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# GOLF COURSE<sup>®</sup> INDUSTRY

## HISTORIC HEARTBEAT of GOLF

9-holers are still common. 9-holers blending the pasts and presents of **Downers Grove Golf Club** and **Tam O'Shanter Golf Course** are tough to replicate. Plus, a look at what makes one of their Chicagoland neighbors special.

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**ABOUT THE COVER:** Lohman Quitno Golf Course Architects provided the cover shot of the historic sixth hole at Tam O'Shanter Golf Course.

VOL. 34 NO. 5

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# INGENUITY OF A FEW

**T**he trio of Chicagoland 9-holers featured in this month's cover package employs a combined half-dozen full-time golf course maintenance workers. Downers Grove Golf Club, Tam O'Shanter Golf Course and Pottawatomie Golf Course combined to support more than 115,000 rounds in a cool-weather market last year.

Yikes? Or wow?

Amazingly, Downers Grove's **Jeff Pozen**, Tam O'Shanter's **Jim Stoneberg** and Pottawatomie's **Denise Gillett-Parchert** concoct ways to complete the job and advance to the next season. The combined length of their respective tenures exceeds 60 years. Pozen, Stoneberg and Gillett-Parchert are loyal municipal employees. Their work allows the park districts they represent to make money on golf. Moreover, their work provides pleasant physical and mental recreational greenspaces within a densely populated region.

Their stories and courses are inspirational.

Pozen, Stoneberg and Gillett-Parchert prove jobs at clubs with seven-figure maintenance budgets aren't prerequisites to career success in the golf industry. They found fulfillment at places filled with golfers of all skills and sizes. Their courses include it-happened-here histories, which are detailed on these pages. Pozen is linked with **Charles Blair Macdonald**, whose writings he studied in high school. Stoneberg is linked with the first generation of golfers who appeared on television. Gillett-Parchert is linked with one of the earliest versions of **Robert Trent Jones Sr.**'s imaginative work.

They are also linked with nearly everybody who reads this magazine. Pozen, Stoneberg and Gillett-Parchert are managing big properties (yes, even 9-holers have significant footprints) with small crews in an era of heavy play. Sound familiar?

Stoneberg spent his first 21 years at Tam O'Shanter as the lone full-time, year-round employee. Finally, last year, the Niles Park District added a second year-round employee. As we chatted in his office on a dreary early spring morning, I asked a question I'm seemingly asking every superintendent these days: How does a large, constantly changing outdoor landscape remain in tidy condition with minimal personnel? It's a question the people who are doing the actual work are often too busy to ponder.

"You just try to find a way to fit everything that has to be done in a day into your schedule," Stoneberg says. "I do the aerating, the spraying, the topdressing. I cut fairways. I don't know how I get it done."

Stoneberg adds that using his allotted vacation time in the off-season helps him handle the demands of the job. Fortunately, Tam O'Shanter is closed during Chicago's harsh winters.

Superintendents in regions with weather conducive to year-round golf find it trickier to take extended respites, despite the plethora of research indicating breaks, vacations and personal time lead to more productive work upon an employee's return. The national labor crunch makes scheduling time off more challenging in golf and dozens of other industries requiring hands-on work.

Nothing through the first four months of 2022 suggests that a short-term solution to golf's labor woes will emerge. More facilities are trending toward smaller crews. Seasonal employees provide boosts in cool- and warm-weather regions. But what happens when a few seasonal employees opt against returning? Stoneberg faced this situation as temperatures started to warm this spring. "You're nothing without a returning staff," he says.

And golf is nothing without people like Pozen, Stoneberg and Gillett-Parchert. Outsiders will never fully understand how they get everything done, because superintendents are a humble group. Even when you ask them how they make the seemingly far-fetched appear obtainable, they struggle to provide a comprehensive answer. The only people capable of truly relating to their situations are experiencing the same dilemma.

Big landscapes. Small crews. Yet, there are still jobs that are tremendous fits. Pozen, Stoneberg and Gillett-Parchert are proof those jobs exist.

Yikes? Or wow?

Sometimes it can be both. **GCI**



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## GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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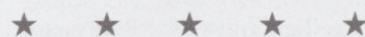
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# 75<sup>th</sup>

**ANNIVERSARY**



# NOTEBOOK



## A GEORGIA MORNING

Managing editor Matt LaWell recaps his first visit to Augusta National and the Masters ... in cobbled rhyme.

"Hello, friends," we heard **Jim** say,  
"and welcome to another day  
at a course both charming and special:  
It's called Augusta National."  
And so began a splendid morn'  
(after so much rain just poured and  
poured)  
when for some reason, would you  
believe,  
they let us walk from tee to green.

Before **Tiger** grinned and **Rory** surged —  
before Friday's cut and the field's purge —  
before **Scottie** simply wowed,  
**Guy**, **Lee** and **I** just walked the grounds.  
It helps, I think, Masters first-timers  
to have a friend a little wiser:  
"Go here, watch them, check that,  
not this,  
snap a photo and make a wish."

Guy helped so much — two trips'll do  
that —  
and while we gawked, he just hung back.  
He did point out some recent change,  
but wanted us to seize the day.  
And so we did! From nine to noon!  
Until we heard the sirens — Boo!  
T-storms, tornadoes, fast approaching,  
and on our walk they were encroaching.

We dragged our feet as best we could,  
walking slowly through the wood.  
There was no rush, we tried to wait,  
but again were told: "Evacuate."  
No sadder words could've been  
dispensed.  
Was our day now in the past tense?  
Radio tuned, forecast updated,  
inside our car, we sat and waited.

And then — a rush! A flash of patrons  
made their way back to the gates, and  
could it be? Was that sign accurate?  
The course reopened for those with  
badges!  
Back in we walked, smiles unwavering;  
this was icing, a bonus, gravy.  
The golf gods smiled on tens of  
thousands,  
sent back inside to stroll and browse, and

browse we did, 1 to 18 ...  
and inside the Golf Shop. See,  
I sort of told a bunch of chums  
my travel plans: "Please get me stuff?"  
The line alone was Disneyesque,  
wrapped and curling, a midday rest.  
And once inside — gunga galunga! —  
whole paychecks died in moments.  
Oompah!

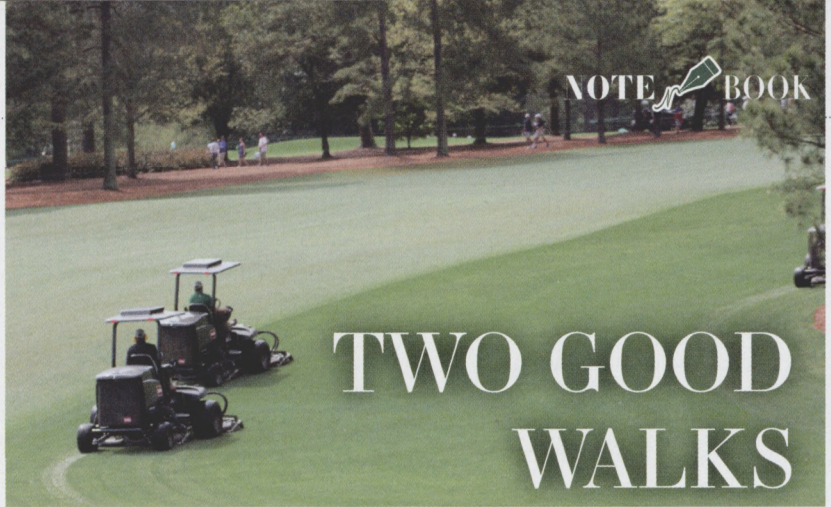


Six caps, three shirts, a quarter-zip,  
a towel trio to clean club drips.  
Some playing cards and divot tools,  
pin flags, ball markers, all are cool.  
My uncle wanted just a ball.  
For you, old **Tom**, an easy call.  
Never did see those trendy gnomes —  
would've sat on my lap the whole way  
home.

And then some lunch, as light as bricks:  
pimiento cheese (I ordered six),  
four pecan clusters, lemonade,  
sweet tea, some bottled waters made,  
perhaps, from old Rae's Creek on 12.  
Oh! And one banana, just to help  
refuel my legs on grassy stuff —  
never enough potassium.

Met up again with Guy and Lee,  
there was more course for us to see.  
Up and down and up again —  
elevation change is real, my friends.  
We watched **Cam**, **Vijay** and **Woosie**,  
then at the Par-3, **Weir** and **Hughes-y**.  
The sun peeked through, the day was  
grand,  
and then, oh no, sirens again.

Once more, a voice told us to leave,  
and this time, no, no clemency.  
We filed out at 4 o'clock,  
shoulders touching, golf small talk.  
Who knows the next time we'll return?  
Next year, I hope, without concern.  
If not, we've been there once (not twice),  
so we've got that goin' for us, which is  
nice.



## The greenery. The people. The ambition. The golf. Lee Carr's first visit to the Masters was bliss.

looming azaleas. Delicious sand-  
**B**wiches. Busy caddies. Bags of mer-  
chandise. As someone visiting for  
the first time, these are all things I  
expected to see and enjoy at the Masters.  
Everyone who had been there told me the  
elevation changes were going to be more  
significant than I imagined. They were.

Connected media members. Watchful  
security. Courteous volunteers. Morning  
mist. I have never associated cigar smoke  
with the grounds of Augusta National  
Golf Club but I occasionally caught that  
fragrance. I love it because it takes me di-  
rectly back to my great uncle's house and  
the comfortable cadence of my childhood.  
Truth be told, I felt like a kid. I was at the  
Masters and, shamefully or not, nothing  
else really seemed to matter. I don't think  
I was alone in this. There was a blanket of  
joy, a palpable and positive energy across  
the property. The forecast leading up to  
Wednesday had been uncertain but my  
colleagues and I got lucky. We were able  
to see so much. For me, it was all new and  
incredible. My cheeks actually hurt at the  
end of the day from continual smiling.

Flowering Peach. Magnolia. Amen  
Corner. Holly. Every hole has a lovely  
name and there are an astounding  
number of plants on this land, rich in his-  
tory, that used to be a nursery. So much  
written about and universally known but  
secrets remain. Many. There in the open,  
teeing off on Carolina Cherry, was **Viktor  
Hovland**, with a solid strike (I love that  
sound) before striding down the fairway  
and smiling, full of athleticism and poten-  
tial. **Hideki Matsuyama**, the defending  
and revered champion, teed off too, as

whispers of the previous night's Champi-  
ons dinner, with an exquisite menu and  
exclusive camaraderie, circulated. Not  
even 100 contenders. Who would win on  
Sunday?

Babies in white jumpsuits. Giggles.  
Hugs and family. Courageous putts from  
loved ones. The Par-3 contest was my fa-  
vorite part of the day. It was an awesome  
sight to see the hills covered with patrons  
for this once-a-year triumph. Members  
wearing their green jackets watch, beam-  
ing like everyone else. On hole No. 5,  
a group of youthful agronomy workers  
relaxed and enjoyed the afternoon before  
they were needed. I couldn't help but  
wonder where their careers and lives  
would take them. I quickly and silently  
prayed for their health and happiness.

The whirring SubAir. Rolls of sod. A  
parade of fairway units. Capable grounds  
crews. We were evacuated once earlier in  
the day, returned to the grounds and were  
evacuated again after 4 p.m. as these im-  
pressive teams went to work. The course  
is kept to pristine standards, clearly, and it  
is its own brand of gorgeous. What stood  
out to me most was a man driving the  
edge of the fairway and stopping every  
few feet to pick up a single pine cone  
or small pieces of bark no bigger than  
half a pecan cluster. Total intensity, total  
dedication. That's why the results are  
remarkable. There's no shortcut and no  
substitute for ample resources, under-  
standing and hard work. It's an outstand-  
ing achievement.

I had a great time and was grateful for  
the opportunity. The property is alive.  
There's always going to be something



new or different, including the much-discussed gnomes, even though the traditions are deeply rooted and it feels like everything has always been where it is. Friends and acquaintances meeting up and firmly shaking hands. Golf conversations everywhere. It's like wind rustling the trees, alluring and peaceful.

I would call on Augusta National again in a heartbeat. It's classy. Brilliant. Well done.

It's the Masters.

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

## Tartan Talks 70

**Kevin Atkinson**

still believes in the power of sketching in golf course architecture, especially when dealing with clients.



▲ Atkinson

"It's a way to communicate my vision in a realistic way," he says on the Tartan Talks podcast. "Often-times, they'll use my sketches more than plans to build the vision. They can see it and it's something they can understand. I think sketching is a critical communication tool to shapers, members and boards. And I do it for me, because it pushes me to be as creative as I can."

Atkinson has sketches that are more than two decades old inside the garage of his suburban Denver home. That home sits near Red Rocks Country Club, which happens to be one of his clients. Atkinson is also a member of the club and backyard golf architecture conversations with neighbors and fellow members are a common occurrence.

A podcast with Atkinson resembles an affable and thoughtful backyard conversation. His start in the business after he failed to make the University of Nebraska-Lincoln team, incorporating mountain views into designs, and the creativity involved with the modern short-course movement are among the topics he discusses. The podcast can be found on all popular distribution platforms.

"Golf architecture is addictive," he says. "It's all I think about and I love it. I'm thankful every day."



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## COURSE NEWS

The LeFleur's Bluff Education and Tourism Complex in Jackson, Mississippi, announced major plans last month for a new golf facility in the Magnolia State's capital city that will help to preserve nearly 150 acres of urban green space and create a permanent home for First Tee of Central Mississippi. The project is part of a larger master plan to connect four museums with walking and biking trails and other outdoor recreational amenities. **Robert Trent Jones II** is collaborating with Mississippi-based architect **Nathan Crace** on the golf part of the project. ... Building on a nearly century-long relationship, the United States Golf Association and Pebble Beach recently announced a long-term

partnership. Pebble Beach will now host the 2027, 2032, 2037 and 2044 U.S. Opens, and the 2023, 2035, 2040 and 2048 U.S. Women's Opens. The resort's Spyglass Hill Golf Course will host both the U.S. Senior Open and the U.S. Senior Women's Open, back-to-back, in 2030. ... Entrada at Snow Canyon Country Club recently unveiled its new **David McLay Kidd**-designed golf course to members and dignitaries. During the 17-month renovation project, McLay Kidd redesigned the club's former **Johnny Miller**- and **Fred Bliss**-designed course, which opened for play in 1996. ... **Tripp Davis** and Associates wrapped up their redesign work at Houston's BraeBurn Country Club. While keeping the same basic routing of the original course, Davis and his team rebuilt and reshaped all the greens, rebuilt and shifted tee locations, and rebuilt bunkers in a more classic style. NorthBridge Bermudagrass

was installed along with a new irrigation system and upgraded drainage. ... Omni Amelia Island Resort opened Little Sandy, the resort's unique 10-hole par-3 course, along with an accompanying 18-hole putting course. Created by **Beau Welling** Design, Little Sandy is designed to appeal to golfers of all skill levels while also offering strategic tests on contoured greens. The design firm is also working on other Omni projects such as Omni PGA Frisco Resort, which is scheduled to open in spring 2023. ... The **Tom Weiskopf**- and **Jay Morrish**-designed Broken Top Club in Bend, Oregon; the **Brian Silva**-designed Massachusetts muni Olde Scotland Links; the Club at Sea Palms, designed by **George Cobb** and situated in St. Simons Island, Georgia; and Oldfield, a private community in Okatie, South Carolina, with a course designed by **Greg Norman**, all selected Troon for various management needs.

