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TITLE TALK

Working on a golf course as a career doesn't resonate like it did in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Non-traditional hours. Minuscule to mediocre pay for those hours as cost of living soars. Years of toiling as an "assistant" to *maybe* receive an opportunity to interview for a handful of destination jobs.

Thousands of capable millennials have avoided or fled the industry. Those who stuck around are among golf's most inspiring and creative leaders because they came of management age during an era when less replaced excess. They understand golf's gigantic bust better than its unsustainable boom. Work prosperity for this generation involves getting through a day without busted equipment.

With the industry in the third year of a surge created due to lifestyle changes in response to a global pandemic, it's time to brainstorm distinct ways to ensure Gen Z-ers seek golf course maintenance careers and stick around to enjoy better work lives than previous generations.

Boosting pay, a topic covered exhaustively in this column over the past two years, is the most logical solution. Unfortunately, many industry executives and board members still aren't applying logic to compensation decisions.

Where does that leave industry recruitment and retention efforts?

If you can't pay somebody more when you seemingly have the resources to do it (well-run private clubs and management companies have fared tremendously over the last three years), then you must look in smaller places. Have you tried rethinking job titles?

I never thought I'd be writing a column suggesting job titles matter. I operate by the motto, "I don't care what they call me as long as they pay me every two weeks." I'm also not a young person deciding what I want to do for the next four decades. Titles — and more specifically words in titles — matter to many job- and career-seekers.

Industry titles have remained unchanged for decades. Working on a golf course means you likely start as a "laborer" on the "grounds crew." Depending on your educational path, you might progress to an "intern," "assistant-in-training" or "technician" before becoming a second, first or senior "assistant." Somebody striving to climb atop the hierarchy hopes to land a "superintendent" or "director" position.

Are you as uninspired as I am from constantly hearing and reading these words? Imagine how somebody in their late teens or early 20s feels about working a decade or two as an "assistant." When 937 open "assistant" positions exist at any given moment, what's the incentive to spend days clicking to determine which one might be the right fit and pay the bills?

Hundreds of surveys and articles suggest the newest work generation values purpose from their careers and demonstrates passion for the environment, data, technology, happiness and being associated with a caring team. Think about golf course maintenance. The job meshes with all of the above.

Working on a golf course means protecting and enhancing the environment, requires using data and technology to make the most effective decisions, and yields enormous consumer happiness — and nobody can maintain a golf property alone.

By telling young people words they want to hear, the opportunities to show more of them how rewarding the work can be will arise. Consider replacing terms such as "laborers," "workers" or "crew" with "team" when posting and discussing entry-level positions. Try inserting "environment," "data" or "technology" instead of "assistant" or "technician" into titles reserved for specialized positions.

A few management companies now employ environmental managers or sustainability directors. It's a start. But those words and concepts become more meaningful if they reach the facility level.

An Ohio club refers to its top turf position as its "natural resource leader." On the clubhouse side, a Colorado facility boasts a "people specialist" on its management team. An Iowa club refers to its outside services manager as "director of happiness."

Snickers. Be dismissive. Stick to norms.

Losing another generation of potential full-time employees isn't funny.

Changing a few words might be an economical way to alter perceptions and separate your course from a crammed pack seeking enough labor help to reach tomorrow. **GCI**



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LISTEN



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TEEN THINKING

A high school senior chats with a few peers to learn whether his generation views golf course maintenance as a good work option.

By Kyle McGovern

Golf course maintenance is a quality employment opportunity. As a teen who knows a little about the industry, I decided to investigate further. Why aren't more teens working these jobs? I wanted to determine what teens like, dislike, or simply don't know about working a job on the course. By reviewing ads and talking with my peers, including two high school golfers who have worked course maintenance, I learned more.

One of my classmates, **Charlie DeCapua**, has worked a part-time job in golf course maintenance. DeCapua is a varsity golfer at our school, was a top recruit and will play in college. His passion for golf contributes to his positive experi-

ence in this field. "Being in my element all day and getting paid for it makes the work enjoyable," he says.

Teen golfers may be drawn to a job on the course because as golfers themselves, they have an enhanced understanding of how important their work is. "Having an impact on other golfers' games made me want to do my job as well as it could be done," DeCapua says.

Another fellow student, **Mark Pillar**, who placed fourth at the Ohio state tournament last season, worked limited hours on a course so he could focus on practice and competition. DeCapua and Pillar are both multi-sport athletes. Athletes are disciplined, fit, punctual and accountable — all ideal characteristics for a worker.

This proves to be a double-edged sword as committed athletes may prioritize sports over summer work. Teenage golfers may be the best candidates for working in course maintenance but flexible schedules, particularly as the high school fall sports season nears, are necessary.

I chose some peers for a dedicated discussion (yes, snacks were involved!) because we worked hiking trail maintenance together last summer. Our common experience included long workdays, seasonal conditions and labor-intense tasks that parallel some of the work found on a golf course. None of them had much experience with golf besides occasionally playing for fun.

The group's initial opinions reflected conventional impressions of the golf course industry, intoning that golf course work included a lot of mowing and managing golf carts. The group also mentioned that pesticides, deforestation and water requirements had negative environmental impacts. There are many

prevalent negative stereotypes and perceptions about golf, even within the thoughtful, outdoorsy group of people I selected for my study. These negative stereotypes make hiring difficult.

Everyone in the group was surprised to learn of the potential environmental benefits provided by golf courses. Golf courses can prevent industrial development; help filter polluted water; can serve as sanctuaries for butterflies, raptors and wildlife; and provide a recreational green space where people can improve their health.

Most people in the group were keen on continuing to work outdoors. **Chloe Firrell** indicated that completing tasks at an outdoor job is rewarding. "I like seeing a physical representation of your progress while you're working," she says. "I like going home feeling like I have done something."

Another talking point was the early hours golf course maintenance requires. Everyone in the group liked the idea of watching the sunrise every day and breathing that crisp morning air. Many individuals also liked the idea of getting a day's work completed by early afternoon.

They also felt that the early start time would lead to being tired for the rest of the day. Someone mentioned that having the whole day on a different schedule than everyone else's would make it more challenging to spend time with friends over the summer. This argument can be mitigated by encouraging interested teens to recommend the job to their friends.

Wages were the most significant factor considered by the group. Most people felt that the high wages of golf course work made the early hours and work worth it. We reviewed three hiring advertisements from golf courses in northeast Ohio. Job A consisted of a flexible schedule, four-hour shift option and wage of \$15 to \$17 per hour. Job B consisted of a less flexible schedule, but higher earning potential with a wage of \$12 to \$20 per hour. Job C consisted of a full-time position paying \$20 to \$28 per hour but with a

less detailed job description.

