ryegrass and fescue don't thrive as much in heat," Reasor says. "You might not get that turf competition in the North that you get in the South with Bermudagrass and zoysiagrass, where it's growing like crazy. That turf can compete better against crabgrass. But that's not to say crabgrass is not a problem down South. The warm-season turf can just fill voids quicker than if you have bentgrass in July in New Jersey, where it might not recover as quickly and it can lead to more crabgrass."

How crabgrass is controlled has changed significantly in Gannon's 23 years at NC State. "When I first started here in this region, you could historically get by with a single application of a preemergence herbicide," he says. "Due to a number of factors, including application history as well as the longer growing season that we have now, you can't just get by with a single application today." Gannon recommends split applications six to eight weeks apart for control.

The region where Gannon conducts research is relatable to thousands of superintendents, because North Carolina supports courses with warm- and

## On the shelf

PBI-Gordon's Q4 Plus Herbicide offers postemergence crabgrass control. The herbicide is labeled for use on annual and perennial ryegrass, Bermudagrass, fescues, Kentucky bluegrass and zoysiagrass. Benefits include:

- Control of other broadleaf weeds such as yellow nutsedge, foxtail, chickweed, dandelion and clover
- Rapid visual response
- One-week reseeding interval for most listed turf
- Availability in one-quart, one-gallon, 2.5-gallon and 30-gallon sizes



cool-season turf. Soil temperatures lead to preemergence herbicide applications being made as early as February in some regions. Reasor, who is based in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, sees varying growing environments on courses he visits, yet he notices commonalities among solid crabgrass control programs.

For starters, effective programs nail the initial preemer-

gence application. "That timing is really important," Reasor says. "You don't want to be too early where that herbicide control will run out and you get a lot of emergence. But you don't want to be too late where you get it out after it emerges."

Proper sprayer calibration and applications conditions are other factors to consider. "One of the biggest things I have seen — and it's not just on crabgrass,

it's on a lot of weeds — is applying in dry conditions can really impact control," Reasor adds. "Make sure the turf isn't under drought stress, because if the turf is under drought stress, it's likely the weed is under drought stress and you need those weeds to be growing so they can actively use, absorb and uptake that herbicide."

Fewer herbicide resistance concerns surround crabgrass than goosegrass or *Poa annua*, and multiple postemergence herbicide options provide control, including PBI-Gordon's Q4 Plus Herbicide. Reasor uses an analogy to the human lifespan to describe postemergence crabgrass control.

"There are two different stages of crabgrass where you can get the best control: early stages and very mature stages," Reasor says. "The teenage years of crabgrass, when it's really growing, makes post-emergent control really difficult. If you do need to apply a postemergence or a postemergence is your sole strategy, make sure it goes back to watching the emergence, looking for those seedling poppings and applying the herbicide sooner rather than later. A lot of these herbicides require a two-application program. Make sure you have that in mind going into it. A lot of those postemergence herbicides don't last in the soil like the preemergence herbicides do."

The annual crabgrass tussle ends at first frost. It then repeats itself the following season at a time to be determined. "We like to talk about a calendar timeframe," Gannon says, "but every year and every season is different." GCI

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

## More about competition

Differences between how crabgrass affects warm- and cool-season turf are stark. Working in the Transition Zone provides NC State University assistant professor Dr. Travis Gannon opportunities to study crabgrass management on a myriad of turf species and varieties.

"When you think about the differences of crabgrass and different types of turf, particularly warm season vs. cool season, crabgrass germinates and emerges earlier in warm-season systems," Gannon says. "But as the growing season gets going, the warm-season grasses are more competitive. If you have a pre-emergent down, or if you make an early post-emergent application, typically, by the time you get that first flush of germination, the warm-season grasses are very competitive and outcompete it for the remainder of the season. Cool-season grasses are competitive at higher mowing heights earlier in the summer. When the tall fescue starts getting stressed from the summer, drought or whatever the case might be, then the crabgrass starts invading those weaker or thinner areas. It's a unique situation of warm versus cool season, largely because of the competitiveness of the different types of grasses."





# PROACTIVE BUDGETING

**T**hey say it's never too early for ice cream, to get out of bed, or to be someone. That adage also holds true for budgeting, a task for which you can definitely be too late.

We've hit the mid-year mark. For most facilities, budgets won't be finalized until the end of 2022. But that doesn't mean managers shouldn't be getting serious about the process that will lead them to a budget that not only gains the approval of their general managers, boards and owners, but also provides the funding and staffing that support near-term and long-range objectives.

The following three-step process will lead you through the budgeting cycle efficiently and proactively.

## PUT AWAY THE CALCULATOR, OPEN YOUR EARS

Clear a path for the disciplined work ahead by putting away the calculator — number crunching will come later. Instead, grab a notebook and a pen and begin a series of meetings with the people who can tell you where the club and course want to go next year and in the next five years. What are the growth goals? What capital improvements are planned? How has member and player feedback informed budgeted and potential changes to course conditions?

These conversations are also excellent opportunities to win support for your own plans for the next year. Maybe you want to introduce a new turf maintenance technique, finally fix a troublesome drainage issue or add a staff position. Now's the time to make your case. And don't overlook extended stakeholders, such as the city council and leaders of the local municipality, especially if you have a strong jobs creation or sustainability story to tell.

During this phase, create or update your agronomic plan. Updates to any post-pandemic plans must address labor costs and benefits, as well as access to the competitive labor market, the cost of fuel and petroleum-based resources, and availability of fertilizers and other inputs affected by supply chain constraints.

Identify strengths, benefits and risk factors that are part of your agronomic plan. Help each person involved in your decision-making critical path map to understand changes that are needed, the benefits of an altered approach, and their cost and long-range implications.