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# Nichole Parker

CABOT CAPE BRETON

**N**ichole Parker is in the process of taking the next steps on her journey in the turf industry.

When she joined **Rick Woelfel** on the Wonderful Women of Golf Podcast, Parker was in the process of changing jobs. She recently took a position at Cabot Cape Breton in Inverness, Nova Scotia, as the environmental coordinator after spending more than two years at the Ladies Golf Club of Toronto.

"I'm very excited to be taking on my next role," Parker says. "For the most part, I'll be working at the links course. However, I have the ability to work at Cabot Cliffs as well, a little bit here and there. I'm excited because it will be a completely different environment. They have a lot more fescue and different cultural practices. I believe there will be a lot to learn and they'll be able to provide that."

The 25-year-old Parker's career in turf was launched while she was working a summer job at Magna Golf Club in Aurora, Ontario, roughly 30 miles (or 49 kilometers) north of Toronto. She was a nursing student at the time but was contemplating going in a different direction.

"After about three years I kind of just decided, 'Maybe nursing's not my thing,'" she says. "I'd always had a love for environmental aspects and being in nature and with nature."

Parker switched her major from nursing to an environmental landscape track and continued to work at Magna Golf Club during the summers. In 2019, she was part of the crew that worked the CP Women's Open at the club.

"That's when I really decided I was going to (dive) into turf and make a dedicated career out of that," she says.

To that end, she enrolled in the turfgrass management program at Penn State, earning an advanced certificate this past December.

In January 2020, Parker was hired at the Ladies Golf Club of Toronto. Located in Thornhill, Ontario, another northern Toronto suburb, the club traces its history back to 1924. It is the only remaining private club in North America founded and run by women. The golf course was designed by legendary architect **Stanley Thompson**.

Parker was hired as a spray technician but eventually became the second assistant superintendent. Over the next two years, her responsibilities expanded to include training

and managing the seasonal staff and eventually significant input in the hiring process.

When it comes to agronomy, Parker prides herself on her versatility. She points out that during her time at the LGC of Toronto she was able to operate every piece of equipment on the property.

Parker left the club in April to assume her new position but notes the atmosphere created by the members at the LGC of Toronto was inspiring and left her feeling empowered.

"The club definitely does as much as they can to portray that and to continue to empower all of their staff," she says. "They definitely want to see the females succeed and the members are more than open to talk about their own struggles in their own industries and how they got where they are today."

"Overall, it's a very empowering and positive environment and I enjoyed every second of working there. Honestly, it was a great steppingstone in my career."

When she reflects on her time in the industry and how it has affected her, Parker speaks to the willingness of those in it to share their knowledge and learn from one another.

"The ability to grow," she says, "And the never-ending knowledge that is out there to learn about our industry is the big thing that kind of drew me in and kept me in. Another thing is you can reach out to anybody in our industry, whether you know them or not, and they're going to help you to the best of their ability." **GCI**



"After about three years I kind of just decided, 'Maybe nursing's not my thing. I'd always had a love for environmental aspects and being in nature and with nature.'"



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

To hear the full interview, visit the Superintendent Radio Network page on the *Golf Course Industry* website, Apple Podcasts, Spotify and other popular platforms.



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# MANAGING STRESS

**W**hen Naomi Osaka and Simone Biles, two of the most accomplished figures in their sports, announced they would not compete in prestigious events in 2021 — Osaka in the French Open and Biles in parts of the Tokyo Olympics gymnastics competition — both cited mental health concerns. Each was immediately met with harsh criticism: Biles was called a “quitter” and a “national embarrassment.” Osaka was labeled “narcissistic” and told to “woman up.”

Within days, and upon more sober reflection, the sentiment toward both athletes, including some who leveled the harshest critiques, began to turn. Rather than describing them as weak and selfish, many called their decisions courageous. Speaking for large numbers of their supporters, former tennis star Ai Sugiyama said she hoped their actions would “create an opportunity to talk about athletes’ mental health.”

The conversation was soon picked up by others outside sports. Writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, authors Alyson Meister and Maude Lavanchy said: “These instances of high-profile athletes prioritizing their mental health, along with organized efforts from the sports industry, have triggered an important shift in the narrative of mental health in sports. They’ve increased awareness of the numerous career dynamics that pose mental health risks to athletes: unsustainable expectations for perfection and constant improvement, enormous public pressure to win, pervasive demand to outwork or outlast an opponent . . .”

Conversations about mental health have since proliferated beyond the arenas and into practically every business and industry.

Change a few words in the previous paragraph and those HBR authors might have been describing golf course superintendents and other managers. Their stress has manifested in headaches, high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, skin conditions, asthma, arthritis, depression and anxiety. Unpredictable weather conditions, volatile supply chain conditions, labor concerns and growing expectations for superior conditions only add to the stress we layer on ourselves in efforts to perform at our best and please our owners and managers. Those who cope most effectively do so with a disciplined set of actions.

**SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS.** If the bar that establishes performance expectations is continually being raised, stress is inevitable. Start the year with a plan that you and your manager agree is aligned with management’s goals and one that the budget and your team can support. Schedule regular management check-ins to review progress.

**TAKE A WALK.** Remember the lesson learned from Hardy Weems in “The Legend of Bagger Vance”: get out there in that “green, green grass.” Reconnect to the best parts of your profession and reflect on issues and demands that may be pressing in on you without the normal chatter and distractions of the workplace.

**MAKE A LIST.** One of the most valuable benefits of a peaceful walk is a better organized set of priorities and tasks. You have a head start on a less

stressful day if you have a list that clears the air within your mind. Prioritize tasks and be realistic about what can be accomplished in a day, week or month. Overly ambitious lists only add to stress levels.

**ACT INSTEAD OF REACTING.** Responding to unexpected or unforeseen problems is stressful. Put your plan in place and make it the star on which you navigate your work and stress. Knowing what needs to be done is the first step for managing stress. Reviewing your priorities and the critical parts of your responsibilities comes next. Schedule your day to allow time to deal with the day’s surprises and problems and to regain control over unexpected events.

**DELEGATE.** Look at your own team and identify which members can best handle certain jobs and the pressure that comes with them. Building a strong team is its own reward. Experienced and dedicated team members will step up if given the chance, reducing your workload and pressure.

**STAY HEALTHY.** Stress builds on itself. Being properly rested improves focus and clarity of thought, makes for better heart health and improves mental health. Eating right is as basic as feeding your course the right nutrients. It also boosts immunity, increases energy levels and lowers stress-related illnesses.

Managing stress is a courageous first step in improving mental health and performance. Don’t hesitate to adopt behavior that lessens stress and adds to your enjoyment of your job and the people around you. **GCI**



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



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# HISTORIC HEARTBEAT of GOLF

9-holers are still common.  
9-holers blending the pasts and  
presents of Downers Grove  
Golf Club and Tam O'Shanter  
Golf Course are tough to  
replicate.

By **Guy Cipriano**







■ - BASF

We create chemistry



# THE PATH TO BROOKLINE

Dave Johnson's extraordinary career has prepared him well for the challenge of readying The Country Club for the 2022 U.S. Open

// by Pat Jones //

Photo credit: James Sylvia | MembersFirst

For Dave Johnson, the path to hosting a major championship at one of golf's most storied courses began in the quiet town of Dudley, Massachusetts, where he grew up in a little house across from a local course. "I was that kid who was outside until the sun went down," he says. He picked up the game, started working at the course and was hooked.

Along the path, three Donald Ross courses shaped the '97 UMass turf grad's career. First, the family-owned gem, Wachusett CC, where a curious aspiring turfhead cut his teeth and learned about more than playing surfaces. "I worked

with the Marrone family for seven years and really learned the business of running a golf course," says Johnson. Next came two Ross restorations, Whitinsville GC, which is considered one of the best 9-hole facilities in the country, and Wianno Club, on Cape Cod. In both cases, he collaborated with Gil Hanse to restore and revitalize. "I was having a ball," he recalls.

But the path to Brookline beckoned. Five years ago, when long-time superintendent Bill Spence announced his retirement, Johnson quickly rose to the top of the candidate list. Many members of The Country Club were

also members at Whitinsville and Wianno, where they had seen Johnson's work firsthand. So, in 2018, he became director of grounds at one of America's oldest and most storied clubs. And he had just four years to prepare for a major.

We caught up with Johnson earlier this spring to find out about his approach to preparing for the 2022 U.S. Open, which is being played at The Country Club this June; we asked how volunteers will be engaged and how he built a program that includes BASF turf products to produce elite conditions for his members and the world's best players.



# QA

AND



**DAVE JOHNSON**

**"THE SANDMAN"**

Director of Grounds,  
The Country Club

**WE HAVE  
A STRONG  
PROGRAM  
FOCUSED  
ON BASF  
PRODUCTS. ”**

## **Why were you and The Country Club a good fit for each other?**

The leadership here is the best in the industry. The culture is special. My experience prepared me, but my communication skills and passion for the business and the golf course were critical. I think they appreciated that I was a team leader and I was committed to being the best and giving them the best in the industry.

## **The history there is amazing. Tell us what's really special about that for you.**

Francis Ouimet in 1913! This is where golf really started in America. People played golf before that, but when that young amateur won the U.S. Open — that's what blew it up. He lived across the street and was a caddy her, [so he] walked this ground all the time. Then [there are] all of the championships that have been held here: more than a dozen national championships, including three U.S. Open championships and the Ryder Cup in 1999.

## **When you arrived, you had about a four-year timeline for the national championship. What has your team focused on?**

We started with infrastructure. The greens needed some work to move water off of them. That led to working with Gil Hanse to repair the contours so water would shed. And, if we were doing that, it made sense to redo greenside bunkers. So we expanded 17 out of 18 greens and rebuilt all the bunkers on the championship course. About 90% of the work was done in-house.

## **What else have you focused on?**

We've been very, very, very aggressive about cultural practices — topdressing tee to green to try to get firm and fast as much as possible. My nickname here is "The Sandman."





Photo credit: USGA

### **Tell me about the volunteer program for the event and your staffing this year?**

We have a staff of 36, and we're bringing in 100 volunteers. We've asked all of them to work the full seven days instead of trying to rotate people through with shorter schedules. We're a smaller footprint — it's a difficult property to get around, and they're going to be working in the middle of the night. We must have work done and tees open on 1 and 10 before the first tee times at 6:45 a.m. That said, we're confident with 136 people, we'll be in a good spot.

### **How do you hope that will translate into a great experience for your staff and the volunteers?**

On Sunday, when they're heading home after a week, I hope they leave with a sense of satisfaction, happiness and value. We're going to have a tent dedicated just to education, so we hope to provide some great opportunities, particularly leadership and networking. This should be a great networking opportunity. We're going to have some real leaders of the industry for them to meet and expand their networks to become better professionals.



## **WHAT ARE YOUR CORE PRODUCTS?**

Lexicon® [Intrinsic® brand fungicide] and Navicon® [Intrinsic® brand fungicide] are core products for us. We use them for the heat of the battle. When Navicon [Intrinsic brand fungicide] is going out, I tell the staff we're putting out the good stuff! I also tell them why we're spraying it: We're in the heat of the battle, the worst weather we see all summer and the most stress on the plant. Those products are so strong and effective, and that's why we rely on them in the heat of the season.



Photo credit: Elisha Lung



## What are your disease challenges?

We have built a plant protectant program focused on plant health and sustainability. That means we choose products that offer nice environmental profiles along with having longer residual protection, so we don't have to spray as often. Our biggest disease pressure — especially on fairways — is dollar spot. We have a strong program focused on BASF products. You put them out, and you don't have to worry for a solid three weeks in the summer months. We're on a strong preventative program we've built over four years.

## How does it feel to be where you're at today?

I am so fortunate that I get to work at one of the best clubs in the country. The people who belong here and the people who run this club are amazing. That helps make me a better professional, and I'm very fortunate for that. I don't take it for granted, and I try to instill that into my staff. I want to educate them, elevate them and prepare them for whatever is next. That is my goal: Prepare my staff for their future.

# FINAL THOUGHTS

The land tells the story of this place. When you walk the property and look [at] how it's laid out, you realize how they built this golf course back in the day and how it meanders through the valley and rock outcroppings; you don't see that in modern-day construction. The people who really love golf and get it will appreciate it. It's a special piece of land and a truly special golf course. I can't wait to show it off.

**To learn more about turf solutions  
from BASF, visit [betterturf.basf.us](https://betterturf.basf.us)**



**T**here are 3,676 9-hole golf facilities in the United States, according to the National Golf Foundation. Scattered among all 50 states, each 9-holer provides respites and joy to millions of small-town, mega-city and suburban golfers. Eighty-five percent of 9-holers are open to the public. **Doug Myslinski**, a golf construction and design devotee employed by Wadsworth Golf Construction Company, considers courses of this ilk “the heartbeat of what golf is and how we can grow it.”

Myslinski lives in the sprawling Chicagoland region, an inland golf mecca supporting an abundance of 9s, 18s, 27s, 36s and gargantuans. Within every golf subset, a few courses possessing incomparable pasts demonstrate modern vitality. Downers Grove Golf Club and Tam O'Shanter Golf Course operate in this subset.

Downers Grove and Tam O'Shanter are municipal facilities occupying contrasting Chicagoland tracts. Owned and operated by the Downers Grove Park District, Downers Grove Golf Club is a hilly site in a prosperous southwest suburb. Owned and operated by the Niles Park District, Tam O'Shanter is a relatively flat northwest suburban course flanked by dense industrial, commercial, residential and Forest Preserve District of Cook County plots.

Commonalities exist between the courses. For starters, they are both 9-holers in heavily populated areas. They are also affordable and accessible. An ambitious golfer who relishes walking can play one and then make the 27-mile trek to play the other on a weekday and drop less than \$45 in green fees. Whether one walks Downers Grove or Tam O'Shanter, or both, they are experiencing land that changed golf.