Job A, with the most flexible schedule, had the most support. People were willing to sacrifice on pay in exchange for more flexible part-time hours. The group liked that Job A guaranteed pay of at least \$15 per hour, preferring this to Job B with a lower starting pay (\$12 per hour) even though the potential was more (\$20 per hour). Would their experience working outside be enough to warrant higher pay?

Comparing Job A to Job C, individuals still supported Job A on the basis of its flexible hours. Even though Job C had a much higher guaranteed starting pay and the potential to pay 186 percent as much as Job A, the group was definitively less interested in full-time work.

Teens are willing to sacrifice on pay in exchange for more flexible hours, even if work starts before sunrise. For summer employment, these teens also seem to prefer jobs with a guaranteed starting pay of around \$15 an hour, even if such a job has less future earning potential when compared to others.

Additionally, people agreed that 20 minutes was the longest they would want to drive for their commute to work on a golf course. When discussing that many course maintenance teams included multiple generations, the group was indifferent to this. No one viewed working with retirees or people from a wide age range as a drawback. Everyone was willing to use power tools and learn to use new machines and technology to do the job well.

After some discussion, there was generally a positive reception to the golf course industry. Teens are willing to work maintenance jobs, but the negative stereotypes need to be overcome so they can understand, earn and enjoy the benefits.

Kyle McGovern is a senior at Independence High School in Independence, Ohio. He plans to major in earth and environmental sciences at Vanderbilt University.

Tartan Talks 81

Kevin Norby first appeared on the Tartan Talks podcast in 2018. Golf was in a different spot those days.



▲ Norby

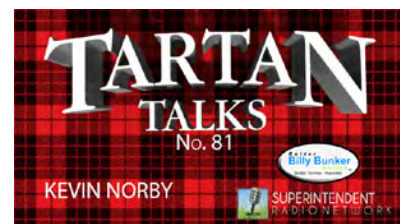
Because so much has changed in the last five years, we invited Norby to rejoin the podcast. The result? Another engaging conversation about specific projects and broad industry topics.

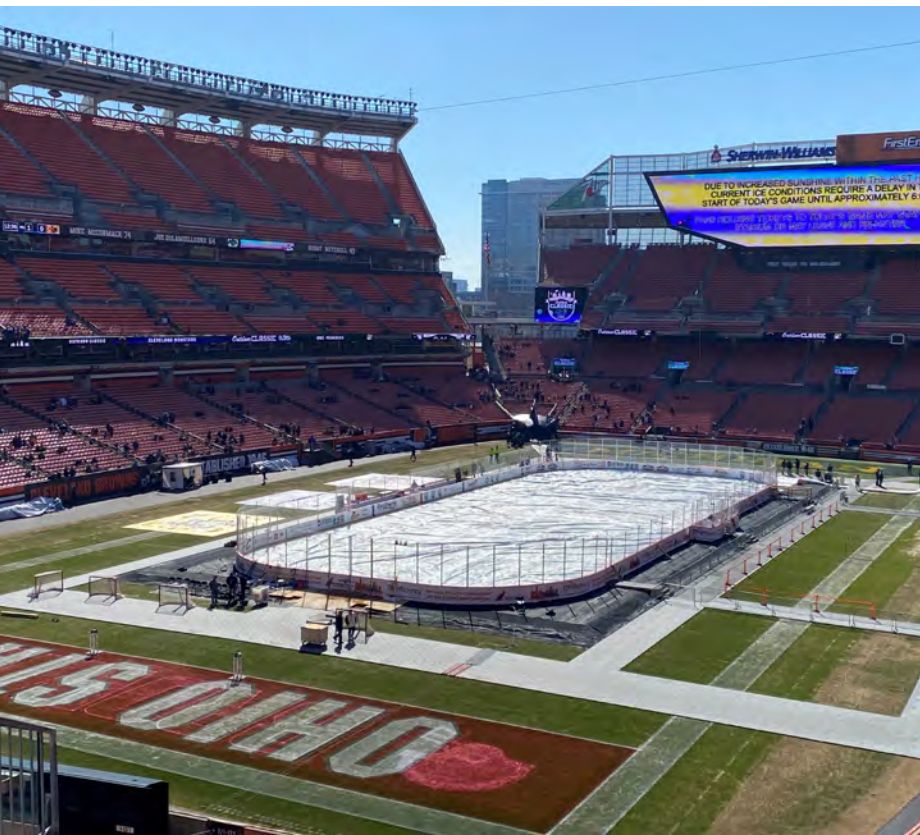
"It's a different time, different market and different economy for sure," Norby says.

Norby has guided projects in the four continental United States time zones over the last five years. His workload included the completion of a new municipal layout: Fox Hills Golf Course in Waterford City, North Dakota. Fox Hills features five sets of locally-named tees, beginning with the Lewis & Clark Tees at 4,793 yards and stretching to the LongX Tees at 6,980 yards.

"What's really unique about this project from my perspective is that it took so many years," Norby says. "It literally took 10 years from when I first met them and did the first drawings to putting the first shovel in the ground. It was a long, long process."

Restoring **A.W. Tillinghast's** work in Minnesota, reworking courses to improve municipalities' stormwater management capabilities and designing a 38,000-square-foot putting course are other topics covered in the podcast. The episode can be downloaded on the Superintendent Radio Network page of popular podcast distribution platforms.





STAY ON **SOLID ICE**

Guy Cipriano explains why upfront communication and empathy can soften the inconvenience when undesirable weather interrupts a customer's big day.

Golf is an outdoor game played on varied landscapes. A course has no defined dimensions. Weather determines how — and sometimes if — the game can be played.

Hockey is an indoor game played on surfaces with defined dimensions. A standard North American rink measures 200 feet long by 85 feet wide. Weather has no impact on when the game can be played ... until the business and marketing folks decide to play outdoors.

Managing editor **Matt LaWell** and I attempted to watch our local American Hockey League team, the Cleveland Monsters, play an outdoor game at the home of the Cleveland Browns on the first Saturday afternoon in March.

Cool idea. Market the heck out of playing hockey outdoors in an NFL stadium. Get a few extra thousand eyes on your product. New fans have fun watching a fast-paced spectator sport. They later attend a few indoor games. Emulating the marketing appeal of the annual NHL Winter Classic, the game

was called the Cleveland Monsters Outdoor Classic.