## ALIGN YOUR AGRONOMIC PLAN AND BUDGET

The agronomic plan is the thought foundation of your budget. All that you will do is based on the dependable alignment of your plans and the resources — time, money and labor — needed to support them. Here are three keys to effective alignment:

- Begin with agronomics and set the plan exactly as you wish to execute it. Adjust to account for increases in scale or scope and decreases in available funds. It's critical that that you are prepared to manage and protect your plan and its budget. Remember, nobody knows your plan as well as you do, and nobody will defend it as intelligently and persuasively as you.
- Rely on the decision makers with whom you collaborate. This is where the quality of your downfield information sessions comes into play.

Keep them informed and emphasize the disruptive and corrosive effects that cost-cutting can have on your agronomic plan.

- Monitor changing costs and their impacts on your budget. Volatile labor and the uncertain supply chain are a certainty. Anticipate the changes and communicate the impacts of these changes in a timely manner to all decision makers.

## ENJOY THE PROCESS

Budgeting doesn't have to be drudgery. Consider it a time to better understand the opportunity to deliver great golf experiences to your members and customers, and align yourself with the plans of your managers and boards for long-term success. Similarly, relish the opportunity to educate your stakeholders — members, players, managers, boards and community leaders — on your professionalism and dedication.

As we often encourage, plan your work and work your plan. Communicate tirelessly to keep your managers informed and watch as they come to rely on your knowledge and dependability. By scheduling regular meetings — formal and informal — you'll limit surprises and stay alert to their key issues and hot buttons.

The professionalism and precision you exhibit during the budgeting cycle are qualities that managers look for in high-performing leaders and signs that you're ready for the next step in your career. That's another reason it's never too early to get started. **GCI**



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



I have spent years (full disclosure: more like decades) having to occasionally tell golfers that the collar is part of the green. This conversation usually comes up when a golfer is spotted pulling — and often parking — his or her pull cart onto the collar. This statement on my part is usually met with a look of either bemusement or confusion.

“Really?” is most often the response I get.

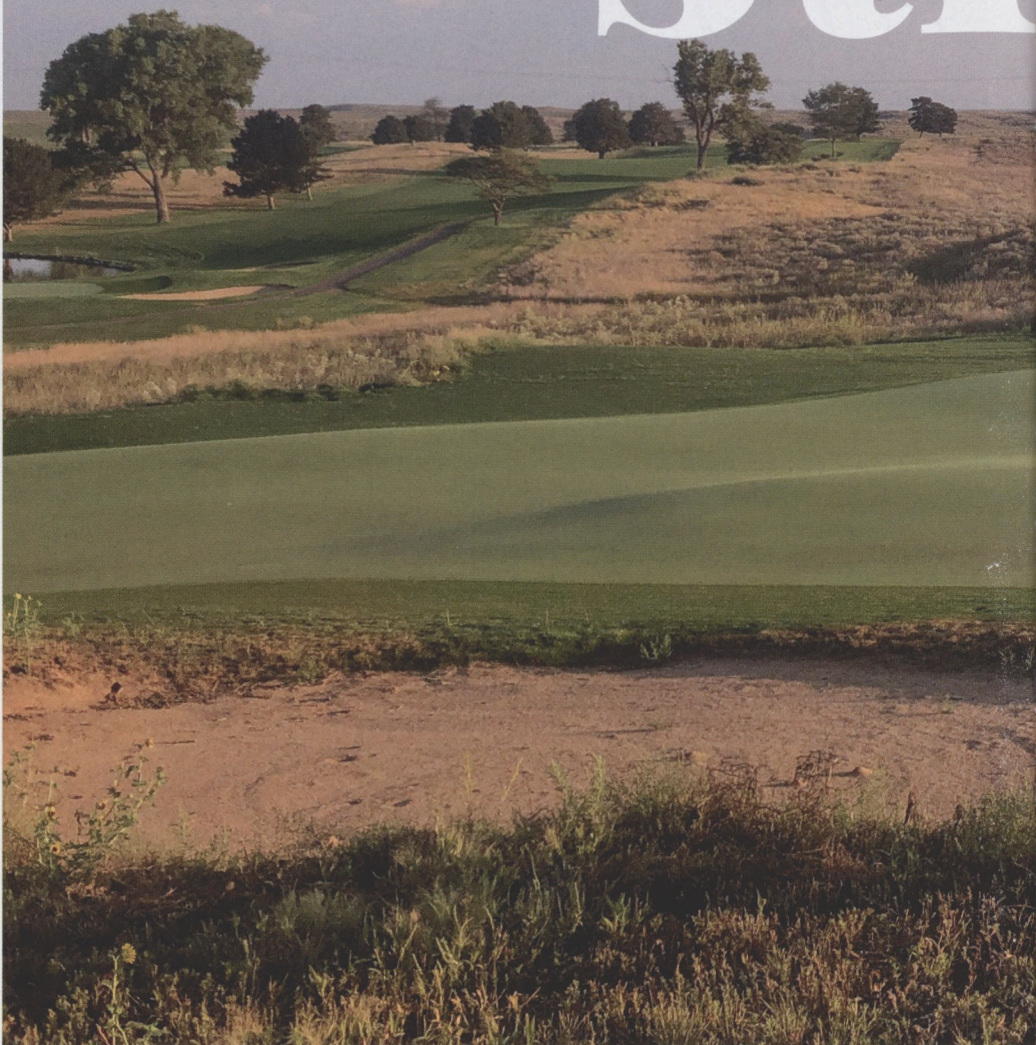
Collars have often seemed, to me at least, the forgotten child. They’ve always taken a backseat to the green itself. Which is, I suppose, somewhat understandable. The green is the crown jewel. The crème de la crème. Let’s be honest: nobody asks about the speed of the collars or how they’re holding shots.

But the collar, as most superintendents can attest, is indeed part of the green surface. Not only visually does the collar provide an appealing edge to the manicured surface of the green, but we manage them much the same as we do the green. Perhaps the biggest difference on the maintenance side — separating the green from the collar — is simply the height of cut.