**Charles Blair Macdonald**, the patriarch of Chicago and American golf, designed the original Chicago Golf Club in 1892 and 1893 on the current site of Downers Grove. Chicago Golf Club moved to its Wheaton location in 1895, the same year its original course was renamed Belmont Country Club and reverted to nine holes. The Downers Grove Park District purchased and renamed the course in 1968.

Have you watched televised golf lately? Then, you already have a connection to Tam O'Shanter. In 1953, Chicago businessman and golf promoter **George S. May** televised the annual World Championship of Golf conducted at his Tam O'Shanter Country Club. Nobody

had attempted to put golf on television before May. The event featured a \$75,000 purse and May invited players from six continents to Niles Township. The tournament had a made-for-TV ending as **Lew Worsham** holed a wedge on the final hole to topple **Chandler Harper** by a shot. May died in 1962 and Tam O'Shanter faded as a prestigious private club after hosting the Western Open from 1964 to '65. Howard Street intersected the 18-hole layout and the Niles Park District purchased 37.5 acres on the south side of the street for \$1.33 million. Tam O'Shanter reopened as a nine-hole course in 1972.

Modern golfers are immediately made aware of each course's past. A sign adjacent to Downers Grove's first tee includes a three-paragraph description of the course's development. The final line: *Therefore, in 1893, the first eighteen-hole golf course in the United States was established on this site.* A billboard-sized sign behind Tam O'Shanter's first tee box lists winners of prominent men's, women's and amateur tournaments above a five-paragraph course history.

Downers Grove and Tam O'Shanter

◀ Tam O'Shanter Golf Course in Niles, Illinois, was the site of the first televised golf tournament in 1953.

## NUMBERS TO KNOW

Source: National Golf Foundation

**3,676**

Nine-hole  
facilities in  
America

**3,132**

Public nine-  
hole facilities in  
America



combined to host more than 80,000 rounds in 2021 despite cold-weather climates. Superintendents **Jeff Pozen** and **Jim Stoneberg** are damn proud of where they work and the recreational value their workplaces provide. They are bullish on the present and future of the 9-holers their small teams maintain.

“Great pieces of land that turn into great golf courses are just timeless,” says Pozen, Downers Grove’s superintendent for the past 17 years. “They are going to last forever. There’s something about them.”

Stoneberg, a former sports field and park grounds manager who became Tam O’Shanter superintendent in 2000, adds, “Hopefully this is nothing but still a gold mine for the

park district. I hope it continues the way it is, whether it’s the number of rounds or maintenance. It’s a staple in this town.”

### SUBURBANIZATION MEETS EARLY American golf on Downer’s Grove seventh hole.

Condos and an auto dealership parallel the par 4. A community recreational center lurks behind the green. Tees are tucked into a wooded corner of the property, the landing area is slightly raised, the approach steep, and the green severely sloped from back to front. One fairway bunker is detached from the right side of the fairway.

The hole, according

to Pozen and general manager **Ken McCormick**, is the closest to its original Macdonald form on the course, making it the most accessible and affordable Macdonald-designed hole in the world. Nearly the entire Macdonald design portfolio consists of ultra-exclusive private clubs.

The allure of Downers Grove’s landforms attracted Pozen to his current job. Pozen walked the course for the first time as a 15-year-old playing high school golf in 1986. “I barely remembered most of the course,” he says, “but I remembered the seventh hole for sure. That green was crazy. People were putting off it. Once I came here to start working 17 years ago, you think, ‘This is not how I remembered it.’ I didn’t grasp what it was back then.”

Now, Pozen, who read Macdonald’s 1928 book “Scotland’s Gift: Golf” when he was in high school, protects Macdonald’s work, ensures the seventh green doesn’t become too fast and cultivates pleasant conditions for golfers beginning rounds at 5:40 a.m. and well after 5:40 p.m. He juggles it all with one full-time co-worker and four seasonal employees. The peak-season team is rarely at Downers Grove on the same days. Pozen staggers his limited labor resources. Mondays resemble Saturdays, Tuesdays mirror Sun-

**George S. May's Tam O'Shanter Golf Tournaments 1941-1957**

World Championship of Golf 1943-1957				All American Open 1941-1957			
Men's Champions		Women's Champions		Men's Champions		Women's Champions	
Professional	Amateur	Professional	Amateur	Professional	Amateur	Professional	Amateur
1943: Jug McSpaden	—	—	—	1941: Byron Nelson	Shirley Alexander	—	—
1944: Byron Nelson	—	—	—	1942: Byron Nelson	Beth Ward	—	—
1945: —	—	—	—	1943: Jug McSpaden	Dale Murry	Patty Berg	—
1946: Sam Snead	—	—	—	1944: Byron Nelson	T.J. Fergal	Patty Berg	—
1947: Ben Hogan	—	—	—	1945: Byron Nelson	Art Dinning	—	—
1948: Lloyd Mangrum	William Campbell	Babe Zaharias	Carol Dwyer	1946: Harmon Barton	George Hefner	Babe Zaharias	—
1949: Johnny Palmer	William Campbell	Babe Zaharias	Grace Letcher	1947: Bobby Locke	Felix Torres	Grace Letcher	—
1950: Harry Hanson	Frank Stranahan	Babe Zaharias	Don Kathy	1948: Lloyd Mangrum	Frank Stranahan	Babe Zaharias	—
1951: Ben Hogan	Frank Stranahan	Babe Zaharias	Marilyn Kell	1949: Lloyd Mangrum	Frank Stranahan	Loisie Sepp	—
1952: John Jura	Frank Stranahan	Betty Loumont	Mary Vilges	1950: Bobby Locke	Frank Stranahan	Babe Zaharias	—
1953: Lew Worsham	Frank Stranahan	Patty Berg	Will Smith	1951: Carry Madsen	Frank Stranahan	Babe Zaharias	—
1954: Bob Todd	Frank Stranahan	Patty Berg	McLary Wright	1952: Sam Snead	Frank Stranahan	Babe Zaharias	—
1955: Julius Fries	Doug Sanders	Patty Berg	Will Smith	1953: Lloyd Mangrum	Frank Stranahan	Patty Berg	—
1956: Ted Kuhl	Wood Wessinger	Mabel Bruce	Alice Buchanan	1954: Jerry Barber	Arnold Palmer	Babe Zaharias	—
1957: Dick Mayer	—	Patty Berg	—	1955: Doug Ford	Don Sanders	Patty Berg	—
—	—	—	—	1956: El Harrison	John Hasky	Lois Sepp	—
—	—	—	—	1957: Roberto DeVigiani	—	—	—

**Tam O'Shanter Golf History**

The original 18-hole golf course was designed by Charles Vignati and built in 1921. George S. May purchased the property in 1927 and after holding a successful Chicago Open for the CDGA in 1940, saw an opportunity to develop the property into a professional and semi-professional club. The following year, after receiving the public's interest, he sold the property to the Tam O'Shanter Country Club.

He would introduce the World Championship of Golf in 1943. These tournaments were held from 1941-1957 and took place on the 18-hole course. In 1955, a one-hour broadcast of the final round of the World Championship of Golf was the first ever live broadcast of a golf tournament.

May was instrumental in popularizing the game of golf in America, and can be credited with introducing the first ever nationally televised golf tournament. In 1955, a one-hour broadcast of the final round of the World Championship of Golf was the first ever live broadcast of a golf tournament.

an eagle 2 and a birdie 3. The following year, the 1956 All American Open was held at the Tam O'Shanter Country Club. The 1956 All American Open was the first ever live broadcast of a golf tournament.

Golf legends walked these very greens. Ben Hogan, Ben Hunter, and Sam Snead were regulars. Babe Zaharias and Patty Berg took home titles in over half of the women's professional events. Arnold Palmer finished his win in the 1954 All American Open. Numerous other winners have won the 1941-1957 World Championship of Golf and the 1941-1957 All American Open.

The last stretch of the 18-hole was sold and developed in the early 70s. Mike Prok, District opened the course's 9-hole layout in 1972. Poles remaining mostly original are #1 and #16, while today's #9 and #10 are new.

On the main level of the Tam O'Shanter Golf Course, center you can see a beautiful piece of golf architecture from the historic Tam O'Shanter Country Club. We're honored to be able to show off this historic piece and one of a kind home from the 1940s and 1950s. All American and World Championship of Golf tournaments have been held here. Many of these items came directly from the May family to keep the rich history of Tam O'Shanter alive for generations to come.





days. “Every day is pretty much like a weekend day here,” he says. “There’s really not a slow day.”

Downers Grove supported 44,717 rounds last year. Some golfers care deeply about the history; others have no idea the course played a prominent role in American golf development. On a gloomy and chilly March evening, as Pozen and McCormick are showing a visitor black-and-white routings and articles inside the clubhouse, children are gathered inside a heated, 10-bay shelter constructed in 2018 to support more cold-weather activity and programming. The shelter is part of a driving range complex added in 1992, when the Downers Grove Park District commissioned a redesign of the course. The projects and dates above indicate the evolution of Downers Grove. Not everything from the 1890s resonates with modern golfers. The scene outside the clubhouse on the March evening also indicates that even Chicagoland’s youngest golfers are a hardy lot.

Five green pads, according to Pozen, remain from Macdonald’s design. Greens averaged around 4,000 square feet when Pozen arrived. Through his restorative work,

putting surfaces now average around 5,000 square feet. Pozen also has restored several bunkers on Nos. 3 and 6, and portions of the par-3 fourth and eighth holes. Aerial photos from the 1930s and discoveries unearthed below playing surfaces guide the restorative work, which occurs in what Pozen calls “the late, late fall,” because play doesn’t recede until winter weather arrives.

“The surge in play has made it challenging,” Pozen says. “Usually, in November, we get room to work. But it’s been warm the last couple of falls.”

Abundant October and November play is unlikely something Macdonald envisioned. “When it’s warm in the fall, we’re packed,” McCormick says. “Then the days where there’s no play, you can’t go out there and work because weather conditions don’t allow it.”

Downers Grove doesn’t have an official beginning and ending to the golf season. If it gets warm enough for winter golf, customers fill the course and range. Golfers notice — and appreciate — courses changes upon returning from weather-induced breaks. Pozen and McCormick receive autonomy to decide how to

best enhance Downers Grove within the annual budget. Time, money and available labor limit creativity more than any board, committee and owner.

“We do what we can and that’s why things have happened pretty slowly,” Pozen says. “I have done a few greens, but I haven’t done greens in a couple of years, so I have switched over to bunkers. We are slowly getting there.”

Improvements extend beyond playing surfaces. Pozen’s team also has recently expanded the range to add an instructional tee and guided the effort to secure an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf certification. That willingness to enhance and adapt could keep Downers Grove around for another 130 years.

“The idea of nine holes in a premium setting has its niche and that allows the course to have a long lifetime,” McCormick says. “Prior to the pandemic, golf was in a tough spot in a lot of places. But this was set up to do well even then. Going forward, there’s a bright future for this property.”

**TOO MANY FLOODS** over more than two decades. Stoneberg loses track of how many times the North Branch of the Chicago River has overwhelmed Tam O’Shanter’s turf during his tenure. The river promotes serenity, factors into course strategy, and protects businesses and homes from excess stormwater.

“It serves the purposes golf has for hundreds of years and that’s the conveyance of water,” Myslinski says. “It’s a high-density area and this course prevents a lot of houses and businesses from receiving water. But it takes its toll on the course.”

Stoneberg is inundated with soggy — and even smelly — stories. Take 2005, for example, when remnants of Hurricane Katrina reached northern Illinois.

“Water was flowing over Howard Street,” says Stoneberg, pointing to the busy road 30 feet behind his office. We

◀ Downers Grove Golf Club’s Jeff Pozen, left, and Ken McCormick.

◀ Jim Stoneberg has led Tam O’Shanter’s maintenance efforts since 2000.



lost seven acres of turf, we hauled out over eight semis of sludge. It was like a 100-year flood. It had dumped all the crap that was on the banks for years onto the golf course. But we were only closed for about seven days. We opened on that dead turf. I was able to get out and aerate it. I still can't believe just the smell and everything. Who would even want to be out there?"

The question is rhetorical. Private clubs surround Tam O'Shanter, so being the most accessible course in the neighborhood means achieving valiant feats to keep history open. Tam O'Shanter, unlike Downers Grove, closes in the winter. When the season begins, usually in late March or early April, golfers play the course in any weather. For most of his tenure, Stoneberg was the lone full-time employee. He received his first year-round co-worker last year, as his rotator cuff ached more and more from a career spent working outdoors. Stoneberg receives seasonal help, although it has become increasingly tougher to fill positions.

The number of significant rain events (translation: floods) are also increasingly more common, according to Stoneberg. "Here, in the last five years," Stoneberg says, "we have had two years with 12 to 16 events, which is unheard of. We lost a lot of revenue."

Tam O'Shanter opened in 1925 and flooding represents part of its history. Tam O'Shanter has its own museum and the collection includes a black-and-white photo of May staring out a clubhouse window at a course overwhelmed by raging water. The Niles Park District made a big move to mitigate effects of flooding when it engaged Myslinski and Todd Quitno of Lohman Quitno Golf Course Architects to create a master plan.

"Ninety percent of our goals were to get the tees in the floodplain out of the floodplain," Quitno says, "and then get drainage into areas so the golf course could recover quickly after floods. This course is in a flood-

plain. It always will be in a floodplain and has suffered a lot over the years from flooding damage."

Work commenced in late 2017 and concluded in mid-2018. The project was the first significant renovation since the Niles Park District purchased the course. Not only were tees rebuilt and drainage added, 22 bunkers were constructed using aggregate liners and low-mow bluegrass green surrounds were added. "I still don't believe it ever happened," Stoneberg says of the project.

More open days means more opportunities for golfers to appreciate Tam O'Shanter's place in golf history. The sixth hole, a par 3 playing over the river, is the closest current hole to the layout touring pros experienced. **Byron Nelson, Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Babe Didrikson Zaharias, Louise Suggs and Patty Berg** won at Tam O'Shanter, and May used the club and tournaments to entertain business partners.

"It takes my breath away when I look at some of the old tapes. They took a helicopter and played each hole with a pro just so George May could show off his course," Stoneberg says. "All of the big names played here. It's a shame that it's not here anymore in that form. But I don't think I'd be running the course if it was a championship course."

Stoneberg recently found an old *Toro* magazine advertisement featuring former Tam O'Shanter superintendent **Ray Didier** alongside Nelson, Snead, Hogan and two turf peers. Didier prepared the original course for numerous tournaments with the trio in the field. "I would have loved to walk the course back then," Stoneberg says.