Following a pancake brunch and paying \$20 to park (such is a day out in the city!), Matt, his daughter and I walked into the stadium around 12:20 p.m. We watched a pregame skate, purchased a few drinks and settled into our seats like thousands of other fans, many of whom either never or rarely attend Monsters games.

The game was scheduled to start at 1 p.m. Something seemed amiss around 1:20 p.m., when the teams remained in their respective locker rooms and a crew scurried to cover the ice with a tarp. Something also seemed amiss in how the franchise's management handled the situation. Nobody communicated to customers why a game scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. was being delayed.

Finally, around 1:40 p.m., the public address announcer told the crowd the start of the game had been postponed until 6 p.m. at the earliest, because afternoon sun caused the ice to deteriorate, thus creating unsafe playing conditions. Fans were told they could remain in the stadium or leave and use their ticket to re-enter. Anybody with something else to do that day besides attend a hockey game was out of luck. No refunds. No use of the words "sorry" or "we regret to inform" you in the announcement.

A one-hour delay? OK. A two-hour delay? Fine. A five-hour delay? Now you're treading deep into personal schedules. Matt, his daughter and I, plus thousands of other fans, were gone — not only for the day, but perhaps for good.

Participant or spectator safety should never be compromised for commerce. Similar weather decisions are made daily at golf courses. A spoiled Saturday afternoon inside a stadium led to me pondering ways golf operators can effectively handle and communicate weather-related dilemmas without peevish customers.

Put yourself in the customer's spot

Golf, sporting events, movies and concerts. No discretionary spending activity is forced upon a consumer. People are

choosing your course over doing something else. Some might be choosing your course for the first time. Acknowledge the time and financial sacrifice a consumer makes to patronize your business. An afternoon at the course might be the norm for you. It could be an event circled and highlighted for months on somebody else's calendar.

Upfront communication works

If frost, wet conditions or a threat of severe weather are going to delay a tee time or outing, begin notifying customers via text, email and social media. Let's say you know at 6 a.m. that frost won't lift until at least 9 a.m. Start the communication chain immediately. Customers will be thankful they aren't wasting time waiting at the course.

If weather issues arise when customers are already at the course, be honest, thoughtful and proactive with in-person communication. Use empathetic words when addressing customers whose plans are altered by weather. A superintendent visit to the clubhouse or grill to explain the situation can't hurt. Nobody communicates the hows and whys surrounding weather better than a good superintendent.

Trust the technical guru

Completely trust the expertise and input offered by the people responsible for maintaining the playing surface. Owners, general managers, pros, boards and committees must listen intently to the superintendent's thoughts on starting times. And the superintendent must speak up when the commerce doesn't make enough sense for the likely conditions. Plan for the fallout if a worst-case scenario develops.

Scheduling a lucrative outdoor golf event at 7 a.m. before a crew can fully prepare playing surfaces or nine days following an aerification might not be worth the short-term revenue boost. Businesses willing to play the long game when handling customers almost always flourish.

Be flexible with refund policies

Policy is policy, and you might not be

legally obligated to refund customers when weather goes awry. Again, this is where it's important to think long term.

Sometimes what you're required to do and what you should do are separate ideas. Giving somebody something — a full refund, a discount on later events or tee times, shop or food/drink credit — makes customers

think their feelings were considered in the decision-making process.

A successful business wants repeat customers. Giving somebody a reason to come back will likely make them forget the initial inconvenience.

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



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INDUSTRY BUZZ

The Musser International Turfgrass Foundation selected **Dr. Wendell Hutchens** as the 2023 Award of Excellence recipient. Hutchens received his bachelor's degree in turfgrass science from NC State University and completed his master's degree in turfgrass pathology at the school. He then earned his Ph.D. in turfgrass pathology at Virginia Tech. In August 2022, Hutchens became an assistant professor of turfgrass science at the University of Arkansas, where he divides his time between research, extension and teaching. ... The USGA and The R&A have proposed a Model Local Rule that gives competition organizers the option to require use of golf balls that are tested under modified launch conditions to address the impacts of hitting distance in golf. The MLR is intended for use only in elite competitions and, if adopted, will have no impact on recreational golf. The proposal was sent to golf equipment manufacturers on March 13, following

the Equipment Rulemaking Procedures established by the governing bodies in 2011. Manufacturers and golf stakeholders can provide feedback until Aug. 14, 2023. If adopted, the proposal would take effect on Jan 1, 2026. ... Audubon International announced the addition of a new Signature Sanctuary Platinum Certification level. Signature Sanctuary Certification is specifically designed for properties undergoing renovation or new development. The Platinum Certification level offers the opportunity to encompass an entire resort under one certification umbrella. ... RISE joined more than 400 organizations to send a letter to all members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives voicing support for the current regulatory framework in place under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). The letter is in direct response to recently introduced legislation (S. 269) focused on the current regulatory system that guides the nation's pesticide laws. This marks the third time related legislation has been introduced. ... Syngenta appointed **Todd Loেকে** to the newly created role of head of key accounts and promoted **Troy Rippy** to Midwest district sales manager within the turf and ornamentals businesses.

COURSE NEWS

The City of Sequin, Texas, selected the trio of **Brian Ross**, **Nathan Crace** and **Todd Quitno** to guide the redesign of **Starcke Park Golf Course** on the banks of the Guadalupe River. Originally designed in 1939 by **John Bredemus**, the course is an 18-hole par-71 layout carved through a pecan orchard on a bluff above the river. Starcke Park is the only public course in a 20-mile radius of quickly growing Sequin. ... Officials at Dormie Network named **Michael Sheely** as director of agronomy at **Gray-Bull**, a **David McLay Kidd** design set to open in the Nebraska Sandhills in 2024. Sheely, who previously worked at ArborLinks, will be joined by the team of superintendent **Kit Lofgreen**, assistant superintendent **Katie Kramer** and equipment manager **Tyson Kramer**. ... Bobby Jones Links has been selected to manage **Travis Pointe Country Club** in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and **Cypress Landing Golf Course** in Chocowinity, North Carolina.



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Noel Popoli

THE OLYMPIC CLUB

In less than 18 months, the Women in Turf movement has profoundly impacted a lot of people, but perhaps no one more than **Noel Popoli**. Popoli has been an assistant superintendent at The Olympic Club in San Francisco since July 2022. She first visited the club for the 2021 U.S. Women's Open as part of a corps of 30 female volunteers. At the time, she was the senior assistant superintendent at Century Country Club in Purchase, New York. Appearing on the *Wonderful Women of Golf* podcast, she told host **Rick Woelfel** that the experience was life-changing.