Although many of us consider collars part of the green, they definitely add unique maintenance challenges and present a few headaches. Collar maintenance, if anything, has become more difficult in recent years. In my opinion, lower cutting heights; increased play producing more traffic and compaction; hotter, drier summers; and superintendents eliminating core removal from their maintenance practices are expanding the collar conundrum. A lesser problem, but an issue for some of my colleagues, involves the original construction of greens complexes not extending outward to the collars, meaning they might have poorer draining subsurface.

I spoke with a few superintendent

# Pesky little str



© CLAY PAYNE/BUFFALO DUNES





# rips

**Collars can befuddle superintendents. Ron Furlong explores his tussles with the surfaces and exchanges ideas with peers on how to enhance them.**





▲ Dowling



▲ Holfoth

peers and a USGA Green Section agronomist to get some other takes on modern day collar maintenance.

"It is a problem I see more and more each year," USGA Green Section Northeast Region agronomist **Elliot Dowling** says. "And I don't see the problem going away on its own." Dowling cites a few interesting observations that I hadn't considered, including a slightly different perspective on the "traffic" issue. "Collars see a disproportionate amount of traffic" he adds. "Turning greens mowers on them, stopping and starting rollers on them, as well as driving sprayers, topdressers and other pieces of equipment over them, can all weaken the turf further."

Dowling also thinks the explosion of plant growth regulator usage hurts the health of collars. "One of the most damaging things done to putting green collars is plant growth regulator overspray," Dowling says. "Superintendents want to make sure the putting green is covered, but they don't want to waste product on the surrounds, so the booms are often turned off and on over the collar. Consequently, collars are often overregulated, which can lead to problems. When turf stress and thinning occurs, recovery is slow because of that overregulation. Moreover, recovery from traffic or environmental stress is slow as well."

I also spoke with Country Club of Rochester (New York) superintendent **Rick Holfoth** about his collar management philosophies. Holfoth agrees with Dowling that turning on the surfaces with the greens mowers

“  
We are going to mow collars in front of greens mowers, so the greens mowers know exactly where the edge is based on dew removal. Hopefully this helps with trying to keep the collars and green edges from 'moving' in-season.”

– **Clay Payne**

is something that must be avoided for the health of the collars. "We mow a short-cut rough pass around the collar," Holfoth says. "That is where all mower turns are supposed to occur. This has reduced abrasion injury that occurs when turning either a greens walk-mower or triplex."

Holfoth mentions the benefit of giving the collars additional corings beyond what the greens at Country Club of Rochester receive. "We usually try and give the collars one to two additional aerations each season, which is basically one pass around with the aerifier, plug cleanup and a topdress." Other tactics Holfoth implements to protect and enhance collars include using wetting agent pellet when hand watering collars exclusively, resodding extremely worn collar areas and managing traffic around the repairs as they grow in.

Collar mowing height is a management technique I have experimented with at our course in western Washington the last couple years. As we reduced greens mowing heights, collar mowing height also had to be adjusted. Keeping the collar height at .350 or even .300 when you are mowing greens at .110 or even .100 can be too severe of a difference. I've

found that when mowing greens at .110 in-season, I've had to lower the collar height to .275. Although this solves the severe height discrepancy, it does make it more challenging to keep collars healthy at the lower cutting height.

**Clay Payne**, superintendent at Buffalo Dunes Golf Course in Garden City, Kansas, also has experimented with his green vs. collar cutting heights differential. "We are able to keep the greens height right at about .125 in season," Payne says. "We've found that collars cut at .300 work well with this height."

Payne has discovered that managing collars exactly the same as greens works well for the program at Buffalo Dunes. "We manage our collars as if they were greens," he adds. "Same soil amendments, fertility, wetting agents and cultural practices. ... It is the same variety of bentgrass as our greens. The only difference is the height of cut."

Preventing the green edge from moving throughout the season is an issue Payne and I both encounter. When mowing a clean-up pass on greens, operators often cut into the collar wherever the collar bends into the green at a curve. They then often perform the opposite when the green



turns at the corners. Green shrinkage is a reoccurring problem in corners.

To keep the edge where it's supposed to be, I paint tiny white dots where greens either shrink or expand. Payne is planning to experiment with another idea this year at Buffalo Dunes.

"We are going to mow collars in front of greens mowers, so the greens mowers know exactly where the edge is based on dew removal," he says. "Hopefully, this helps with trying to keep the collars and green edges from 'moving' in-season."

Collar mowing frequency is another fascinating topic. I mow collars once a week in spring and fall. The frequency increases to twice a week during the summer.

**David Beanblossom**, the superintendent at Chariot

Run Golf Club in Laconia, Indiana, adheres to a less-is-better approach. "In-season, we only mow collars two days a week," he says. "I feel the key is getting by with less mowing due to our reduced nitrogen inputs and our use of PGRs. We are also non-aggressive with them as far as groomers and verticutting goes. Our aerification consists of one to two times a year pulling cores, and two to five aerifications throughout the year."

The biggest collar headache Beanblossom sees is the universal issue of localized dry spots. "We make sure our greens wetting agent spray includes collars," he says, "and we hand water using wetting agent pellets."

Dowling provides one more interesting idea based on his observations: the elimination of collars.

"What I see in the region over

the last two to three years is eliminating collars and transitioning that area either to putting green or to surround," he says. "I like to recommend making the area putting green wherever possible, to increase the size of the greens and perhaps add additional hole locations. In some cases, however, it does make more sense to turn the old collar into surround."

For those of us not quite ready to take that bold step of eliminating our collars, Dowling has some definite guidelines for keeping the surfaces as healthy as possible throughout the season.