The course Stoneberg maintains measures 2,440 yards from the back tees and the clientele possess a different skillset than American golf's first "Big Three." But Tam O'Shanter remains relevant ... and moves water better.

"You can see that just by the tee sheet," Stoneberg says. **GCI**



**Elsewhere in Chicagoland, a small, passionate team makes an historic (and ecologically noteworthy) 9-holer shine.**

**By Matt LaWell**



# OUR TROUBLES are ALL THE SAME

**P**ottawatomie Golf Course is both a time capsule and a time machine.

Packed into 42 acres along the Fox River in St. Charles, Illinois, an hour and change west of downtown Chicago depending on traffic, the course is one of 254 either constructed or renovated by the Works Progress Administration — whose most famous golf projects were almost certainly the Black, Blue, Green and Red courses at Bethpage State Park — and still shines a light on what the United States can do, together, when pushed hard against a societal wall. Walk around enough WPA projects and you almost feel the labor and the longing to escape the Great Depression, some eight

decades later.

Pottawatomie also features just nine holes — a positive when the course opened in July 1939 and rounds were as inexpensive as 15 cents, and a positive today when the very idea of the game is shifting, when time is our most valuable resource, and full mornings or afternoons hoofing around 18 holes are fewer and ever more far between. Almost by accident, **Robert Trent Jones Sr.** laid out a golf course for our modern times when he sketched these nine — and what is recognized as his first island green — during the late 1930s.

“What’s the point in making the course so difficult that people don’t enjoy it?” superintendent **Denise Gillett-Parchert** asks rhetorically. “You can play a quick nine and even if

the course is packed, you can still get around in 2 hours, 15 minutes, and you go about your day.”

Like the course she has tended to the last 23 years, Gillett-Parchert is herself both a time capsule and a time machine. After studying floral design at Joliet Junior College — and determining “after one class that it wasn’t for me” — she shifted toward golf course maintenance and landed a summer internship at Cog Hill Golf & Country Club in 1980. She was often the lone woman on the crew, and she was often cast aside. During nearly two decades working on private courses, she was subject to the casual misogyny of that time and was turned down for at least one superintendent job despite being told by the person in charge of hiring that she was the most qualified applicant. “Being a female at that time with aspirations of getting a gig at an 18-hole private golf course was very difficult,” she says.

After her husband landed a position that tied them to the area, she applied to and was hired by Pottawatomie in 1999 near the height of the Tiger Boom. Projects were plenty, even if women working courses weren’t.

“The second or third year I was superintendent here, the GCSAA at one of their conventions had a Women in Golf panel and I was invited,”

▲ Pottawatomie Golf Course in St. Charles, Illinois, is owned and operated by the St. Charles Park District.



she says, remembering the exact number of women who held positions of some authority at that time: 184. “I think the industry has come a long way. The kind of prejudice that I experienced at first would never be tolerated today. But it made me who I am, so there’s no angst or anything like that. It’s just the way it was.”

For more than four decades, Gillett-Parchert has put her head down and worked. For more than eight decades, Pottawatomie has done the same.

**OWNED AND OPERATED** by the St. Charles Park District, Pottawatomie trumpets its past—the Jones design, the WPA funding, the original green fees and land value (\$50,000 in May 1936, which works out to a little more than \$1 million, though surely 42 acres of riverfront property today would sell for far more)—but also promotes its present and future far more often: Leagues, tournaments, lessons with golf course manager and professional **Ron Skubisz**, who has worked at Pottawatomie for more than a decade. The course handled more than 36,000 rounds last year.

“We really, really encourage all ages and all degrees of players,” Gillett-Parchert says. “If you’ve never had a club in your hand, you are more than welcome here. If you’re a scratch golfer, you’re equally welcome. We just want to provide a place where anybody and everybody can come and play—and feel comfortable.”

“You get into the higher end of public golf courses, or private golf courses, you only have certain days that women can play, or kids can play. We think it’s important to promote the game of golf, and that’s what we’re here for.”

Gillett-Parchert reports to Skubisz—an unusual situation, she says, but one that works. “Ron’s attitude is that I know more about the nuts and bolts of the golf course than he could possibly know,” she says. “So, if I say I need to do this or I need to do that, I generally have his full backing.” Generally?

“When I say carts should go, he kind of gives me the hairy eyeball. His job is to generate revenue.” She laughs. “But he totally supports what I do and how I do it.”

She works alongside a single other full-time employee—assistant superintendent **Edgar Portillo**, who worked 20 years at nearby Pheasant Run Golf Course, part of a larger resort and convention center, all of which closed in 2020—and a handful of retirees and students who work 20 to 25 hours. One retiree just mows fairways. Another just mows tees, approaches and banks.

“I’m lucky that we’re small enough that we get it done,” she says. “Sometimes it takes us a little longer, but when the kids come in from school, we’re able to get a few extra things done. We do most everything in house unless it’s something huge we can’t take down ourselves.”

Every year seems to bring a different project: Shoreline stabilization. Irrigation. Reshaped tees. Renovated bunkers. More drainage. New cart paths. New bridges. “Who wants to stand still?” Gillett-Parchert asks with a laugh. “Well, I shouldn’t say that. I do, kind of, now. You know, 23 years later, I wouldn’t mind. But now the golfers expect something to be changed. It’s OK. It’s fun.”

Her son, **J.C.**, was 7 when she started working at Pottawatomie. He played 18 or 27 holes every summer day for years, then joined three other Parks District staffers’ kids and formed the SAS—the Seed and Soil Crew—filling divots on par-3s to earn rounds before joining his mom’s crew during high school and college. He’s 30 now. He and his wife are expecting their first child this summer. Gillett-Parchert is over the moon and already planning weekend trips. Now 61, her remaining years as a superintendent will most likely be outnumbered by her years as a grandmother.

**NOT LONG BEFORE** Gillett-Parchert

arrived at Pottawatomie, **Luke Cella**, then the course superintendent and now the executive director of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, helped the course become the first 9-holer to be fully certified by the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.

“We really are stewards of this property for a very short time,” she says. “Someday, I’m going to leave here and I want to make sure that I leave it in a way that someone else can manage it and it will be here in 50 years for somebody else’s grandchildren to play.”

Gillett-Parchert looks toward the future as easily as she recounts the past, remembering some of the many golfers who have played on her work.

“One golfer, **Chris May**, used to call this place Cheers Without the Beers,” she says. “When Ron came, he started selling beer, so it was just Cheers: Everybody knows your name, that’s sort of the attitude around here that we take. Because we are so familiar with so many of the golfers, they say, ‘What’s new, Denise?’”

May played the course growing up in St. Charles and became a Saturday-Sunday regular, his tee time written in ink. “This was his happy place,” Gillett-Parchert says.

May died a few years ago. Every time Pottawatomie feels like the domain of Sam, Diane, Coach, Carla, or Norm is a nod to May. “We have a lot of regulars, guys and women who have their tee time and it’s just their happy place.”

For them, perhaps Pottawatomie is neither a time capsule nor a time machine, but a carousel: allowing them to travel around and around, nine holes at a time, to a place they know they are loved.

“When I got this job, I was able to be a mom and a superintendent,” Gillett-Parchert says. “I got here, I stayed here and I loved it. I made some changes on the golf course and now it’s a pretty nice 9-holer—so they tell me.

“You’re only as good as the people



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# BETTER USE OF PGRs

Kyle Briscoe, Ph.D.

TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER  
SEPRO CORPORATION

Using plant growth regulators (PGRs) to manage turfgrass has been commonplace for decades. However, optimizing a PGR program is an afterthought for many turf managers. They usually prioritize herbicide, fungicide, and insecticide programs instead. Given the recent increase in fuel and labor costs, it's time to rethink why you're using PGRs and retool your program to maximize their performance.

Let's start simple and ask a few questions. Why are you using PGRs? More than likely, managing turf growth is on the list, but is it the primary reason? Are you using PGRs to manage weedy annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*)? If so, how much *Poa annua* do you have, and how aggressive do you want to be with your conversion to the desired turf species? Are your PGR objectives the same for greens, tees, and fairways, or do they vary by height of cut? You must set objectives before making a PGR purchase, much less a PGR application.

Nailing down the objectives is a critical first step. The second step is understanding active PGR ingredients and turf response following their application. There are two classes of PGRs available for use in turf: Class A and Class B. Both classes regulate turf by inhibiting gibberellic acid (GA) biosynthesis. However, their sites of action differ. Class A PGRs inhibit GA late in the biosynthesis pathway, while Class B PGRs inhibit early in the

pathway. From a turf management perspective, the primary difference between the PGR classes is their influence on *Poa annua* growth. Active ingredients in Class A PGRs like trinexapac-ethyl (multiple trade names – most commonly known as Primo Maxx) and prohexadione-Ca (trade name: Anuew) provide significantly less *Poa annua* growth suppression than similar Class B actives like flurprimidol (trade names: Cutless MEC and Cutless 50W) and paclobutrazol (multiple trade names – most commonly known as Trimec).

The active ingredients in both classes vary in the amount of desired turf growth suppression they provide. There are also differences in the maximum growth suppression between greens height turf and fairway height turf for each active. It's necessary to understand the amount of growth suppression each active ingredient provides and apply the PGR at the appropriate time to maintain a set amount of suppression. Suppressing growth and then allowing the turf to "rebound" prior to another PGR application has been shown to reduce turf quality.

Plant growth regulators are no different than herbicides, insecticides, or fungicides in terms of the importance of application rate. However, there's a common misconception that increasing PGR application rates will increase the length of desired growth suppression. The truth is that increasing PGR application rates has signifi-

cantly more influence on maximum growth suppression than length of growth suppression. Average air temperature primarily dictates the length of growth suppression. The cooler the average air temperature, the longer the growth suppression will last for a given application rate. Combining PGR actives in products such as Legacy (flurprimidol + trinexapac-ethyl) and Musketeer (flurprimidol + paclobutrazol + trinexapac-ethyl) will increase growth suppression compared to any single active.

With your objectives set and a little background behind you, you can now focus on choosing the correct PGRs to satisfy your needs. The spring and fall can often be a balancing act between maintaining desired growth suppression and managing weedy *Poa annua*. In this scenario, the best option is usually combining PGR classes. Cutless 50W or Cutless MEC tank-mixed with Anuew has become a popular option. The Cutless application rate drives the amount of *Poa annua* suppression (while adding some turf growth suppression) and the Anuew application rate drives the desired turf growth suppression (while adding some *Poa annua* suppression). If ease of use is a factor, Legacy or Musketeer are the best options. Both have been shown to provide more turf growth suppression than single actives ingredients alone. However, Musketeer provides more aggressive *Poa annua* suppression than Legacy.

Cool-season turf management in the summer is less about weedy *Poa annua* management and more about turf growth management and quality. Remember the influence of air temperature on length of turf growth suppression? Plant growth

regulator application rates must increase as the average air temperature increases to maintain the same level of growth suppression. However, periods of summer stress will naturally slow turf growth and may reduce the need for PGRs. Therefore, it takes diligent clipping monitoring to determine if a PGR change is required.

Warm-season turf managers are typically trying to manage excessive growth in the summer. Combining active PGR ingredients and increasing PGR application rates as the average air temperature increases will maximize growth suppression. However, warm-season managers must also be mindful of the amount of nitrogen fertilizer they apply during the summer. Nitrogen may reduce PGR effectiveness during periods of high turf growth. In fact, you may be able to reduce the amount of total nitrogen applied during the season if you are using PGRs. It's been shown that total applied nitrogen can be reduced by 50% if an appropriate PGR program is used, without sacrificing turf color or quality.

The PGR program that works for your neighbor likely won't work for you. Environments, cultural practices, and many other factors impact turf growth rate and weedy *Poa annua* populations differently from course to course. You must set objectives and optimize a PGR program based on your conditions. There are plenty of university and manufacturer resources available to help select application rates and timings to get started. Ultimately, the best results will come from understanding the relationship between your PGR program and turf growth over the course of a growing season. ■





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## SHARE THIS: A LETTER FROM YOUR SUPERINTENDENT

**E**very author likes compliments, but I was especially gratified while playing a new course recently with some fellow superintendents that they all, in one way or another, said something like this: “We read your column every month. You write the stuff we all want to say but can’t, and we really enjoy it. It’s a shame that more people — specifically our general managers, golf professionals, low-handicap golfers and architects — aren’t reading it, too. Maybe then they’d realize what we deal with and the pressures we face every day.”

I feel your pain. So, here’s something to give to the aforementioned folks so maybe they understand just what it means to be a superintendent today.

Pass this along to those who can use a little education. Tack it on the clubhouse bulletin board, forward the link, stick it in inter-office mail. Then find common ground. Ground you can easily maintain.

### GENERAL MANAGER

We’re in the same boat. Like us, you must deal with supply-chain issues, inflated costs and problems finding workers. But good economy or bad, pandemic or not, it’s important that you support those of us responsible for the care and conditioning of the golf course.

In most instances, the golf course is the primary attraction and cornerstone of the club. It’s why golfers join and it’s a huge part of the reputation. The current situation also proves that courses attract

diverse audiences and ages.

Ask golfers what they like about a golf course and conditioning always comes up. Conditioning is key to the golf experience, which is key to driving revenue, whether it’s rounds played, food and beverage sold, or lessons taken. That’s why you need to fight for the course as strongly as we do. It’s vital to our success — and I don’t mean just me, but you and everyone else who works at the club.

### GOLF PRO

We feel for you. We really do. Your office is the most accessible to golfers, so it’s hard to hide. But you’re only dealing with 1,000 or so square feet in the golf shop while I’ve got 150 acres. And I can’t close the door.

Because you’re on the front line with members and customers, you can be a huge help to the maintenance staff. But are you? Are you backing us up when we announce a frost delay? Or rope off parts of the course that have been abused by bad cart drivers? Please don’t tell Mrs. Havercamp that, “If it were up to me, I’d let you drive on the fairways, but Tim is insisting ...” Do I give your students conflicting swing advice?

Explain that the maintenance crew has the best interests of the course — and all golfers — at heart. We are not singling out one person for parking on the edge of the green. Invoke the Golden Rule if you have to. But never make exceptions. Ever.

Our rules apply to everyone.

### LOW-HANDICAPPER

I hate to break it to you, but you’re not as good as you think you are. If you want to play in the U.S. Open, go ahead and try

to qualify. If you do, I’ll applaud and give you my respect.