"I had worked with a woman horticulturalist before," Popoli recalls, "but never in turf. I went out to the 2021 Women's Open and it was such a great experience. Not only meeting the women and connecting and seeing other people doing the same thing that we do, but the tournament itself was awesome, the course was obviously beautiful and it was great all around."

Once she returned, Popoli started California dreamin'. Buoyed by her experiences at the Women's Open, Popoli, a University of Connecticut graduate — she earned a bachelor's in turfgrass and soil science — renewed her commitment to a career in turf.

She reached out to **Troy Flanagan**, The Olympic Club's director of golf maintenance.

"I called Troy and told him, 'I loved my time out there and I would love to send you my résumé,'" Popoli says, "and it kind of went from there. Luckily, I must have done something right that week."

Even by the standards of her profession, Popoli's duties are varied. Officially, she is an assistant on the Ocean and Cliffs courses under superintendent **Jared Kief**.

But a renovation of the Lake Course, The Olympic Club's "Open Venue" is ongoing and Flanagan and Kief want everyone on the staff participating in the effort, which began last November.

"They want us all involved in every aspect," Popoli says. "They made sure to tell us from day one, 'Even if you're working on the Ocean or working on the Cliffs, every day I want to see you on the Lake doing something. Being part of it, learning, growing, asking questions,

jumping on equipment.'"

With the renovation in progress, every day that Popoli spends at her "office" is unique.

"Everybody's been helping out on the Lake renovation, so we just jump back and forth," she says. "We'll get our crew going on the Ocean, checking mowers, making sure the bunker rakes are (in the right places). Obviously, as the Lake has been closing, the Ocean has been getting a lot more golf and we want to make sure all our members are happy over there.

"And then we'll step over to the Lake and see if they need help stripping sod and moving it, if they need help watering sod. We're doing all the sanding and the grading for the greens. (Every day) is different and that's why I love it."

Popoli says the renovation was a significant factor in the decision she and her wife made to head West.

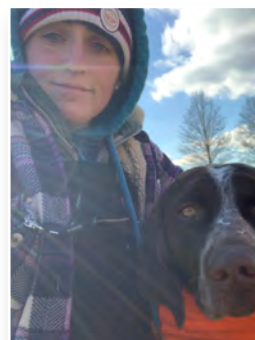
"I've always wanted to be a part of a big project," she says. "**Gil Hanse** is one of the best architects there is. To be able to watch him work his magic is incredible."

Popoli spent eight years in the turf industry before assuming her position at The Olympic Club. She appreciates the fact that Flanagan, Kief and other superintendents she has worked with have provided her with opportunities to grow and learn.

"The only way you're going to learn is by doing, right?" she says. "Especially in this industry. You have to get your hands dirty and you have to do it. And I've been fortunate to have some first assistants and superintendents, whatever their titles might be, who were willing to give me the chance." **GCI**



The only way you're going to learn is by doing, right? Especially in this industry. You have to get your hands dirty and you have to do it. And I've been fortunate to have some first assistants and superintendents, whatever their titles might be, who were willing to give me the chance."



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STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING SUMMER PATCH



Q&A WITH JEN BROWNING, PCA

Senior Technical Specialist at BASF

Summer patch plagues some courses with perennial pressure and months of susceptibility, and superintendents are responding to this added stress in a variety of ways.

1. What are some differences in how we are managing summer patch now?

For the hardest hit courses, pressure is triggered in early spring and is constant through summer due to mild temperatures like those along the coast. Courses may tighten the intervals on their applications from 28 days to 21 or even 14. That is not a scenario anyone wants to entertain, especially in the west where we have escaped having to spray at shorter intervals for a single target. But once the season starts, it can last for months: the onset of soil temperatures at 65° F initiates the season. The weather, course terrain and other conditions dictate how long it persists. Long seasons are a challenge to program across effective chemistries, modes of action, and the schedule required to manage that pressure.

2. What are the other conditions that contribute to summer patch pressure?

The “other conditions” vary and can include whether or not the course has nematode pressure. Where superintendents report successful nematode reduction, they also report less summer patch pressure, and

overall better canopy quality. That makes sense when you think about cumulative stressors on root systems and how improving root vigor improves stand density. One of the most interesting conditions we have discussed this past year has been fertility, which is not something we spend as much time on in turfgrass IPM.

3. Fertility? Is this about nitrogen?

Nitrogen and N-sources are important, but these recent conversations and tests have been focused on manganese. Clarke, Vincelli, Koch & Munshaw (2020) recommend 6 lbs of Mn/A applied as manganese sulfate in spring. It turned out, some properties with high summer patch pressure were short of that. Last year, I started asking about it specifically when working with more tenacious summer patch-prone properties. Eventually I worked with a couple of experimental, collaborative types who decided to mix test rescue applications with 2 lbs of Mn/A. And they got better results. “Rescue” applications for summer patch are a mixed bag in any case: as we know, the roots are already injured. But they saw faster turnaround in canopy color and made this note: don’t skip the spring manganese. With more conversations, I found a number of superintendents who had experience with summer patch and were now fastidious about their manganese management...



When left untreated, summer patch can severely damage turf.

and no longer fought with *Magnaportheopsis* injury every spring and summer.

4. How does fertility information fit into a program for prevention?

For Bent-Poa, or monoculture greens of either, the nitrogen source and manganese and timing are both somewhat simple, foundational recommendations. Note that manganese is important for root vigor that also helps protect against take-all patch of bentgrass (*Gaumannomyces* sp.), a look-alike for summer patch in stands of mature bentgrass. Once those two and the rest of fertility are dialed in, check for nematodes, and manage them if you’re nearing, at, or over threshold. Finally, dial in your preventive summer patch chemistry program. Start at 65° F soil temperatures and plan to be proactive on 28-day intervals knowing the chemistries that protect against *Magnaportheopsis* are preventive for the key diseases of both cool and warm season turfgrasses. BASF solutions include Maxtima® fungicide,

Navicon® Intrinsic® brand fungicide, Lexicon® Intrinsic brand fungicide, Honor® Intrinsic brand fungicide, and Xzemlar® fungicide. Our programs rotate in other effective chemistries including 3336® fungicide from NuFarm.