"Collars should certainly be on their own maintenance program independent of putting greens or surrounds," he says. "Try to keep growth regulators off them the best you can. This is made easier if you have GPS sprayer technology. But if not, apply PGRs alone or with another product that it's OK if the very farthest edges of the greens do not receive the products."

And what about traffic? "Where possible, turn mowers and sprayers well away from the putting surface and the collar, basically in the surround," Dowling adds. "Also, alternate where you stop and start rollers. For example, one day stop and start on the green, the next time stopping and starting on the surround. This spreads wear from the roller away from the collar."

Collars certainly comprise the smallest physical area of critical turf on the golf course, yet somehow these pesky strips of turf seem to present one of the biggest headaches to superintendents each season.

Collar maintenance is always evolving. New ideas, techniques and products can hopefully help prevent collars from becoming the weak link. **GCI**

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







## SIZING UP A GOLF COURSE

I've been at this for a long while. Along the way, I have played every imaginable type of golf course, from ultra-exclusive, regular major championship venues and modest resort courses to "country club for a day" municipal tracts and low budget mom 'n' pop 9-holers.

The first thing you learn is that there is no such thing as an average golf course. How can there be, when maintenance budgets at 18-hole layouts range from \$300,000 a year to \$3 million? That diversity, in fact, is what makes each round so interesting. After all, the rulebook on the game indicates only one industry standard — that the hole to which you are playing measures four-and-one-quarter inches in diameter.

The differentiation that results means golf has the most varied and compelling playing fields in sports. Terrain, width of fairways, soil composition, the playing textures in terms of grasses and the lengths of holes vary. You also have teeing ground options that enable you to play "the same course" differently from day to day. And the layout presents itself differently each day based upon wind direction and hole location.

You quickly get a good sense of the kind of facility you're visiting. Personally, I much prefer courses where it's obvious I have the option to walk. I don't care whether it's a prestigious private club or a daily fee with a shack for a clubhouse and dirt for fairways: nothing puts me off more at the outset than seeing a long line of motorized

golf carts by the pro shop, as if you're expected to ride rather than walk. It sets a bad tone. Alarm bells go off.

So, too, places that abound in instructions. Directional signage everywhere. Long lists of rules about proper attire. Postings about that day's Stimpmeter readings. A pin sheet. It is TMI in my fragile world.

The same goes for vertical intrusion on the golf course. The need for a cemetery stone-like marker on each tee showing yardage and a hole map is indulgence that mars the ability to scan the horizon and appreciate the terrain. Ball washers create the same intrusive effect and should be done away with.

One of the great assets any golf course has is its natural setting. Don't hide it. The first time I played Northland Country Club in Duluth, Minnesota, the back of the downhill par-4 13th hole was curtailed by trees, hiding a spectacular long view of Lake Superior behind it. The next time I was there, the trees were gone and the hole conveyed a stunning infinity edge view with the lake as a deep backdrop.

Not every course has that kind of setting. The interior views compel at many courses — or they would, if only the club removed what look like ornamental Christmas tree plantings and other amateurish landscape elements better suited for a snow globe than a golf course.

Clubs waste time and labor setting up colored flags denoting front, middle and back. Whatever happened to judgment as an element of golf? Besides, many

golfers now are equipped with handheld (or cart-borne) distance devices that can determine where the hole is cut. The vast majority of golfers would benefit from never aiming for a flag and simply playing for the front third of every green. One color flag, please — ideally, solid yellow, which shows up more clearly than any other. Just ask any golf course photographer.

It's not snobbery. It's about ease and simplicity of setup. The same goes for mowing patterns. Golfers would benefit in terms of definition and seeing the shape of a hole if the course did not have an intermediate cut and instead showed the contrast of fairway height against a singular rough cut. That would also marginally reduce the labor burden of maintenance.

Given the wide range of budgets and client expectations, it's understandable that some courses have more resources to devote to setup. The difference is in how that's deployed. Golfers would be better served if the focus in maintenance were on topdressing the approaches and firming up the areas short of greens, for example. That's a much better use of resources than layering in four different heights of collar and light rough around the putting surface — or spelling out the club's name in an annual flowerbed behind the signature waterfall par 3.

Regardless of pedigree, what counts in golf course presentation is being true to one's identity without pretension. As with so much of life, ease and simplicity go a long way toward showing off native virtue. **GCI**



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



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



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Putting courses are providing a jolt to facilities looking to keep customers around longer.

They are also attracting golf newcomers. **By Judd Spicer**





**A**s golf continues to enjoy a pandemic-era rise in participation, the game's most accessible, equitable and equalizing club is enjoying its own sweet stroke of ascent.

Perhaps taking an overseas page from the globe's most historic and famed putting grounds — the two acres of mounded, 18-hole flatstick fun of the Himalayas Course adjacent to the second hole of the Old Course at St Andrews — domestic golf properties of all manner and endeavor are sporting a stated trend of putting courses.

The National Golf Foundation reported 3.2 million new golfers in 2021. That demographic, according to the NGF, has enjoyed a 20 percent rise in just the past five years.

In contrast with the game's one-time novelty putt-putt days, today's surge in putting properties involves

an architecturally driven ethos of design intent crafted to keep even scratch players engaged using agronomic plans mirroring those of regulation course putting surfaces.

The most eminent domestic homage to the Himalayas Course comes, sans surprise, by way of Pinehurst Resort, where the two-acre Thistle Dhu debuted in 1916 and is regarded as the nation's first miniature golf course.

"Thistle Dhu is on the same agronomic program, and pretty well the same standards and conditioning levels, as our other courses," says **Bob Farren**, director of golf course and grounds management at Pinehurst. "We do have a little more tolerance for areas that get a little banged-up or worn-out for one reason or other. There are a lot of kids out there and people who aren't as golf savvy, but we don't stress over all that."

In recent years, Farren has seen

a dramatic rise in the course's use and popularity. Akin to many (if not most) of its domestic resort putting course cousins, use of the course comes at no cost to resort guests.