But you’re not playing in the Open when you’re playing on our golf course. Stop being selfish, look around and realize you’re not the only one out there. No one else wants the ridiculous green speeds, excessive yardages and maniacal hole placements you keep asking for. Most of the other members/golfers are average (if that) players. If we went even halfway to the conditions you’re asking for, rounds would take five or six hours, which is fun for no one. And in case you haven’t noticed, the game today is about fun.

The conditions you’re asking for are expensive, not only in money but in our time and resources. I don’t think you’re going to find many other members willing to pay more for a harder golf course.

### ARCHITECT

Are you designing the golf course for the players or for your ego? I’m not questioning your brilliance, but I sometimes wonder if you’ve considered what it takes to maintain some of the features you put in the course. Steep slopes and morning dew don’t get along. Ragged, choppy “natural edges” around deep bunkers take time to edge, especially when it’s 95 degrees. The equipment we use is heavy and takes deft handling. All I’m asking is that you talk with the superintendent before you commit to the final design.

Because if your brilliant design incorporates too many features that are too hard or too costly to maintain, we’ll just get rid of them. Yeah, we can do that. Easily. **GC**



**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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# Quietly better over time

By **Guy Cipriano**

Concord Country Club meshes brilliantly with historic surroundings thanks to loyalty and constant improvement.

**P**eter J. Rappoccio moved the Concord Country Club golf course maintenance team into a new grounds management center in 2012. A decade later, on busy Fridays, 21 pieces of equipment are staged around the complex, waiting for workers to

mow, cut and roll venerable turf for a 127-year-old club serving as a generational social and recreational hub for a community incorporated in 1635.

Framed course imagery, routings and articles adorn walls of the grounds management offices and break-room. The offices are connected to an equipment garage featuring high ceilings, abundant lighting and enough

© TOP: JAMES TYLER  
RIGHT: GUY CIPRIANO



outlets to handle the dozens of cords and chargers likely required to power turf maintenance equipment when Concord, Massachusetts, celebrates its 400th birthday. In Concord, Massachusetts, 13 years isn't *that far* into the future.

The adjacent environmental management center allows trained employees to mix plant protectants in a self-contained structure and wash equipment with recycled water. Combined, the grounds and environmental management centers provide 20,000 square feet of modern space to ensure Rappoccio's team possesses modern tools to enhance venerable golf ground.

Everything seems to endure in Concord, where the first shots of the Revolutionary War were fired, where Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthorne produced literature still widely read today, and where Donald Ross designed a pair of nines for Concord Country Club in different decades.

Rappoccio has an uncanny ability to remember dates. He first walked the land he has spent 12 years maintaining on Jan. 29, 2010. Eight inches of snow blanketed turf, but Rappoccio, a second-generation superintendent raised in a house along Silver Spring (Connecticut) Country Club, where his father, Peter R. Rappoccio, worked for 39 years, marched Concord Country Club's 18 holes anyway. Everything about the club enthralled the younger Rappoccio.

"It's a great Ross golf course," he says. "It's a great place to work. You can play it every day and find something different on it and enjoy it every day. I don't think you can ever get bored of it."

Rappoccio was just 30 when Concord Country Club hired him to become its sixth superintendent since 1914, the year play commenced on the current site. "We hired a baby," club historian and green committee member Dr. Wil-

liam Healy affectionately says, "but we hired a brilliant baby." Rappoccio started caddying at Silver Spring before he turned 10 and informally joined his father's team before he turned 12. His *résumé* includes stints at classic clubs designed by celebrated architects: Westchester Country Club (Walter Travis), Oakland Hills Country Club (Ross), Winged Foot Golf Club (A.W. Tillinghast), Woodway Country Club (Willie Park Jr.) and Silver Spring (Robert White). "I got to watch my dad growing up," Rappoccio says, "and that's all I ever wanted to be, was him."

Philosophies ingrained from a

lifetime in turfgrass maintenance and Rappoccio's zest for Concord Country Club are revealed during a late-March, tee-to-green walking tour of the course. Toro Reelmaster 5410-D mowers are deftly maneuvering through severe and subtle fairway contours, giving a durable blend of *Poa annua*, bentgrass, fescue, ryegrass and bluegrass their first 2022 trimming. Even the turfgrasses in Concord are old.

"We try to promote our best species as much as we can," Rappoccio says. "Lower nitrogen, less water and those type of things help. But along the way, you have 100-year-old



Concord Country Club superintendent Peter J. Rappoccio, middle, with assistant superintendents Jake Donahue, left, and Derek O'Dea. David Miethe (not pictured) is also part of Rappoccio's management team.



grasses that might not like some of the things you do to it. Sometimes you have to communicate, 'Hey, this grass doesn't look so great this time of the year, but you get the better stuff taking over.' That's all part of the education process."

Since arriving at Concord Country Club, Rappoccio has guided a significant expansion of short-grass areas, returning elements of Ross's original design. Fairways have gone from 24 to 28 acres, greens and approaches from 4 to 5.9 acres and tees from two to four acres. Instead of regrassing, Rappoccio's team has expanded the turfgrass nursery to the left of the par-5 17th hole from 2,000 to 15,000 square feet and growing conditions resemble those on the course, although Concord Country Club can be tricky to manage uniformly because soil types range from thick white clay to sand and gravel.

The club purchased the 180-acre site and farm buildings from local agriculturist John Brown in 1913, the same year Francis Ouimet sparked mainstream American golf interest by defeating British stars Harry Vardon and Ted Ray to win the U.S. Open at The Country Club in nearby Brookline. Concord Country Club hired Ross to design nine holes around a barn serving as the clubhouse and the course opened for play on July 4, 1914. The original holes are today's Nos. 1, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17 and 18. They play through gently rolling land.

Ross designed the second nine holes on more severe terrain in the late 1920s. The 18-hole course opened in 1930. Concord Country Club is one of 44 existing Ross-designed courses in Massachusetts. Ross settled in Oakley, 15 miles southeast of Concord, upon arriving to America from Dornoch, Scotland, in 1899. "His courses in Massachusetts have endured," Healy says. "Massachusetts golfers really do know who Ross is. We don't own him, but he started here. This is where he came. He's Oakley's gift

# It's OK to look

Concord Country Club superintendent Peter J. Rappoccio has absorbed thousands of lessons from his father, longtime Silver Spring (Connecticut) Country Club superintendent Peter R. Rappoccio — including the value of continual improvement.

"One thing my father always taught me as a superintendent and one thing I always remembered is that you need to be better tomorrow than you are today, you need to be better next week than you were this week, you need to be better next month than this month and better next year than this year," says the younger Rappoccio, who still receives tournament volunteer support from his father. "If you have that mentality every day, you're going to be successful."

Every winter Rappoccio and his management team evaluate all aspects of the operation and use a zero-based budgeting approach to planning for the new year. That evaluation includes exploring ways to integrate new products and technologies into maintenance practices. Quality relationships with distributors and suppliers such as New England-based Toro distributor Turf Products are regular parts of Rappoccio's operational studies, and he encourages companies to bring new products to him.

"We are always looking at things and bouncing ideas around," he says. "Turf Products has always been good, because they are always asking, 'Do you want to see this? Do you want to see that? Let me show you something.' That's neat because they are opening the door to show you different stuff you might not be thinking about."

to American golf."

The club draws members from four communities—Concord, Acton, Carlisle and Lincoln—and a familial atmosphere permeates the grounds. Third-generation members are common, and the club's BYOB policy represents an anomaly in the golf business. Asked why the club has lasted 127 years, Rappoccio says, "It's the people, it's the members. Members romanticize about this place in a very positive way. They came here as kids, they bring their kids here and hopefully their grandkids come here. They have kept the culture tight-knit. I can't imagine it ever changing. This is one of those unique places that will be around forever."

Only one of Concord Country Club's six superintendents had a tenure that lasted less than a decade. Two of Rappoccio's predecessors, Edwin Hansen and Nary Sperandio, served the club for nearly 70 years between them. When the 18-hole course opened in the fall of 1930, the club presented Hansen and his sons

with \$50 bonuses for their efforts in helping complete the new holes. The club employs numerous managers whose tenures have exceeded a decade. Equipment manager Pat Flannery is in his 32nd year. David Mieth, Jake Donahue and Derek O'Dea form a trio of talented assistant superintendents.

Concord Country Club has become busier the past two years, with play increasing by more than 30 percent since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rappoccio strives to create a maintenance program where employees and equipment are seen and heard as infrequently as possible. The greens are a *Poa annua*/bentgrass mix and require constant attention during the summer. To help the assistant superintendents meander play, the club acquired a trio of Toro GTX Lithium utility vehicles. Released in 2021, the vehicles include the same features and durability as the Toro GTX and operate via a lithium-ion battery. The idea for examining new utility vehicles originated





such as Concord Country Club protect resources on its own and surrounding land. “Autonomous mowing, GPS spraying ... those are things now that we are going to have to look at. If you have noise on a golf course, electric is great. You’re trying to do work ahead of play, it’s quiet, there’s no emis-

when New England-based Turf Products offered Rappoccio the opportunity for a demonstration during the 2020 New England Golf Association Amateur Championship at Concord Country Club.

“We got busier with COVID,” Rappoccio says. “We were packed out there and the guys trying to get around with gas-powered vehicles became a disaster. It was noisy and members could hear them bouncing around. Talking to Turf Products, we asked, ‘What do you have for electric vehicles?’ and they mentioned the GTX Lithium. We demoed them for the New England Amateur. Our guys loved it. It was quiet and we were able to water during the event. We knew we wanted to get a few, so we bought three and the assistants use them.

“They are out and about every day. They hold a charge all day long, they are quiet, they can sneak in and out of play, especially in the afternoons if they are watering or going around during a tournament. They aren’t disturbing anybody. They are good, solid vehicles and I think we will definitely incorporate more electric and battery-powered equipment into our fleet and operation moving forward.”

Protecting club and surrounding land factors into Rappoccio’s decisions: The Town of Concord enact-

ed a ban on single-use plastic water bottle sales in 2013, electric cars traverse roads and neighborhoods bordering the club, and trails, greenspace, historic sites and waterways dot the community’s 25.9 square miles. A conservation area borders Concord Country Club’s fifth hole.

The Jennie Duggan Brook flows through the middle of the course, adding strategy and serenity to multiple holes, including the par 5 first and 17th holes. The brook deposits into the Sudbury River, which connects with the Assabet and Concord Rivers near North Bridge, scene of the first Revolutionary War battle. The Concord River meets the Merrimack River. The Merrimack River flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

Concord Country Club participates in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf. Bird boxes and bat houses are subtle parts of the landscape. Water quality checks are performed annually. “And the water is cleaner when it leaves the property versus when it comes onto the property,” Rappoccio says. The club obtains water via a pair of wells, and it’s currently constructing a new pumphouse and pond to expand its stormwater-holding capacities.

Emerging equipment, Rappoccio adds, will further help a course

sions. If you can do your little part here or there, it’s going to help moving forward, especially in this industry.”

An entity doesn’t last as long as Concord Country Club without being proactive and innovative. The club regularly executes elements of an Andrew Green-devised master plan and as Rappoccio scans the construction around the pumphouse and pond behind the 16th green and 17th tee, he uses an analogy to describe managing a department at a club that understands that reinvestment yields longevity. “Every year we’re doing something,” he says. “It’s fun doing projects. It’s hard to get thrown out of the loop when you’re in the center of it.”

Rappoccio then begins walking the 17th hole as the pair of Toro Reelmaster 5410-Ds mow the 16th and 17th fairways. The brook intersects the hole and Rappoccio unveils his phone to show the flooding his team encountered on this spot multiple times in the summer of 2021. Each time, Rappoccio’s team swiftly returned the course to a playable condition. Each time, he learned something more about the land, people and history that make his workplace special.

“I hope it stays just like it is 100 years from now,” he says. **GCI**





# Turfvention

**T**he basic plot arc: someone has a promising idea, develops it, takes the product to market, makes mistakes, has some success (hopefully!) and the business grows. It's an emotional — and exciting — adventure. Even though the plot points are similar, every journey to market is unique.

For **Rodney Hine**, president of HineCraft LLC and superintendent at Boston Golf Club in Hingham, Massachusetts, his invention of TurfTrainer was one of necessity. Hine was trying to reduce grain on greens and he wanted a better alternative to grooming and the current brushes. Hine began prototyping a brush that would satisfy all of his requirements and TurfTrainer was born. Hine started trying it on a few greens and the product was working. "If the turf is handling summer stress reasonably, then I have every confidence to brush with it," he says. "Seeing good results, I had a

greens chairman who encouraged me to patent it."

**Jeff Stahman**, who owns Turf-Mend with his wife, **Amy**, also developed a product out of necessity. When Stahman shared his turf repair blend with a struggling superintendent, he was encouraged to think about selling it. "I worked in the industry for a long time," he says. "You take what you feel is the best from everyone and make it your own. I created a blend that





on...

# it's a family thing

**Bringing an idea from the course to the market takes support from loved ones and an entrepreneurial spirit.**

**By Lee Carr**

is effective and now the goal is to have it available for field managers, homeowners, landscape companies, superintendents, whoever. We want our blends to save people time and money."

Working at Skagit Golf & Country Club in Burlington, Washington, **Rob Roberts** was inspired by challenges he faced while spraying. There wasn't an easy way to keep the cups clean. Roberts started using old CDs to cover the cup and

pieces of tape to make a tab in the middle to lift the CD. "But the tape would come off, the CDs would break and you still had to touch it," he says. "Then I wanted something to grab the tab, like a garbage picker. Thankfully, the idea evolved to using a metal tab on a circular cup cover that you could lift up and replace with a magnetic wand." It took more than five years but the present design for Spray Caddie was finalized. "We tested it on our course and it

worked great," Roberts says. "Now, we'd be lost without it."

Hine, Stahman and Roberts share common characteristics: a background in turf, desire to improve turf maintenance and they genuinely want to help others. They also have supportive spouses who have been part of their journey since the start.

Hine's wife, **Caroline**, helps with strategy, administration and more. "Caroline is fantastic not only as my life partner but as a business part-



ner,” Hine says. “Sometimes she is risk-averse where I might push and the balance between us creates very solid collaboration for ideas about how to move forward.”

Accounting, graphic design work and maintaining the website are part of what Amy, Stahman’s wife, does for TurfMend. When Stahman started working on TurfMend, they both acknowledged that profitability wasn’t as critical as finding something that Stahman was really interested in working on. “The moment I started this, I became happier, I was focused,” he says. “Amy works full-time and having support from her made this successful. I’m very lucky.”