5. What else can superintendents do to help develop summer patch programs?

A lot of what has been learned regionally in the last few years has been at GCSA meetings, in phone calls and emails from people who were willing to share their spray records, photographs, and experiences. Consultations with Dr. Jim Kerns of NC State University, Dr. Rick Latin of Purdue University (emeritus), and Dr. Lee Miller of Purdue University have been invaluable in figuring out the puzzles at golf courses around the west and farther afield. These conversations plus research trials and everyone’s time are continuing to build better programs for everyone. Let’s keep talking about summer patch.

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WHY WAIT TO BUILD A 2024 BUDGET?

Is there anything that brings out the inner procrastinator in all of us more than the annual budgeting process? Maybe starting that diet we've been putting off forever or cleaning the garage might rival diving into the next year's budgeting cycle. But deciding how, when and where we're going to spend the precious budget dollars we're allotted surely ranks among the least favorite parts of our jobs.

Of course, we're in good company when it comes to procrastination. **Leonardo da Vinci**, **Frank Lloyd Wright** and the **Dalai Lama** were famous procrastinators. But who was going to tell those guys to get a move on?

But wait a minute, you're saying about now, didn't I just finish budgeting for 2023? Probably so — and that's the point: Budgeting is a process, a journey, if you will, and just as we're reaching our annual destination, it's time to get back on the path.

While many superintendents and club management professionals begin thinking seriously about budgeting around Labor Day, now is the time to put the pieces in place to win the budgeting game. It starts with a game plan that includes three preparatory steps:

1. MAP THE PROCESS TO IDENTIFY THREE KEY GATEWAYS

Gatekeeper

Who is the primary source of approval? Is it the CFO, controller, accounting manager? Know whose opinion and approval enables you to advance your budget through the approval process — and who can throw up roadblocks.

Planning team

Budget planning is bigger than one individual, although it is the superintendent who carries the burden. Build your team to anticipate

equipment needs and evolving irrigation system requirements. This means including your mechanic and irrigation technicians as key contributors.

One who approves

Your golf course owner, club manager and board will need an unprecedented volume of information, which you should describe succinctly and persuasively.

2. IDENTIFY THE PRIMARY COST CATEGORIES

Before starting to crunch numbers, place each anticipated cost in its appropriate bucket. Three points of focus:

Maintenance standards and scope of operations

Your agronomic plan is the starting point and basis of the budget assumptions for mission-critical considerations. This step starts with extensive preparation on your part and requires in-depth discussion with ownership and management.

Capital needs

Identify and begin to quantify the need for capital maintenance on existing assets and capital improvements. What existing equipment needs replacing? Which innovative technologies should be incorporated?

Manpower and staffing

Labor has been one of the more volatile expense categories over recent years. Proper budgeting requires forward thinking and holistic planning to explain your intentions and labor needs to the Gatekeeper.

3. DESCRIBE YOUR ASPIRATIONS

Telling the Gatekeeper what you

wish to accomplish is essential to your success. Major ambitions you should describe include:

Golf course "fit and finish"

Provide photographs of what you are planning — images help those unfamiliar with agronomic practices envision your proposals. Show how you want your course to look and be enjoyed with the resources you are allocated.

Human resources

Show your staffing plan beyond an organizational chart. Tell what skills you wish to add and retain. Explain why your course needs these capabilities. Recognize that an increased and maintained workforce is the key for everyone to be recognized as successful and for the course to look and play to its potential.

Special projects

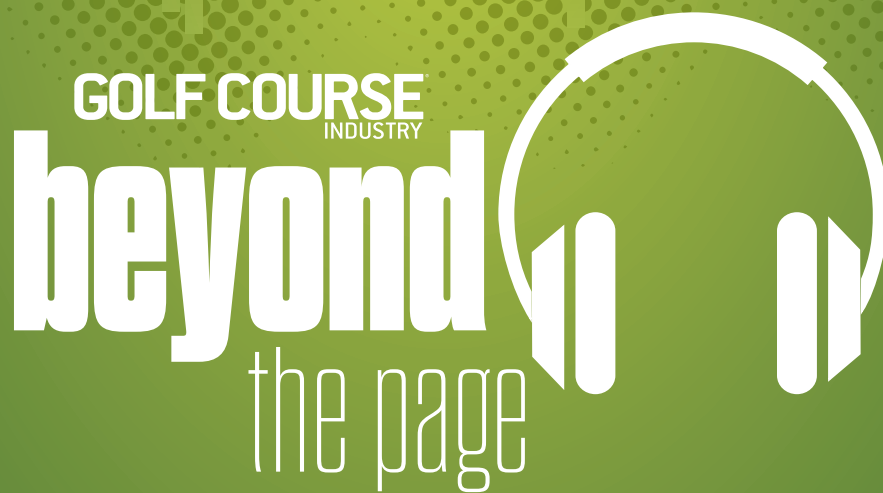
Most superintendents envision new ideas and projects that add enjoyment and engagement for golfers and distinguish their course. A special project can be a relatively small but long-awaited enhancement or it can be a shoot-the-moon venture. Neither will happen if they are not included, documented and defined in the budget.

Budgeting is a sequential process that requires advance planning, rigorous due diligence and robust conversations among key stakeholders. Superintendents must plan and lead the process. Other stakeholders may not know what your vision entails or its benefits. It's your job to bring that vision to life through the budgeting process. Today would be a great time to get started. **GCI**



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

DIVE A LITTLE DEEPER!



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

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Wonderful WEATHER Watchers

Superintendents are admittedly obsessed with Mother Nature. The physical tools and mental tactics to help them cope with this one-sided relationship are always evolving.

By **Judd Spicer**

"Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get."

— Mark Twain

From coast to coast, border to border, the conditions may change but the narrative remains the same.

Be it rocky ridges, elevated terrain, arid desert, frozen tundra, windswept prairie, Atlantic coastline, purple mountain majesties —there's a playing competitor that no superintendent in the history of golf has ever conquered.

And her name is Mother Nature.

The modern-day superintendent is facing a coalescence of factors that place an augmented onus on tracking nature's patterns, prophecy and whim. The duel and dance with environmental changes and the game's ascent in participation has superintendents across the union keenly aware of the tasks of preparing for and responding to weather-driven adversity.

"Weather patterns are changing a bit, climates are changing, so, at

our location, we're getting more powerful and wetter storms and creating more of an environment for ice build-up, which we didn't have as much at all 20 years ago," says **Scott Bower**, director of greens and grounds at Martis Camp in Truckee, California.

In concert, the pandemic-era rise in golf participation continues to find a dramatic demand for play. While 2022 rounds, according to the National Golf Foundation, saw a slight dip from the record-setting pace of 2021, the three-year cumulative average since 2020 still accounts for a massive 16 percent rise in domestic rounds played when compared with 2017-19.