"Any time there's daylight, somebody is out there," Farren says. "As a matter of fact, we've now divided it up into two 9-hole courses instead of 18, so we can get more people on it at different times. It has grown in popularity, and we've seen other locations (around the country), mostly resorts, offer a similar size and scale over the last five or 10 years."

While putting courses can be an amenity used to bolster a thriving property, a new flatstick track on the opposite coast has debuted a course aimed at narrating a property reimagination.

Shadow Mountain Golf Club in Palm Desert, California, owns not only the distinction of being the now-golf-rich city's first course, but the 64-year-old grounds are also a rare example of a **Gene Sarazen** design. Struggling to the point of turning to GoFundMe in recent years, new ownership is aiming to fly flesh, compliments of The Flamingo putting course, which debuted this spring.

"There was an existing driving range which was small, didn't get used too much and had limited-flight balls," says **Jay Blasi**, architect of The Flamingo. "So, the new ownership group was looking for a way to transform that underutilized portion of the property."

Transforming the property's 5,375-yard, par-70 layout wasn't a feasible option. "Our course is landlocked, so you can't make us any longer," Shadow Mountain general manager **Joe Gowdy** says. "The consideration here was how to make better use of our dual side drive range space, which had limited stalls. I mean, if our range was full, you might decapitate somebody on the other side, so we wanted something to make us unique, to stand out a bit more. And putting in The Flamingo does that."



► The Little Meadow Putting Course at Black Butte Ranch debuted in 2020.

Nobody else in the desert has it.”

Shadow Mountain’s new leadership also created an adjoining social space with bar, tables, televised sports and soon-to-be-added knee-high lighting. Plans for local industry Skins games and community events will ensue. Blasi designed and planned the one-acre course in relatively short time.

“When you’re blessed with naturally sandy soils, you can work with the native soils,” he says. “It’s a great asset to any putting course and made it feasible to get in there and construct The Flamingo fairly quickly.”

While drainage considerations are still paramount, working free of pre-conceived full course notions or routing corridors provided Blasi with architectural freedom. “You think about it from an operational standpoint, but less so than you would with a full golf course,” he says. “With a putting course, you’re more or less creating a landscape, and once that’s accomplished, you can then lay out holes wherever you want. With The Flamingo, we tried to build in all sorts of fun humps, bumps, side slopes, spines and ridges.”

Blasi sees a movement in the value



of putting courses at large and small resorts while also noting great potential within municipalities.

“The trend really starts with the big resorts with multiple courses, like Bandon or Pinehurst or Sand Valley,” he adds.

“They’ve all either had these or added them as an extra amenity for guests. What I’d love to see is these putting courses come to more suburban and metro areas, as they could serve such a great role in getting people to the game, keeping them in the game.”

A rise in domestic rounds coupled with a resurgence of

golf travel means once-dormant putting courses are finding new life as property assets.

“Our HillTop putting course was actually built back when our **Tom Weiskopf** course (Forest Dunes) was built (in 2002),” says **John Wessels**, head golf course superintendent at Forest Dunes Golf Club in Roscommon, Michigan. “And then, in 2007 or ’08, it was never being used. Never. So, we abandoned it. But with new ownership, we resurrected it in ’18. The shapes were all there, but we did have to go through and till it and basically redo it all.”

The 18-hole, nearly two-acre property putts barren no longer.

“Now we see it used throughout the day, mostly in the afternoon when people are just wrapping up their morning rounds or getting ready for later rounds,” Wessels says. “And at night it gets pretty fun and rowdy out there.”

Like several of the modern putting course designs, HillTop is drawn and maintained to attract players of all

“

And I do think putting courses are a trend. With bigger groups, when they’re done with the round, they want to unwind with a little more competition, with the thinking that, ‘Hey, I didn’t hit it so hot on the course today, so maybe I can catch my pal off-guard on the putting course.’”

– **Brian Farrell, Black Butte Ranch**





levels. HillTop is maintained to the same green heights as the Forest Dunes course and with the same bent-grass as the resort's reversible Loop course and Bootlegger short course greens. "The only thing that's different is that we don't roll it on a regular basis," Wessels says. "We may not cut every single day, so it may play a bit slower speed. But with the undulations, that's totally OK."

Properties long-lobbying for a putting course are also seeing the returns.

The Little Meadow Putting Course at central Oregon's Black Butte Ranch enjoyed the design hand of **John Fought**, who created the property's Glaze Meadow Course. Featuring a dozen holes ranging from 45 to 105 feet, Little Meadow can also be played as 18 shorter holes

and in reverse order.

"It's been planned here for about 25 years," Black Butte Ranch director of golf **Jeff Fought** says. "I've been here over two decades, and it just took somebody on our board who had a passion to bring this up again. And we just thought this would be the greatest amenity for families and kids, and a great place to teach your kids how to act on a putting green."

Little Meadow debuted in mid-2020. It supported 9,000 in-season rounds last year from Memorial Day to the end of September. "It's unbelievable to see how busy it is, and how people who aren't even

golfers are out here, just having a drink and having a good time," Fought says.

The impressions are shared by Black Butte's agronomy team.

"A lot of times, we need to have Jeff hold 'em off a little bit, just so we can get our normal maintenance out there,

whether it's spraying or topdressing or changing the cups," Black Butte Ranch superintendent **Brian Farrell** says. "And I do think putting courses are a trend. With bigger groups, when they're done with the round, they want to unwind with a little more competition, with the thinking that, 'Hey, I didn't hit it so hot on the course today, so maybe I can catch my pal off-guard on the putting course.'"

As with several properties, the segue from championship course to putting course sees no decline in care or conditions. "From green speeds, heights, fertility, we maintain

▲ Thistle Dhu is two acres and one of the most popular attractions at Pinehurst Resort.