Stacie, Roberts’s wife, has been a marketing consultant in the golf industry for nearly 30 years and it has been meaningful for them to have this success together. “When I felt the product was ready, she and I filed for the provisional patent,” Roberts says. “Stacie and her team developed the logo and website, we shot a video and the product has had a great launch.”

**AFTER MAKING IT** through the product launch, the natural next step is to grow the business through volume or product lines—or both. Being a mat attached to the front bucket of your existing equipment, the big benefits of TurfTrainer are that it effective-

ly brushes turf without impeding the sightline of the operator, is easy to store, quick to engage and works on all types of turf. The product is American-made with a core corporate value to keep costs low.

“We wanted it to be available for as many budgets as possible,” Hine says. “We feel that strongly about how helpful it is.” TurfTrainer takes orders across the United States, and from the United Kingdom and Australia. They are also helping their community, with the product being partially assembled by a local ARC.

Two surprising benefits to Hine’s journey have been his own social growth and how much his children have learned. It’s easy to be an introvert in this business and concentrate only on work. “TurfTrainer has empowered me to be more interactive with my colleagues,” he says. “That is such a joy and has been a great reward.” His kids helped determine the company’s core values but also learned how to speak with older people, communicate clearly and work hard even when you’re really tired, like in the closing hours of trade shows.

Most significantly, they have witnessed that taking risks is part of life. “Fear of failure is preventing some young people from even trying,” Hine says. “It made me aware

that as a leader, as a mentor, as a superintendent and as a father. It’s important to show that mistakes are a great opportunity to learn and grow. Mistakes let you refine your work, more so than success. That’s important for all people to realize.”

Stahman acknowledges the journey can be emotional and mistakes are part of it. Some days things are great; others it seems like everything is wrong. From the beginning, Barenbrug has been there for Stahman and TurfMend, helping them navigate seed laws and labelling while they handle the blending. At a critical point in TurfMend’s development, Stahman received some calls that the seed wasn’t germinating. They had chosen product bags that didn’t have enough breathing holes, affecting the viability of the seed. Barenbrug helped them get back on track.

Barenbrug U.S.A. president and CEO James Schneider reminded Stahman that if you’re not making mistakes, you’re not learning. Considering everything that was already bagged and sold, it was a big product loss and TurfMend could have folded. Instead, Barenbrug helped shoulder the loss and encouraged Stahman to see how the setback could become an opportunity to bounce back better. After their first year working together, Schneider also spent time with Amy and Jeff, sharing advice and talking about the business.

## Intellectual property

A new song, a new joke, a new way of doing something and a new product are all examples of intellectual property. Intellectual property is basically something born in someone’s brain. There are many kinds of intellectual property, including patents, trademarks, copyrights and trade secrets. They can all be complicated. Briefly described, patents give the owner the right to exclude others from making, using or selling an invention. Trademarks are phrases or symbols associated with a particular company or individual. Copyrights give the owner the right to publish or distribute works that are literary, artistic, musical and more. Trade secrets (not just for spy movies) are unique designs, manufacturing elements and processes that an individual or company may use for their work. This is a basic overview, but if you have an idea that you feel falls into these categories, don’t be shy about protecting it. Different countries have different ways of governing intellectual property so expand your research if your idea includes international dealings.

► Created by Jeff Stahman, TurfMend is a blend to help with divot recovery.

▼ Rob Roberts is the inventor of Spray Caddie, a solution to help keep cups clean while spraying.





"Barenbrug has allowed me to focus on growing the business," Stahman says. "I know they are going to blend it accurately, bag it and ship it where it needs to go. Having that support has allowed us to grow much quicker." With some seed coming from abroad, TurfMend is almost 100 percent produced in the United States.

Another friend who helped is **John Perry**, who suggested Stahman change his slogan and add a bear to the logo (to repair the bare!). Stahman also helped a small business with a task and, in turn, one of their associates helped him with search engine optimization. Stahman works with many small, family-owned businesses. "So many people have helped us," he says, "and I can help other small businesses. It's critical. I absolutely do it."

**ROBERTS UNDERSTANDS THE** power of helping one another. Spray Caddie's launch was boosted by **Steve Link**, a former boss

of Roberts, who posted a video of himself using the product on Twitter. In 48 hours, it had 9,000 views, sales picked up and they were shipping Spray Caddie starter kits two days later. Stacie was working the booth at

the recent GCSAA Conference and Trade Show show in San Diego for Tahoma 31 Bermudagrass, and her client, **Chad Adcock**, vice president of business development for Sod Production Services, which licenses the



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**"I'd second-guess it sometimes, but every time I went out and used it, those doubts were immediately gone. When I started getting feedback from other superintendents and they were loving it, I knew it was the right thing to do."**

— **ROB ROBERTS**



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## The patent process

It takes about 10 minutes on [www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov) to see how fascinating the patent process is. "You cannot get a patent if your invention has already been publicly disclosed," is the first statement that jumps out, so think carefully about who you are sharing your good idea with and if you have ever shared it anywhere else. The patent process can be expensive and time consuming but it's important. There is a Patent Pro Bono Program in addition to "legal assistance resources and programs for independent inventors, entrepreneurs and small businesses." The site lists eight steps for attaining a patent:

- Determine the type of intellectual property protection that you need
- Determine if your invention is patentable
- What kind of patent do you need?
- Get ready to apply
- Prepare and submit your initial application
- Work with your examiner
- Receive your approval
- Maintain your patent

It is possible to attain a patent in six to 12 months, but the entire process usually takes about two years.

grass, offered Rob space in the booth to demo Spay Caddie. The timing, less than two months after the Spray Caddie website launched, offered tremendous exposure and led to sales around the country.

"I'd second-guess it sometimes, but every time I went out and used it, those doubts were immediately gone" Roberts says. "When I started getting feedback from other superintendents and they were loving it, I knew it was the right thing to do."

"My biggest joy in developing Spray Caddie has been the process of figuring out my materials and perfecting the design, testing it, and developing it from an idea into a real product. To see it come to fruition, that's really cool. I am looking forward to getting Spray Caddie in the

hands of more superintendents to make spray applications easier, safer and cleaner."

Commercially, the most significant thing these inventors have in common is that they have moved from a single idea into developing businesses. They all have ideas they are working on to further engage with and improve the turf maintenance industry. Those ideas are top secret for now, but they will surely complement what TurfTrainer, TurfMend and Spray Caddie are already offering. These families are working hard, succeeding, making friends and enjoying a journey that continues. **GCi**

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



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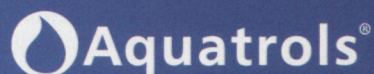


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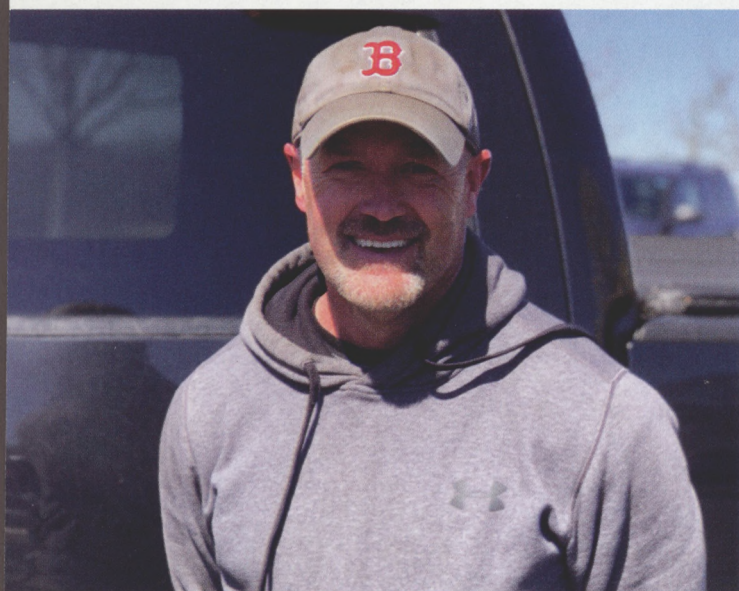
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## MORE RESPECT FOR MUNICIPAL SUPERS

**I** played golf twice during a mid-April week at my local municipal course, once to say goodbye to our longtime superintendent, the next to welcome his replacement.

**Mark Mansur** had tended the fairways of municipally owned Wintonbury Hills Golf Course here in Bloomfield, Connecticut, a **Pete Dye-Tim Liddy** design that opened in 2004. Mansur arrived in 2006 and did not miss a beat. Technically, he was an employee of the management firm the town hired to run the place, Indigo Sports, the public golf arm of Troon Golf and the successor to Billy Casper Golf Management, the company we hired two decades ago.

If that seems complicated, it's nothing compared to the way Mansur and the whole team at Wintonbury also were held accountable by the town's golf committee (of which I am a member) and the Town Council as a whole. Part of my volunteer job was to run interference for Indigo to do its job. It was in this capacity, more than as just an occasional golfer at the course, that I would occasionally stop.

It is not easy running a nationally ranked municipal facility with a maintenance budget under \$600,000. A succession of prominent consultants in agronomy, wetlands and irrigation helped along the way. But the real reason a visitor will find very little *Poa annua* out there and why the greens had a reputation equal to, if not better than, most of the private clubs in the area that cost two or three

times more annually to play, is because of the daily dedication of Mansur and his small team.

Among other things, it meant his doing much of the daily morning setup himself. He liked to say it helped him know the ground better than if he or an assistant relied on the latest technology in measuring devices. Frankly, I do not know how he managed it all. And it's only in the last few weeks that I fully understood how much time he devoted to making sure conditions were right and that a client base that drew from as far as New York and Boston was satisfied.

For 16 years, we had someone showing up daily who threw himself into the job and regularly turned out fine playing conditions. It was easy to forget how physically and emotionally taxing such a job is. Mansur and his peers in the municipal sector do not get the credit or the respect they deserve. That becomes obvious during job searches at private clubs, when those running the search regularly look askance at those in the public sector and prefer to favor those superintendents whose career breeding has been through the ranks of more elite private clubs or under the tutelage of one of the industry's legendary sages. It must be frustrating to have to apply for more prestigious positions and face the subtle bias of such views.

In Mansur's case, he opted for a private club with lots of lawn sports and grass fields but without a golf course. It's a much better job in lots of ways and nobody in town seems to have begrudged his decision to leave.

Credit to Indigo Golf for put-

ting together a full national search on short notice. The 30 or so applicants were quickly narrowed down to a handful. Site visits and interviews followed. Within a few weeks, the announcement was made of Wintonbury's selection of a new superintendent, **Dennis Petruzelli**, CGCS. He's a seasoned veteran of the New York/Connecticut golf scene and just so happens to love fiddling with irrigation systems. Good thing, because Wintonbury will need it.

On his first day on the job, the temperature hovered around 60 degrees but felt much colder due to winds of 20 to 25 mph. Petruzelli was all huddled up in cold-season gear. He was checking things out on his own after bird-dogging Mansur during his final days on site.

I tried focusing on my golf game but could not, noticing all sorts of things. The plethora of remnant divots in the fairway. Irrigation heads with broken or missing plastic caps. How, if we just altered the fairway-mowing pattern on a par 3, we could make ground-game access so much easier. A foursome with three carts. A blue flag (reserved for the back of the green) placed suspiciously close to the middle of the putting surface.

I kept quiet about all of this as I said hello to our new superintendent and simply wished him good luck. He's got his hands full and does not need to listen to my list. My job now is to keep running interference where I can. And also to spread the word industrywide that municipal superintendents work a lot harder than most people know about. **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).



# CUTTING BACK

A SOUTH FLORIDA CLUB RINGED IN ORNAMENTALS DISCOVERED A NEW PGR SOLUTION THAT BOTH SAVES TIME AND IMPROVES AESTHETICS.

By **Matt LaWell**



**A**fter almost three full decades at High Ridge Country Club, Mike Shafer knows every step of the ornamentals drill. Spray. Trim. Spray. Trim. Spray. Trim. Maybe spray again. Definitely trim some more. Carve out whole days — plural — to deal with beautiful, flowering plants around every turn.

"There are no houses on the property and there are probably three times more ornamentals here than on most golf courses," says Shafer, the superintendent at the Boynton Beach, Florida 18-hole. "I have a lot of firebush, jasmine, Panama rose, things like that that we're just all the time trimming. I go in and I cut everything back pretty hard in July, right at the beginning of summer, then as they start coming back I trim them where I want them, usually around July or August, then I'll spray them again."

Two summers ago, though, Shafer introduced SePRO Cutless Quickstop to his ornamental maintenance schedule and ... there was far less ornamental maintenance to schedule. He started spraying just Panama rose and Ligustrum, then expanded last year to jasmine and firebush. "And when I say

I'm spraying these things, I have big areas of them," Shafer says. "It's not just two or three plants here and there. It's all hedges around my 18th tee box."

"The firebush, I had to go back once or twice, I had a couple little spots where either we missed or it just outgrew it or it's a different variety, just a little three-, four-inch piece of the plant outgrowing everything else. We nipped it up in five minutes and it looks like we just trimmed the whole thing. I sprayed the Panama rose two years in a row, six ounces both times, and that gets me through almost nine, 10 months until I really go back and cut them back hard. I haven't been back to them since."

Where Shafer and his assistant superintendent, Paul Lowe, used to block out about 12 hours every month to spray all the ornamentals around the 100-plus-acre property — the 15th and 18th tees alone used to take two full days to spray and trim — they now schedule that same number about every seven to eight months.

"It gives us time," Shafer says. "I have guys all day long filling in divots in fairways, touching up pine straw, touching up mulch, trimming some of the other stuff farther back that we don't have time to get to all the time.

If you have guys doing those things, you don't have time for that."

Count Lowe among the product's fans, too. Now in his 13th year in the industry — and just starting his second at High Ridge after a run at PGA National Members Club that focused more on tournament agronomy — Lowe dived into ornamental PGRs last season.

"There's vegetation everywhere and it's a trimming and maintenance nightmare as far as keeping up with it," Lowe says. "The more we can experiment with it and use it on different species, it's going to be very beneficial to us."

Lowe also noted that in addition to helping the plant keep its shape, Cutless Quickstop "definitely promotes leaf growth and flowering. When we had initially done the firebush, they were cut back pretty hard and it really flushed them out — pretty quickly, too. From an aesthetic standpoint, it helps out quite a bit." He opts for a fan nozzle attached to a standard

15-gallon tank for applications and "didn't notice any issues where we had heavier or lighter rates."