More golf, more golfers, more rounds and more weather extremes have all led to an enhanced weight on the shoulders of the nation's superintendents, with many on the job spending as much time looking up at the sky as down at the turf.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

More than ever, superintendents are cognizant of weather forecasts dictating each and every day.

For better or bitter.

“It’s 100 percent a constant,” says

Tom Caliguire, director of agronomy at Forest Glen Golf & Country Club in Naples, Florida. “I’m looking at the 10-day forecast every single day, winter or summer, and I’m probably checking it six or eight times a day. I’ve been a super for 34 years, I’m a competitive guy, and there’s one opponent I’ve never been able to conquer — the weather.”

For most in the agronomy trade, each day begins with a forecast.

“The weather, it’s a big part of my entire life. It’s every day,” says Bower, whose grounds are soon to host the U.S. Senior Amateur Championship in August. “And because of where we are, in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, it does get to extremes. But I do get excited to wake

up and read the National Weather Service discussions and weather surveys.”

Many supers classify themselves as “Weather Nerds.”

“Weather basically dictates what we do day-to-day,” adds **Scott Schurman**, superintendent at LaFortune Park Golf Course in Tulsa, Oklahoma. “I keep track constantly, and could be considered a ‘weather geek,’ I guess.”

Forecasting often, if not always, dictates agronomic practices.

“Weather is the biggest factor in the life and work of a golf course superintendent,” says **Nick Leitner**, director of agronomy at Indian Wells Golf Resort, a 36-hole facility in the eponymous city of the Southern California’s Coachella Valley. “It impacts when we go to feed the plant, when we go to fertilize, when we try to regulate growth,

when we apply fungicidal applications or preemergent app. There are so many factors in the relationship between weather and agronomic practices.”

John Canavan, the longtime superintendent at Union League Liberty Hill in suburban Philadelphia, experiences a similar relationship with weather.

“It’s everything,” he says. “I start my day with it, check it all day and check it at night, at least five times a day, especially to check humidity levels. Basically, all of my decisions are based on the weather forecast, whether it be fungicide applications or irrigation.”

Whatever the geographic locale, whatever the season, superintendents are both akin to and diverse in the tools used to read forecasts.

“From the University of Maine, they send me weather updates twice a day that’s just for my latitude and longitude,” Canavan adds. “It focuses just on this property — doesn’t care what’s happening a mile down the road. There was a former company called Sky Bid that offered this service. Somebody else bought it and it went away, but this professor at the University of Maine was intrigued by



Checking weather is a constant for me, but I think that’s the key. And it’s not like I’m always working when I’m checking weather, it’s my curiosity. And, yeah, if it helps me do my job better, then it does relieve a little bit of stress.”

— *Jesse Sutton, Fox Run Golf Club*

► From left: Jesse Sutton, John Canavan, Scott Schurman, Tami Jones and Tom Caliguire.



it, so he kept it going. And he doesn't even charge for it. The program is based on 25 years of logarithms and is self-correcting."

Along with daily reading of National Weather Service and related National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration discussions, Bower delves further into his weather study.

"I was fortunate enough to work under current GCSAA President **Kevin Breen**, and he's a trained meteorologist. He taught me how to read the weather charts, how to read the jet stream and how it's coming down from the Arctic," Bower says. "A lot of times, it's about watching the five-day model of the jet stream and the highs and lows of how it's going to hit the West Coast coming down. It's fascinating, and it's usually always right. And it's also another way to geek out on the weather."

Using multiple forecasting resources is the norm, rather than the exception.

"You can't just base your weather forecast off of one source," says **Jeff Simondet**, superintendent at The Quarry at Giants Ridge in Biwabik, Minnesota. "Typically, I use my desktop to check AccuWeather, Weather Underground and Weather.com, and then take an average. And I never go two weeks out ... say, five days out or three days out. If two or three resources are in agreement, I'll go with that average."

Knowing from whence the readings derive makes for crucial comprehension.

"And you really need to look at where the weather station is," Simondet adds. "If you put your city (in the search), but the weather station it's pinging from could be dozens or more miles away. For us, that can make a massive difference in the shifting of a pattern."

For Schurman, the weather geekdom finds a loaded array of phone apps.

"It's weird, because each resource is a little different," he says. "I've got Wunderground.com, Weather Bug, DarkSky.net, a local Tulsa weather app on Mesonet, and also RadarScope, and then the Lightning Pro indicator and the Heat Index for safety reasons."

An arsenal of screens and sources is not atypical in weather checking.

"I pretty much use my phone, but I also use my desktop," says **Tami Jones**, superintendent at DeSoto Golf Club, one of nine tracks in Hot Springs Village's Arkansas golf nexus. "I'll go with AccuWeather, Weather.com and then also the evening TV news. I'll check every morning, every day before I leave work and then the news at night. And if we have rain or weather systems coming in, I'll check it more often throughout the day."

The real-time pulse of social media provides another unique weather insight.

"I use a lot of different things, but I think social media is an incredible tool if used properly," says **Jesse Sutton**, superintendent at Fox

Run Golf Club in Ludlow, Vermont. "I follow a lot of different meteorologists on Twitter. Some of them are people at weather stations and some are just guys with meteorology degrees

who post a lot and have real interest in weather. And I don't know the intricacies of reading weather models, but these guys do — and these weather models are getting really, really good, even a week out. There's one guy in southern Vermont who posts frequently, and I'll send him some messages, gather his thoughts, especially for snow totals."

Connecting with regional meteorologists is not an isolated act.

"They had a segment on the local news a few years back all about water restrictions at home," Caliguire adds. "And they had a landscape company on there to do the interviews, and the segment went right after the golf courses. One of the weather girls, I sent her a private message and told her the story was completely false. So, I had the meteorologist come out here and I showed her how sophisticated our irrigation system is. And she's a golfer, so it was so good to have her come out here and see just how important her forecast is for our business."

WEATHER OBSESSION (AND ACCEPTANCE)

With the new millennium finding a computer in the pockets of 97 percent of Americans, the omnipresence of cell phones makes the strive toward work-life balance a constant friend, enemy, tool and terror for the weather obsessed.