◀ The Little Meadow Putting Course has helped keep golfers around longer at Black Butte Ranch.



Little Meadow essentially the same as our course greens, though the greens on our Big Meadow Course are predominantly Poa, while the putting course is a more dynamic bentgrass turf, kind of the latest

and greatest," Farrell says.

The short game allure and flatstick fever haven't been lost on the game's biggest name, as **Tiger Woods'** budding design business, TGR Design, has included wedge

and putter focus in nearly all its work.

"Tiger started the design company with the vision of making golf fun and more welcoming for everybody," TGR Design President **Byron Bell** says. "And back in 2006, when it started, we didn't necessarily have a clear definition of what that would mean."

TGR's debut domestic championship design, Bluejack National in Montgomery, Texas, includes a 10-hole par-3 course on property along with a putting course. Woods' Diamante design in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, includes the same short game amenities. Additionally, TGR's reimagining of The Hay 9-holer at Pebble Beach includes an approximately 27,000-square-foot 18-hole putting course.

TGR's partnership with PopStroke — a putting, dining and entertainment concept

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On this space, you can have a great conversation. When you play 18 holes of golf, if you're riding in a cart or walking even, conversations can get disjointed. The putting courses are a great space to get people together and not feel awkward about not being a good golfer."

— **Bob Farren,**  
**Pinehurst Resort**





Jay Blasi

—has a host of new locations in the works, and a trio of locations opened in Florida, including Fort Myers, Port St. Lucie and the recently debuted Sarasota facility, with its Tiger Red and Tiger Black 18-holers.

“PopStroke fit our model of bringing friends and families together around the game in an unintimidating environment,” Bell says. “There’s no limit to the constituents. Maybe it’s a 2-year-old in diapers out there, teenagers out for a weekend or grandparents on a date night.”

TGR’s PopStroke work features synthetic turf with different lengths of fibers for play and aesthetic such as rough and bunkers.

“As a for-profit business, you need to be open. You can’t have mowers out there and you can’t aerify and be shut down for a few weeks,” Bell says. “There’s a small footprint on these, where everybody is walking down the center of a small fairway, so you can’t spread out the traffic. And with just a putter, it’s pretty tough to have people hitting out of traditional rough or real sand bunkers all day, so synthetic made sense.”

The benefit of multi-use space increases the allure of putting courses. “Whether it’s for rehearsal parties, wedding receptions, ... a good recreational programmer can do really well with a space like this, and use it for all different kinds of events,” Farren says.

Limiting guests to one club hasn’t turned away prospective customers. Instead, the lone tool yields a freedom that can’t always be found with a traditional round.

“On this space, you can have a great conversation,” Farren says. “When you play 18 holes of golf, if you’re riding in a

cart or walking even, conversations can get disjointed. The putting courses are a great space to get people together and not feel awkward about not being a good golfer.” GCI

Judd Spicer is a Palm Desert, California-based writer and frequent Golf Course Industry contributor. We haven’t received confirmation on his scoring average at Shadow Mountain.

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## COVER STORY FROM P. 29

the gardening now,” Dempsey says with a laugh.

Dempsey was among the first and more prominent international voices on Turf Twitter. Over the last almost dozen years, he has remained among the more active, too — racking up nearly 45,000 tweets, more than 32,000 likes, and just shy of 6,000 photos and videos. His first tweet, he says, “was a picture of some infected turfgrass. That sort of set the tone.” Dempsey was pursuing his Ph.D. during those early Twitter days. Now retired from everyday course maintenance, he does in fact send out a fair number of photos from his garden, but he also remains an active member of the turf conversation, handling research trials focused on experimental products.

Dempsey also turned his early Twitter curiosity into global travel. In large thanks to sharing his scientific research on Twitter, he was invited to present at conferences and events in Canada, Czechia, Denmark, France, Sweden and the United States, among other countries. Still on the circuit today, he plans to travel to Iceland later this year. “If I hadn’t been putting my research out onto Twitter, people wouldn’t have heard of it,” he says. “They wouldn’t have found it, simple as that.

“Early on, I was amazed: I would put something up on Twitter and someone from the other end of the world would get back to me about it within a matter of minutes. It was fascinating to me, that you could communicate so easily. ... Unless you’re near another golf course, you don’t really get to talk with many (people) about grass when you’re in the middle of Ireland. They think you’re stupid or a headcase. The whole country’s covered in grass — hello!”

Many of the avatars Dempsey interacted with years ago have disappeared. “Hopefully, they’ve just got off Twitter,” he says. “Hopefully, they’re not dead.” **GCI**



Papago Golf Club

## COURSE NEWS

Belleair Country Club, the oldest golf club in Florida — designed and redesigned by **Donald Ross** — started an \$8.8 million restoration of its West Course. The architects at Fry/Straka Global Golf Course Design broke ground on the project in March, with plans to re-open all 18 holes by mid-November. Greens are being rebuilt to USGA specifications and restored according to Ross’ 1924 construction drawings. **Jason Straka** and superintendent **Andy Neiswender** picked TifEagle Bermudagrass for the putting surfaces, with Bimini Bermudagrass everywhere else. ... Papago Golf Club in Phoenix will start a four-month, \$4 million course renovation this month. The project will be highlighted by moving the ninth and 18th green complexes as well as the first and 10th tees, rebuilding and renovating bunkers, leveling tee complexes, and removing 10 acres of turf to further reduce water usage. ... **Tripp Davis** and Associates recently completed the bunker renovation at FarmLinks at Pursell Farms in Sylacauga, Alabama. Golf Sculptors International, owned by **Bobby Holmes**, handled the work, and shapers **Luis Chavez** and **Eric Mendieta** and their crews handled all onsite shaping. ... Seaview Hotel and Golf Club in Galloway, New Jersey, recently wrapped up an enhancement project on the club’s **Hugh Wilson-** and **Ross-**designed Bay Course. The nearly \$700,000 project began in October 2021 and focused on enhancing the overall aesthetics and improving playability. Turco Golf, a New Jersey-based golf course construction company, performed the construction work. ... Cherokee Country Club in Madison, Wisconsin, will become the 30th TPC Network and the first in the state. Twelve-time PGA Tour winner and Wisconsin native **Steve Stricker** is redesigning the course — his design debut.