After the success of the 2021 season, when the aforementioned firebush, jasmine and Panama rose were all controlled, Shafer and Lowe have approached the 2022 season with an open mind. The course never closes but play slows down significantly from Memorial Day until about the first week of October. While most golfers are elsewhere, "We're going to try it on the bougainvillea, because I've heard of good results, we'll do the Ligustrum, some Ruellia, there are some ferns out there I want to try," Shafer says. "We're not scared to try, and we can do it in the summer, when there's no harm done because there's no one here."

"I'm just still trying to see what else I can do with it. You name it, I got it, and everything I've used it on so far, I'm very happy with it. For the price of the product, it saves me tenfold on how much we spend trimming." ■

## NUMBER CRUNCHER



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# FIRST TO FOUR

**Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club** prepares to host a milestone event while facing the familiar industry challenge of handling more play with fewer bodies.

By **Rick Woelfel**

A good case could be made that the Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club is the ultimate setting for the United States Women's Open Championship. Located in Southern Pines, North Carolina, the club occupies an extraordinary position in women's golf history.

Since 1953, the property has been owned by the Bell family, whose matriarch, World Golf Hall of Famer **Peggy Kirk Bell**, had a career in golf as a player, instructor and advocate for the game that lasted more than 60 years before her death in 2016 at age 95.

The golf course is a **Donald Ross** design that dates back to 1927. Updates were made by **John Fought** in 2004 and **Kyle Franz** in 2016.

Pine Needles has hosted

three Women's Opens in the past and will soon become the first club to host a fourth. The 77th edition of the championship will be contested June 2-5.

For **David Fruchte**, preparing for a major event is all in a day's work. Fruchte's title is director of golf course maintenance and grounds. He's been at Pine Needles since March 1992 and has no desire to go elsewhere. He also oversees two other golf courses: Mid Pines and Southern Pines. Fruchte, who received his education at Purdue, claims the job fits his personality.

"All three golf courses are family owned," he says. "The Bell family and one other investor own all three properties. The main thing is, I answer to the family, so I don't have a new greens chairman every two or three





years. I don't have committees on my back or anything like that. So, the pressure put on me is pretty much internal for the most part. I definitely need to do my job to make sure the golf course is right for the guests coming in, but this has worked out to a really good fit for me."

Like his peers, Fruchte has seen his job description evolve through the years, notably in the area of equipment technology.

"The biggest thing would be moisture meters," he says. "Before, we'd stick a knife into the turf and figure out how much moisture we had with a knife. Now, you stick a moisture meter in the ground. It gives you a good reading of what your moisture is and you irrigate to that moisture where you need to."

Noting that golfers' expectations have increased over the years, Fruchte adds that today's equipment allows crews to do more. "The mowing equipment has gotten a lot better. Nowadays, you can mow with a triplex and get just

as good a cut as you can with a walk mower."

Pine Needles is one of the busiest high-end golf destinations in America, hosting approximately 40,000 rounds per year. The tee sheet is full most of the year.

"When I first started here, we had two seasons: spring and fall,"

Fruchte says. "We didn't have much of a summer and didn't have much of a winter, as far as play. But now that has changed dramatically. We're pretty much busy 10 months out of the year."

Pine Needles was awarded its fourth Women's Open in 2018. Serious preparations for the championship began two years ago. Fruchte was on hand for the club's three previous Women's Opens in 1996, 2001 and 2007, as well as three other USGA women's championship, most recently the U.S. Senior Women's Open in 2019. He's no stranger to hosting big events. But in the course of preparing for this year's championship, he's found himself doing some things differently.

"Two years out, we stopped overseeding with ryegrass," he says. "In years past, we've always had overseeded ryegrass on our fairways and tees, (but) knowing that the Women's Open was going to be in late May or June, it was best to be playing on Ber-

► David Fruchte has worked at Southern Pines for more than 30 years and has no desire to move elsewhere.



© CHRIS KEANE/USGA (38-39)  
BETSEY MITCHELL (LEFT)





mudagrass versus ryegrass.”

Fruchte notes much of the rough has been eliminated. As a result, the golf course will look somewhat different than it has for past USGA championships.

“In previous Women’s Opens, we’ve always had a thick rough,” he says. “Fairways 30 yards wide and rough on either side. Now, we’ve gone to more fairways with native areas on the sides, so we have very little rough. The only rough we have is in places to help hold the soil down.”

**Chris Mintmier** is the superintendent in charge of the golf course at Pine Needles. A graduate of NC State University, he started working at Mid Pines in 2012 and moved to Pine Needles two years later. He’s been the superintendent there since 2019.

Mintmier says the biggest agronomic issue he’s dealing with is getting Bermudagrass greens up to championship speeds. Because of the volume of play at the club and the necessity of keeping play moving, daily green speeds at Pine Needles are normally around 10 on the Stimpmeter. Speeds will be amplified for the U.S. Women’s Open.

“Green speeds will be much faster

than we typically have them,” Mintmier says. “That’s probably going to be the biggest difference. I think they’ve got us lowering the fairway height a little bit, not anything crazy but around greens, tees and stuff.”

Arguably the most significant issue impacting Fruchte’s and Mintmier’s preparations relates to labor or, more accurately, a lack of labor. As of this writing, Fruchte has fewer than 40 people to maintain three golf courses. Mintmier’s crew at Pine Needles numbers just 11, including himself.

“We used to have 28 guys on staff at (Pine Needles),” Mintmier says. “We used to have three assistants

and a super, and now we have myself and an assistant and other guys. That’s it.”

Having a smaller crew means setting priorities and some detail work must be set aside. “We can take care of mowing greens and raking bunkers, and all the main stuff,” Mintmier says, “but it’s all the detail stuff. Picking up pinecones and weeding cart-path edges, all the little stuff that, frankly, golfers probably don’t even realize, but it’s all the little stuff that is just hard to do if you don’t have bodies to do it.”

Mintmier notes the volume of play makes completing routine maintenance tasks more difficult.

“It’s just really hard for us, because it takes all of us to get the place ready in the morning and trying to do to stuff in the afternoon with the amount of play we have,” he adds. “It feels pointless at times, just because there is so much golf out there (120 to 130 rounds per day is not uncommon). It’s unreal the amount of golf that goes through this place.”

Fruchte and his team will get support during championship week from their peers from other clubs in the region. Fruchte considers that to be one of the most satisfying aspects of hosting a major event.

“In the past, I’ve had past superintendents,” he says. “The last few years it’s been local superintendents and getting together with them and

◀ The combined crew for Pine Needles (pictured), Mid Pines and Southern Pines is less than 40 these days. That makes routine maintenance more difficult.

## NUMBERS TO KNOW

Previous USGA Women’s Championships at Pine Needles

- 2019** U.S. Senior Women’s Open
- 2007** U.S. Women’s Open
- 2001** U.S. Women’s Open
- 1996** U.S. Women’s Open
- 1991** U.S. Senior Women’s Amateur
- 1989** U.S. Girls’ Junior





their assistants and people on their crews."

In part because the crew is smaller than would normally be the case for a major championship, Pine Needles management is planning to close the golf course earlier than it might otherwise. "Which," Fruchte says, "is going to be very good for the golf course to heal over from all the play we've had. Getting all the divots filled back in and not having anybody slowing us down while we're doing the maintenance work. ... It's going to be huge with the crew I have now. We don't have that many people." **GCI**

*Rick Woelfel is a Philadelphia-based writer, host of the Wonderful Women of Golf podcast and frequent Golf Course*

## INSPIRATIONAL REMIX

For the second consecutive year, a corps of around 30 female turf professionals will be on hand to assist at the U.S. Women's Open championship. The group will be part of the crew at Pine Needles during championship week.

Many in the group are superintendents or assistants at other clubs. Roughly half of them volunteered at the 2021 Women's Open at the Olympic Club, including **Kayla Kipp**, who recently took a position as an equipment manager/technician at Nemacolin in Farmington, Pennsylvania, roughly 70 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. Prior to that, Kipp was the equipment manager at the Wisp Resort in western Maryland. She reflected on her experience at

the Olympic Club.

"The women that I have had the pleasure of meeting and becoming friends with through the last two years is encouraging and exciting," she says. "Club directors and event coordinators that are all in on the women we have been able to compile in this industry is a true testament to their character."

"(Olympic Club director of golf maintenance) **Troy Flanagan** and his team were welcoming, accommodating and enthusiastic, which poured over into all of us and the crew. Being at the historic Olympic Club had me in a consistent state of awe, especially at sunrise."

Kipp is looking forward to her first trip to Pine Needles. She knows the history of the property

but has never seen it. "Knowing that the renovations that have been made have kept the Ross design intact is very cool," she says. "I'm super excited to catch every sunrise in North Carolina and reunite with the gals again."

Being involved with America's most significant women's golf event inspires Kipp.

"The best way to describe what it is like for a woman like myself to be invited to assist at the Women's Open, it's phenomenal and extraordinary. It recharges the spirit, strengthens bonds and puts a pep back in your step as it is far from your normal everyday operation. Change is nice, but some things like Pine Needles are classic."

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## FANTASY CAMP FOR TURFGRASS MANAGERS

Adult fantasy camps run the gamut of genres. There are space camps, theater camps and baseball camps. There's even a zombie survival camp where you can learn how to effectively throw a knife, use a crossbow, practice first aid and employ Zombitsu to defeat evil. Don't ask me what Zombitsu is. If that's your thing, they got it for you.

My thing is anything to do with golf course management and turfgrass. Anyone who knows me understands how enthusiastic and dedicated I am to honing my craft and developing my agronomic skills. That's why I decided the next logical step in my turfgrass management career was to volunteer at a PGA Tour event. I was lucky enough to be selected to volunteer at the 2022 WGC-Dell Technologies Match Play at Austin (Texas) Country Club.

When you arrive at a fantasy camp, I must assume, you are in awe of what is about to happen. My experience at Austin Country Club was no different. Championship-level golf is completely different than your everyday golf course setup. Superintendent **Bobby Stringer** and his crew had Austin Country Club at a level of perfection I have never experienced.

There was no Zombitsu performed at my fantasy camp. Days were filled with cleaning green and tee surrounds, blowing leaves, and hand watering greens and fairways. This might not sound fun to everyone, but I loved every minute of it. Working alongside a well-oiled machine, like that of the Austin Country Club agronomy

department, was a privilege and an honor.

I could have just executed these jobs and been completely satisfied. But I received the opportunity to "go inside the ropes" on multiple occasions. I like to think that, in any situation, the more you apply yourself the more you will get from that situation. I try to live that philosophy every day and it always seems to pay off. This time it paid off in spades.

I participated in the PGA Tour Competition Agronomy data collection team led by **Thomas Bastis**. We took measurements twice a day, looking at firmness, moisture levels and Stimpmeter readings. The metrics are used to keep the greens consistent and at tournament quality. Having the ability to ask questions and see how data are collected for these events had a profound and instant effect on my turfgrass philosophy.

I also received the opportunity to help set the cups for the final pairing. What a thrill it was to know that the winner of that week's tournament — which happened to be eventual Masters champion **Scottie Scheffler** — would be putting to a cup that I help set. I was also asked to help keep greens cleared from the live oak leaves that fall in Texas during that time of year.

One day, another volunteer and I were stationed inside the ropes directly behind the 18th green. Depending on a player's approach shot, we were sometimes feet away from the action. We were asked to blow leaves off the green between

groups. Have you ever been cheered for blowing leaves? I have. It still gives me goosebumps thinking about it.

Your experience is only as good as those around you make it, and the Austin Country Club agronomy team provided an atmosphere conducive to learning and developing. Everyone went out of their way to be friendly, and I could see and feel a genuine sense of family within the crew. I was impressed by not only the course but by the staff and their willingness to go the extra mile.

If you are a turfhead, this fantasy camp has exactly what you are looking for. The relationships and connections established in a short amount of time represented the best part of the experience. I connected with turfgrass professionals on a previously unknown level. I collaborated with them in the heat of battle. There's no better learning experience.

The connections go far beyond work life. I got to know several people on a personal level. That's what this business is all about. We are in the people business. Having these connections to talk with — not just about turf but about things outside of turf — is a real game changer for me.

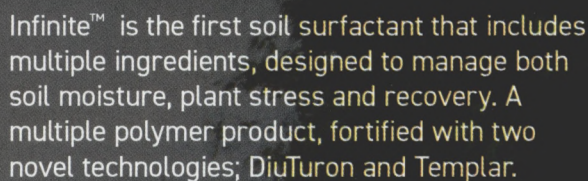
I have experienced a lot of firsts this past year. I published my first article, attended the first Green Start Academy hosted at Pinehurst Resort, got my first dog and volunteered at my first PGA Tour event. Turning fantasy into reality ... that's the dream. I'm living it every day. **GCI**



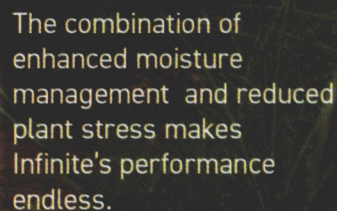
**CHAD ALLEN** is an assistant superintendent at The Club at Chatham Hills in Westfield, Indiana.



## A full-page photograph of a woman running outdoors, captured from a low-angle, rear perspective. She is wearing a white tank top and dark shorts. Her right leg is lifted high in mid-stride, and her left foot is on the ground. The background is a bright, hazy sky with a strong sun flare effect on the right side. The foreground shows some green grass and a dirt path.



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By **Guy Cipriano**

# NO LAND IS TOO SMALL

A New Jersey club found a way to build a desirable amenity on just two acres.

**T**he most meaningful golf shot **Chris Boyle** hit measured 100 yards. He used a wedge. He knocked it close.

For 25 years, Boyle has worked as superintendent at Mendham Golf and Tennis Club, a family-style, sports-centric, low-frills, high-quality northern New Jersey private club 45 miles from Manhattan. Whenever his tenure ends, Boyle will be remembered for helping bring compact golf to a region densely populated with private clubs harboring 18-holes-or-bust mentalities.

Boyle and his team annually provide solid conditions on an 18-hole **Alfred Tull** design with nine holes opened in 1961 and nine more unveiled in 1969. But perhaps Boyle's biggest contribution to the long-term vitality of the club involved collaborating with architect **Robert McNeil** on transforming two of Mendham Golf and Tennis Club's 162 acres into an amenity other land-restricted clubs now want to add. Because of his foresight and dedication, the club selected him to hit the first official shot on The Links at Mendham. Boyle's wife and children along with 80 members watched him hit a wedge to seven feet.

"I have had people say to me that when I leave here, this will be my legacy, having been involved with it and working with the architect to make a layout that works," Boyle says. "Our crew basically turned a grassy mound into golf. To me, that's very rewarding. The fact they asked me to hit







inhabited the site, and Boyle's team shifted and shaped the material into golf features and started growing turf the following year. Greens consist of a 60-40 sand-soil mix and they were seeded with bentgrass. Boyle encourages *Poa annua* because he wants putting surfaces to resemble what members experience on the regulation course. Heights of cut on all surfaces are the same as the regulation course.