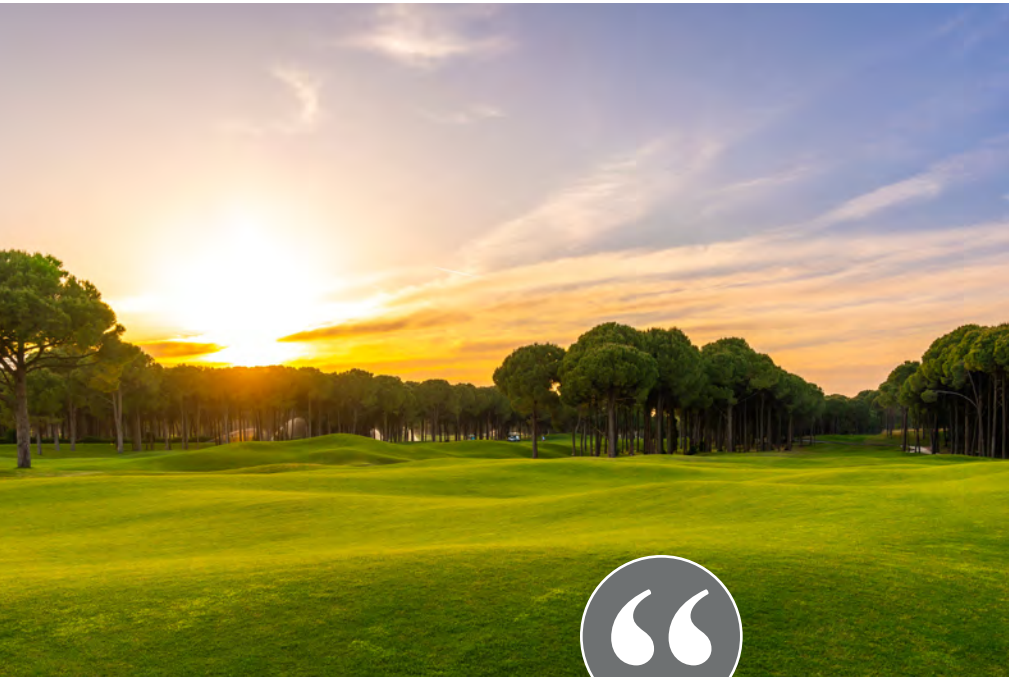
"If you ask my wife, she says



If you work outdoors, you have to be a bit obsessed with the weather. That's our livelihood. And, frankly, little tweaks, just a few percentage points of relative humidity, a degree here or there, that can make or break a season."

— *Scott Bower, Martis Camp*





I need to get off the damn phone,” Schurman jokes. “I’ve been doing a better job lately, just planting it on the bedstand when I get home, instead of carrying the phone around with me or always setting it down on the table in front of me. But if we’ve got some nasty conditions coming in, then I’ve always got it on my hip.”

The son of a superintendent, Schurman says the cell isn’t lost on the generation preceding.

“My dad was a golf course superintendent in Iowa, and it’s interesting to think about how he and his guys would have done things back in the 1970s and ’80s with the

‘I’ll click the refresh button hourly, and I’m looking at the forecast like, ‘Please change.’ So, yeah, sometimes I do feel like I’m checking it too much. But you need to learn to control the controllables.”

— Jeff Simondet, *The Quarry at Giants Ridge*

course, he’s now glued to the weather on his phone. I get texts from him all the time about the weather.”

Weather checking — and app scrolling in general — has become a habitual script, on or off course. “I check Weather.com during every commercial of the Phillies games,”

same technology that we have now,” he says. “Guess I’m like him in that I’m always thinking about this or that with the course. But I figure it’s like most supers in the country — most supers around the world — in that we take ownership of our courses. And even now, my dad, he’s 80 years old and working 40 hours a week on a mower at a

Canavan laughs.

A balance of home-and-away weather watching has become a blurred line. Not that everybody minds the info.

“Even when I’m on vacation, I’m always checking the weather, so it’s just habit,” says Jones, current president of her state’s GCSAA chapter. “Just always thinking about the golf course, wherever you are. I just want to know what’s happening, and if something does come up, I want to reach out to my assistant. What we do, it’s not just a job. It’s a lifestyle.”

Screen-time finds amplify during seasons of potential course plight. In northern Minnesota, the threat of late-fall rain can lead to eventual spring damage.

“I’ll click the refresh button hourly, and I’m looking at the forecast like, ‘Please change,” Simondet says. “So, yeah, sometimes I do feel like I’m checking it too much. But you need to learn to control the controllables. Sure, I carry it home with me sometimes, but I’m working on it. You do what you can to prepare for and prevent disasters, but you just can’t control the weather. Watching



the forecast every minute of every hour really isn't doing you any good — just making for more stress.”

A fine line is swung between vocation and avocation.

“Checking weather is a constant for me, but I think that’s the key,” Sutton says. “And it’s not like I’m always working when I’m checking weather, it’s my curiosity. And, yeah, if it helps me do my job better, then it does relieve a little bit of stress.”

And screen time isn’t always limited to the cell screen.

“The first newscast is at 3 p.m., and my wife will say, ‘You know, the forecast is usually the same when they do it again at the 5 o’clock and 7 o’clock hours. Do you think they’re gonna change the forecast?’” Caliguire says. “I joke and tell her I should’ve married a meteorologist.”

Veteran sky watchers and climate observers employ a mesh of experience and new school tools.

“There’s an internal calendar we have for these practices, but I also pay close attention to the Weather Channel,” Leitner says. “And then there’s the GreenKeeper computer program I really like, the POGO

Turf Pro moisture meter app that I use, a Syngenta growing degree app to track soil temps and I also like to use the Sun Tracker AR app, which I use during all seasons.”

Gut instinct on weather reading is a further factor for longtime superintendents, as timely calls sometimes need to be made for labor and staffing choices.

“During a recent winter weather event, I just had five people from our Cortez (Course), three from the Isabella and two from Balboa that came and assisted my crew,” Jones says. “And we had to jump around the course because of the frost. But I didn’t want to hurt the other courses getting ready for play, so it’s a lot about timing; Mother Nature loves to throw curveballs, so it’s oftentimes a matter of having the experience.”

Ultimately, an acquiescence of what one can’t master proves a crucial stage of both weather and turf acceptance. “You can’t control the weather, you can’t change it. All you can do is adapt,” Sutton says.

Adds Caliguire: “Grass doesn’t care if it’s your birthday, if it’s

Christmas Day or if it’s New Year’s Day. Grass doesn’t care about the calendar.”

Not that superintendents are wont to toss in the towel.

“If you work outdoors, you have to be a bit obsessed with the weather,” Bower says. “That’s our livelihood. And, frankly, little tweaks, just a few percentage points of relative humidity, a degree here or there, that can make or break a season. We need to be ahead of that curve.”