## PEOPLE NEWS

**Jack Morgan** is the new project development VP at Landscapes Unlimited, where he has worked the last 23 years. ... **Dr. Joe Armstrong** moved from Corteva Agriscience to SePRO, where he is the new director of research, regulatory and innovation to guide its R&D initiatives. ... **Phil Cotton** is the new CEO of Nicklaus Companies. He previously led the business interests of **Ernie Els** and spearheaded SAP’s golf sponsorship portfolio.

## INDUSTRY BUZZ

The GCSAA debuted its Certified Turf Equipment Manager program in late May — the first certification program for EMs anywhere in the world. ... The Rounds 4 Research fundraising program auctioned off 1,361 rounds worth \$482,000 — a 36 percent increase over last year. The top bid was \$10,100 for a one-year membership to six private Dormie Network clubs. ... The FMC “Give Back to Local GCSAA Chapters” in-season program opened with a \$26,000 donation to 49 local chapters, bringing the program’s total to more than \$106,000.





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## TRAVELS WITH TERRY

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

### HOMEMADE VACUUM

**A**n existing trailer was transformed into a vacuum for leaf debris removal used in hard-to-get-to areas. The vacuum is mainly used in the fall on the golf course and grounds. A Billy Goat Model DL180V (\$4,000 a few years ago) was placed on the trailer after 1½-inch angle iron supports were added underneath the 18 HP Vanguard engine and vacuum.

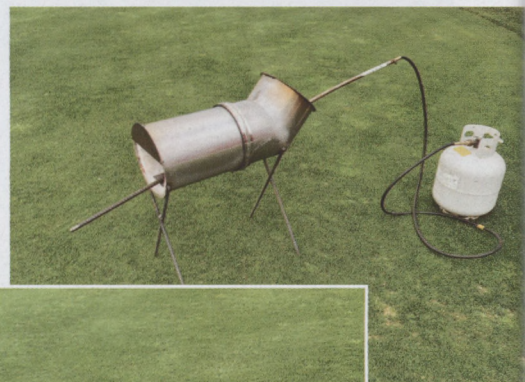
A 10-foot long and 10-inch diameter urethane metallic hose is included, and 1-inch by 6-inch pressure treated wood sides with two tailgates and hinges were added. A 1-inch diameter PVC pipe framework was glued together and

placed on top to support the fiber cloth, which is further held in place with a bungee cord. A jack stand and lockable ball hitch are also on the trailer. Total labor time was about eight hours. Island superintendent **William V. Reil**, assistant superintendent **Chris Dow** and equipment manager **Phil Lewis** comprise the great team at the Gibson Island (Maryland) Club. **Lester George** is the restoration architect.



### CUSTOM BRANDING IRONS

**T**he Stock Farm Club, in Hamilton, Montana, had been a famous cattle ranch for many years prior to building its 18-hole golf course more than 20 years ago. The club's "horseshoe logo" is branded onto tee benches, trash cans and driving range accessories, using an 8-inch squared horseshoe. The 12-inch diameter stainless steel forge has an interior wall fire blanket; the horseshoe is welded to a 24-inch-long piece of rebar; the tip of the propane hose is a weed burner; and it takes about 30 seconds to heat up the horseshoe. They also have 1-inch squared horseshoes that the executive chef brands onto grilling steaks for larger events. It cost about \$500 for the forge materials already on hand and \$20 for each horseshoe and rebar. It takes about three hours to build and 15 minutes for each branding. Director of agronomy **Ryan Knapp** mentioned they might get a small cattle herd for the members to try their luck at branding. Equipment manager **Warren Erickson** and second assistant **Jacob Wilson** are the branding team. **Tom Fazio** and **Ron Smith** are the club's architects.



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



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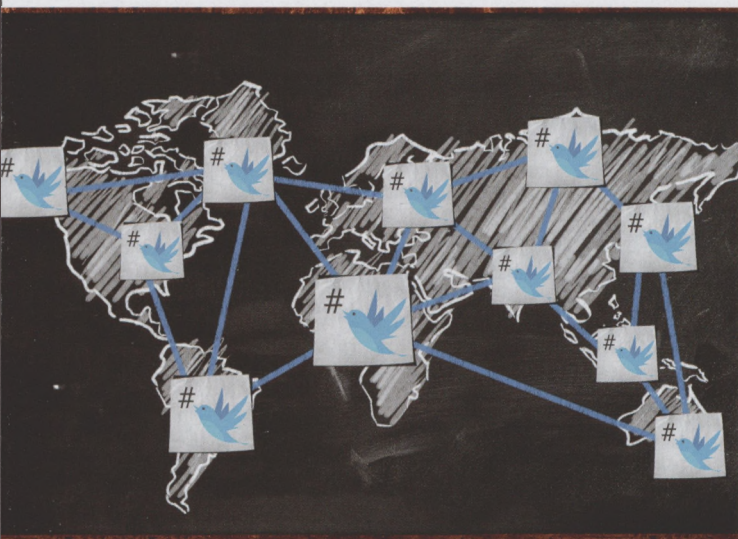
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## TWITTER: WHAT THE COLONEL WOULD WANT

*NOTE: I wrote a longer version of this column in 2016 for Carolinas Green, our regional association's publication. Some of the people I originally wrote about have moved onto new places. Sadly, one of them is no longer with us. The message still resonates.*

**A**t the Golf Industry Show, I sat in a seminar taught by **Dr. Cale Bigelow** (@BIGTurfTeaching) and **Dr. Dara Park** (@TheMuddyTiger). As I scanned the room, my eyes met those of **Steve Wright**, CGCS of Pine Tree Golf Club in Florida.