The course requires less maintenance than had it been used as a practice facility, according to Boyle. "If it was a practice facility, I'd have to hire somebody on staff to maintain those two acres," he says. "Because it's utilized as a golf course, there aren't as many divots, there aren't as many ball marks, there aren't people tearing up the bunkers with all their bunker practice." Crews mow the three greens and surrounding turf surfaces and rake the two bunkers as they pass The Links on morning maintenance routes.

Proximity to the maintenance facility allows Boyle to study how the course is being used.

"That's the coolest thing I see up there," he says. "I see grandparents bringing their grandkids who are 4, 5, 6 years old. I see parents bringing their young kids, I see husbands bringing their wives who are not golfers, but they are out having a golf experience. I see 30- and 40-year-old guys warming up before a round on the regulation golf course. There are guys who play for drinks or \$1 with closest-to-the-

hole games. It's utilized by such a variety of people."

Neither Boyle nor McNeil had seen a similar course prior to The Links' opening. They now receive calls from, in Boyle's case, peers at clubs looking to add something similar and, in McNeil's case, prospective clients about what they achieved.

"It's kind of funny how it evolved," Boyle says. "It went from just a field, to a place to put soil, to a potential practice facility, to now a short course." **GCI**

the first shot and recognized the input our crew and I had on the course was humbling."

And a bit excruciating. "I was hoping that it wasn't going to be me that won the closest to the pin, because I didn't want to take that prize from somebody else," he jokes. "I was about as nervous as I have ever been hitting a golf ball."

Four years later, The Links represents the most laidback spot within the borders of a relaxed club. After a lukewarm reception — "It was a little quirky at first," Boyle says. "I think a lot of our members really didn't get it" — the course received a jolt when COVID-19 restrictions increased interest in golf and other forms of outdoor recreation. New Jersey officials closed golf courses on March 30, 2020. When facilities reopened May 2, 2020, play was limited to walking twosomes teeing off every 16 minutes. Foursomes were permitted to return a few weeks later.

"But we had this extra facility that we could utilize," Boyle says. "And it was booked solid that summer, because people were so limited. They couldn't get on the regular golf course and that was the best thing that ever happened to The Links. People that would have never thought about utilizing that facility were now up there regularly and it caught on."

The Links is not a typical six-, nine, 12- or 18-hole short course.

A maintenance facility expansion completed in 2015 left the club with two acres McNeil describes as a "dead zone," serving as a septic area for the nearby tennis complex. An initial proposal involved creating a practice facility designed under the premise that the interior of the land had to retain its septic purposes. McNeil and Boyle worked

on concepts using the perimeter for golf. Greens of 3,400, 3,800 and 4,800 square feet were designed on corners. "Once you have three greens, you can create three, six, nine, 12, 15, 18 holes," McNeil says. "Three greens big enough to house many pin placements and allowing enough angles of play was the premise."

The Links is available for members to book in one-hour blocks and only one group is permitted on the course at a time for safety reasons. Holes range from 46 to 110 yards. Teeing circles are adjacent to greens. One flag sits on each green and holes are played in different directions. Flags and teeing circles are color coded red, white and blue to ensure golfers are playing to proper locations.

"The intent was one group was going to be out there at a time," McNeil says. "It's their golf course for an hour. That gave us complete flexibility to play over greens, back and forth, and across. It really

didn't matter. As long as we had some unique distances, that would give us the variety that we wanted and the flexibility to use the golf course in a lot of different ways. It kind of creates the nine-hole layout in the end."

Boyle's team handled the bulk of the construction, squeezing in work between maintenance gaps on the regulation course. A contractor integrated irrigation into the concept in 2016. Excess soil from the maintenance facility project already

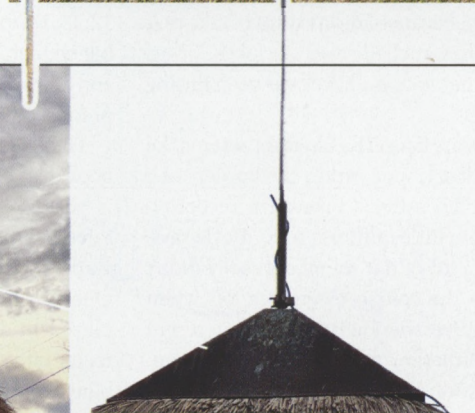
**"OUR CREW  
BASICALLY TURNED  
A GRASSY MOUND  
INTO GOLF. TO  
ME, THAT'S VERY  
REWARDING."  
— CHRIS BOYLE**



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.

## GOLF CART TRAFFIC CONTROL

Versatile golf cart control was built in house using pressure treated landscape timbers, each measuring 4 inches by 4 inches by 8 feet in length and cut into 2-foot lengths. A 5/8-inch diameter hole is drilled into the bottom 4 inches in length and a 10-inch-long piece of 1/2-inch-diameter rebar is pounded in with a sledgehammer for a secure fit. The top of each post has an angle-cut for aesthetic appeal. A 5/8-inch-diameter hole is also drilled near the top so that 1/4-inch-diameter cart control rope can be added as needed. The cart control posts are moved by the course setup person frequently enough, so the concentrated traffic does not cause any stress to the turf. Each 8-foot-long post cost about \$8 three years ago and it takes about 10 minutes labor to complete each post. **Anthony Spivey**, superintendent at the Marlboro Country Club in Bennettsville, South Carolina, conceived this really good, practical idea.



## RAIN SHELTER LIGHTNING PROTECTION

The Gibson Island (Maryland) Club protects rain shelters with lightning rods to keep members, guests and employees safe. What makes their lightning rods unique is they have attached a 1-iron golf club to the top, which is secured in place with a twisted conventional lightning rod; it took just a few minutes to attach them together. As **Lee Trevino** famously stated: "Only God could hit a 1-iron!" Island superintendent **William V. Reil** coordinated the installation and head golf professional **David Grossman** provided the 1-iron. **Lester George** is the club's restoration architect.



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



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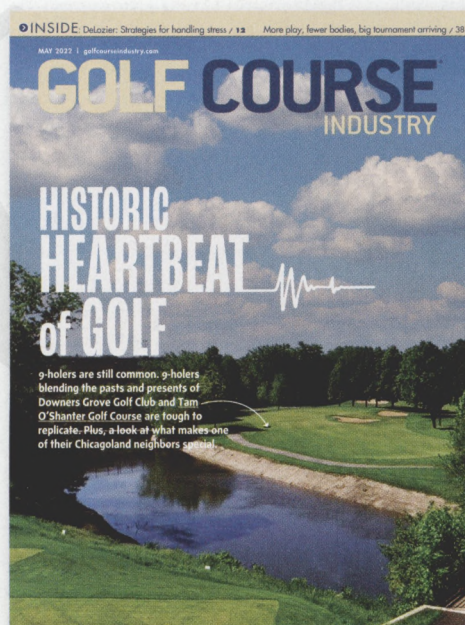
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## THE CASE FOR MONDAY

**O**ld Tom Morris once said, “Th’ coorse needs a rest, even if th’ gowfers dae nae.” Translation: the course needs a rest, even if the golfers do not. This is why the Old Course at St. Andrews is closed every Sunday, except when hosting The Open Championship like later this year.

Now, 150 years ago, Old Tom and **David Honeyman** were not taking advantage of this closed day to topdress greens, but that was mostly because of the Sabbath. Little did Old Tom know his insistence to give the course a day off from play would one day revolutionize modern golf course maintenance.

I know not everyone out there has the good fortune to have a dedicated maintenance day, but you should. Owners, general managers and green committee chairs ... I am pleading with you to give your agronomy teams that opportunity.

Golf course maintenance is difficult enough work without the added potential hazard of being struck by flying objects. If you can carve out one full day or even a partial day to allow your agronomy teams to perform important tasks that are most disruptive to play, you will be doing both your teams and regular golfers a huge favor.

Some might be wondering how it’s possible to take away a partial or entire day considering increased demand for play and course accessibility since the COVID-19 pandemic. But what if I told you that the amount of work that could be accomplished by your golf course superintendent and his or her staff during those dedicated maintenance hours would permit more folks to play their rounds the remainder of the week unencumbered by the sights and sounds of ongoing course maintenance?

Our Carolina Golf Club team has been blessed with Mainte-

nance Mondays except for holidays for nearly my entire 17-year tenure. When there’s a holiday, we get our maintenance day on Tuesday. Perhaps the golf course does not get a full day of “rest” like in Old Tom’s days. But the course definitely has a glow about it late in the afternoon after spending the day at the “spa.”

A typical maintenance day during the growing season results in the mowing of all our practice facilities. The 10 acres include both a primary and back range tee, 11 target greens, dedicated short game area, two practice bunkers, and a large landing zone maintained at both fairway and rough height. When finished, clippings are blown and divots patched with a sand/peat mixture.

If our practice facilities were not closed at least one day weekly, I don’t know how we would manage those maintenance needs around the facility’s high usage the other days of the week. Not to mention the time required to perform all those necessary practices that would take away from our ability to prepare the golf course in a timely fashion for regular play.

When the practice facility is completed, we move to the rest of the golf course. We mow tees, fairways, approaches and surrounds along with the rough on 10 or more holes. This means we can easily complete rough the following day and stay ahead of play. This also allows us to schedule a second mowing of rough before the week is complete. The second

mowing takes less time and interruption because the first mowing is always the thickest.

We have 81 sand bunkers on the property and each week slopes are fly mowed and clippings removed from the sand. We also trim the bunker edges when necessary. Fly mowing is the most laborious task required of us, and if we are not able to complete this necessary maintenance without interruption, the work can take up to three days whilst navigating course setup needs and golfers.

Our bentgrass putting greens do enjoy a break from heavy play and benefit from other cultural practices when necessary, such as solid-tine venting, light topdressing or wetting agent applications. Considering wetting agents require watering in, it’s way more efficient to do so without interrupting ongoing play.

Another added benefit to dedicated maintenance days is contract work. If you find yourself needing to bring in a tree service or other company to tackle something you cannot accomplish in house, it’s much easier to schedule and accomplish the needed work without having to dodge golfers.

With many golf course maintenance departments around the globe lacking sufficient staff numbers, dedicating a day to maintenance would be a huge boost, thus allowing those small teams to make an even bigger impact. For those of you slogging away seven days weekly, I tip my cap. And I pray your leaders read this and inquire about giving the golfers some rest. **GCI**

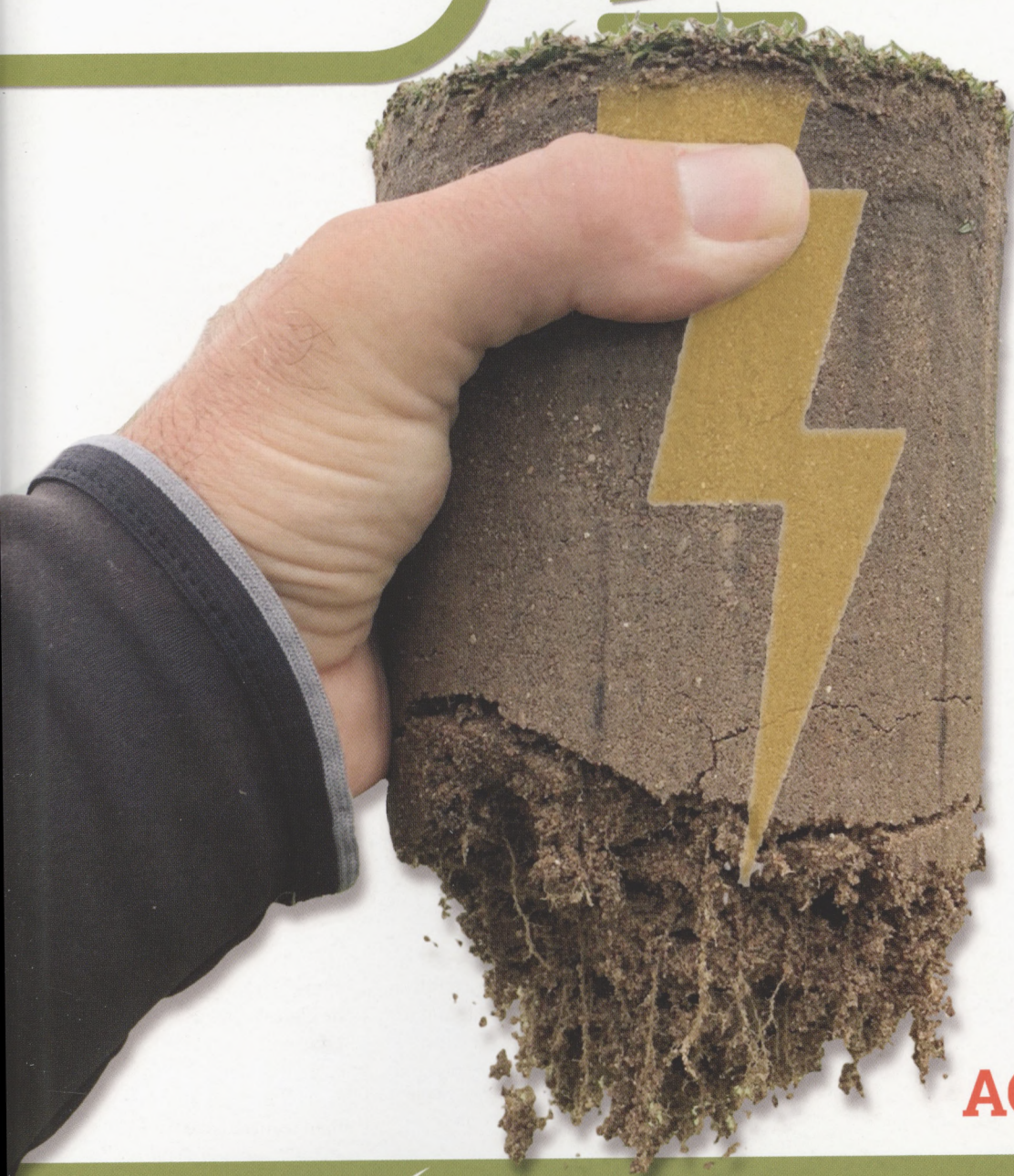


**MATTHEW WHARTON, CGCS, MG**, is the superintendent at Carolina Golf Club in Charlotte, North Carolina and past president of the Carolinas GCSA. Follow him on Twitter @CGCGreenkeeper.



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