What's the big deal? Steve is recognizable in the Carolinas from his days at Long Cove Club on Hilton Head Island and as a Carolinas GCSA past president. But I didn't arrive in the Carolinas until 2005 and didn't attend my first Carolinas GCSA Conference and Show until 2006. To me, Steve is a South Florida golf course superintendent and @wrightsteve19. (Steve unexpectedly passed away in late 2018.)

When our seminar took its mid-afternoon break, we met in the hall to shake hands and catch up. Steve told me he'd met more industry professionals in the past two years than in the previous 20 years combined thanks to Twitter.

**Col. John Morley** founded the National Association of Greenkeepers of America in 1926, believing that "no life is, or can be, self-existent. We depend on each other." Col. Morley knew superintendents needed to lean on each other for knowledge

and support. While the tenet remains true today, the world is changing rapidly. Society moves quicker than he could ever have imagined.

I created the @CGCGreenkeeper Twitter account in 2013 and started using it to enhance communication with our membership. I was already blogging and thought Twitter posts could bridge the gap between blog updates for our newer, younger members. Twitter is free. It takes little time to establish an account and even less time to post content. If an old Gen Xer like me can figure it out, I'm sure anyone can.

Determining Twitter-worthy content is up to you. It's quick and easy to post things like rainfall totals, cart path restrictions and frost delays. I like to post photos of the course and brief video clips to tell the story of what we are doing and why.

But little did I know when I started down this road that I would reap a totally separate personal benefit. I discovered a new world of superintendents, turfgrass educators and other turf industry professionals sharing information and communicating with one another in real time. Twitter is the world's largest local association meeting.

My wife, **Darless**, will tell you I love to talk turf. I fondly remember conversations from many years ago in our Blacksburg, Virginia, apartment during my graduate school days. Darless would be incredibly patient while I got down deep in face-to-face turf chats with fellow Virginia Tech alums **Rick Henderson** (@turfhokie), **Andrew Green** (@GreenGCA) and

**Sean Baskette** (@hvccturf).

Whether it's in the office pre-dawn, out on the course or on a sofa in the evening, I'm now only a few swipes from talking turf with professionals from all over the world. I have learned new techniques that I've applied at Carolina Golf Club.

In 2015, we began hosing our Bermudagrass collars immediately following Primo applications to our bentgrass putting greens. I learned of the technique from two superintendents, one in Florida and the other in California. The turf on our collars was the best it has ever been. More important, it survived the following winter (albeit a mild one) with no turf needing to be replaced.

I have strived from Day 1 to use my account in a professional manner. Everyone has opinions and Twitter is a prime platform to share yours. Just because you can express an opinion doesn't necessarily mean you should.

My target audience is our club's members. There's no need for me to debate social and political issues. Once you post content, it's out there for the world to see. Use good judgment because the positive things happening on social media in our profession far outweigh the bad.

If Col. Morley were alive, he'd be happy to see that we still share information readily, congratulate and cheer on our neighbor's accomplishments, and lend a hand when it's needed. In fact, I think he would snap up the handle @Colonel-Morley and be engaged in the conversation. **GC**



**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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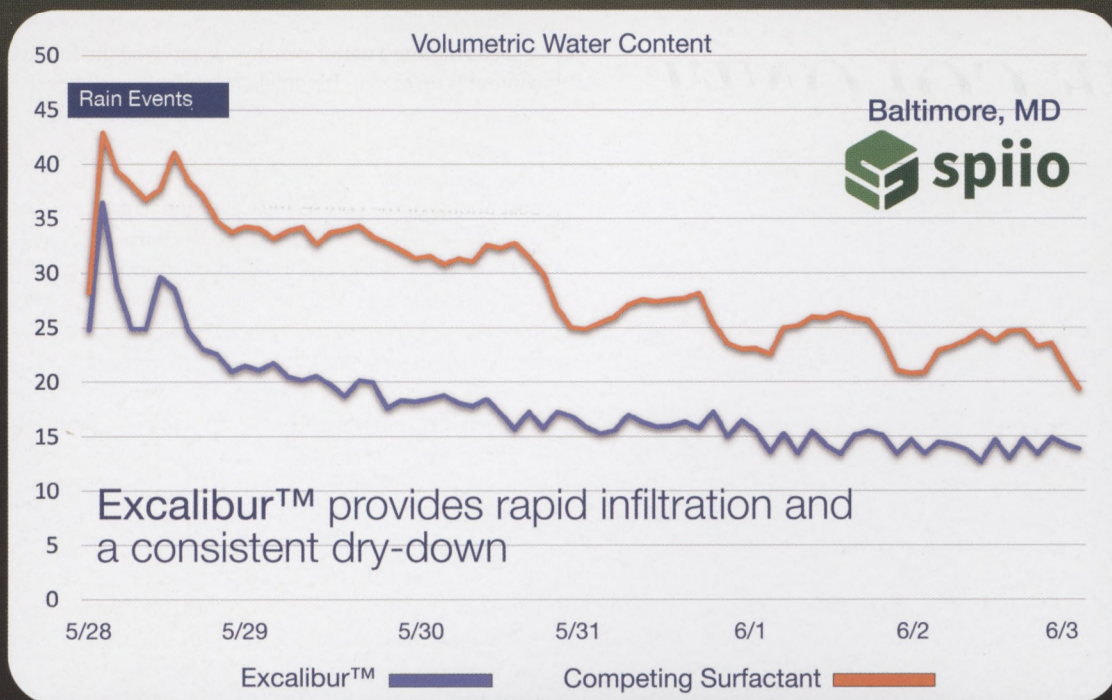
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