Even with the massive influence of technology on weather forecasting, the occasional time-tested axiom or well-waxed postulate of local knowledge can still usurp that of any app.

“There’s an old saying around here, ‘When you hear the train, it’s gonna rain,’” Canavan says. “There’s a cargo rail line about a mile from us, and usually when you can hear it, there is rain shortly after. That’s not technical, but it does often hold true.” **GCI**

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

Wonderful WATER Watchers

No fairway irrigation system? Yes way! A few courses and superintendents are still satisfying golfers without an intricate golf maintenance tool.

By Guy Cipriano

The only clouds that matter in **Chris Warrick's** fairway management program aren't found on a phone, tablet or computer screen.

Warrick is beginning his third season as the superintendent at Highland Country Club, a private 18-hole course traversing enchanting land amid towering pines in the small western Georgia city of LaGrange. A limited water-storage capacity and years of decisions to protect greens forces Warrick to rely on precipitation to prevent 25 acres of 419 Bermudagrass fairways from withering.

No cloud-based platforms to start and stop irrigation cycles. Just hours of staring at overhead clouds, studying radars and analyzing weather reports. Unlike every peer Warrick knows, a work life without fairway irrigation requires thorough sleuth-

ing and predicting, because there's no backup plan to water in fertilizer and plant protectants. "I kind of feel like a detective more than a superintendent sometimes," he says.

Until a conversation for this story, Warrick thought he might be alone, an ambitious superintendent trying to meet and exceed expectations without arguably the most intricate—and expensive—golf course maintenance tool. Warrick's previous work history included stints at well-funded clubs with significant budgets. Capabilities stored in digital clouds allowed Warrick and his co-workers to overcome stretches without rain clouds.

Weather dictates every decision made by every superintendent in every region. The consequences of those decisions are amplified when attempting to maintain large swaths of scrutinized playing sur-

► Highland Country Club in LaGrange, Georgia, is a rare private course that has endured multiple seasons without fairway irrigation.



faces without irrigation.

“You’re very much limited to what the weather gives you,” Warrick says, “and the weather isn’t always cooperative.”

In Durhamville, New York, a small town 30 miles east of Syracuse, the weather gives Old Erie Golf Club patrons distinct fairway conditions and aesthetics. Built by a local farmer, the 9-hole, daily-fee course has existed for 55 years without a fairway irrigation system.

Superintendent **Matthew Woodcock** grew up playing Old Erie and purchased the course with his wife, **Jill**, in March 2021. Woodcock never thought much about playing a course without fairway irrigation until he switched careers in 2019 and joined the turf team at nearby Turning Stone Resort. The training at Turning Stone, which features three 18-hole courses built in the early 2000s, introduced Woodcock to the economics and science of golf course management.

The economics of operating a course without fairway irrigation make sense for Old Erie. Woodcock devotes the majority of his resources to providing the best possible greens that can be played for \$20. Old Erie’s fairway conditions vary by season. Summers offer the best opportunities for significant ball roll; spring and fall

provide the best aesthetics. Fairways comprise around 15 acres, utilizing a blend of fescue, bluegrass, ryegrass and seaside bentgrass planted by the original owner.

“All those grasses thrive in different conditions and it’s really interesting to watch them bounce through the different seasons, because different grasses are growing a lot nicer at different times of the year,” Woodcock says. “During the spring and fall, they are green and they look great. During the summer, the low areas are very tolerant to not getting water, but the humps are not so much. They will brown out and they will go dormant.”

Woodcock doesn’t fret over pairing product applications with precipitation. The fertilizer blend he purchased for fairways upon acquiring the course in 2021 hasn’t left the mechanic’s bay. His fertilizer and plant protectant program consists of treating 50,000 square feet of greens and another 50,000 square feet of collars and approaches. He sparingly treats tees with any remaining product.

“I think what makes golf unique is that it’s played on a perfectly imperfect surface,” Woodcock says. “There’s a place in the golf industry for those ultra-manicured, green, wall-to-wall perfect courses. But at the same time, courses like our course and some

other courses in this area, we put almost all our effort into our greens, and we have incredible putting surfaces. The rest of the course is like how golf was designed and how **Old Tom Morris** thought of golf. It was played on a pasture and, funny enough, our course was built on a farm.”

Donald Ross, one of Old Tom Morris’s trainees, designed nine holes for Highland County Club in 1922. **Joe Finger** designed the second nine in 1972. The club installed a center-line fairway irrigation system, but financial difficulties hindered funding needed for repairs and upgrades and expanding water-storage capacity. The club’s primary water source is a lake surrounding the eighth, 16th and 17th greens. Warrick recently measured the bottom of the lake and discovered its depth averages around 6 feet. Six straight days of irrigating greens in the heat of last summer depleted the lake to the point where “on that sixth day, the lake was so low that it was starting to worry me,” Warrick says.

“If you don’t have enough water to water everything, you have to pick what you’re going to water,” he adds. “And you’re going to water the greens. That’s just the harsh reality the club faced when it went through hard economic times.”

Warrick has called his predecessors to better understand the history of the fairway irrigation system and functional capabilities and placement of heads. Highland Country Club has another 1¼-acre lake fronting the second green, but damage to the pump and pumphouse make efficiently shifting water to the other lake impractical, although Warrick is investigating ways to revive water-transferring possibilities.

Despite the challenges, Warrick produces solid fairway conditions, with the Georgia weather typically fostering peak fairway playability and aesthetics in early fall.

Savvy response

Prolonged dry stretches are anomalies in central New York. When one occurs, Old Erie Golf Club superintendent and owner **Matthew Woodcock** uses turf management and business basics to describe fairway conditions to golfers.

“If they come in after the round and say your fairways are dead, I correct them and say dormant,” says Woodcock, whose course experienced 25 straight days without rain last summer. “There’s a difference between dead and dormant. Dormant is going to come back after rain. Dead means I have work to do.”

“Or I will redirect and say, ‘How are the greens?’ Because I know for a fact that when they come in here and give us \$20, that our greens will exceed their expectations for what a \$20 golf course should be putting out for conditions.”

Old Erie doesn’t have a fairway irrigation system, and Woodcock approaches dry conditions as a business positive.

“Brown fairways means we’re going to be busy,” he says. “It means the weather has been nice and we haven’t had many rainouts, and people get excited because their ball is rolling out 30 yards, so they feel like they are PGA Tour pros with how far they are hitting it.”





Highland Country Club superintendent Chris Warrick.



Natchez Golf Club at Duncan Park superintendent Greg Brooking.



Old Erie Golf Club superintendent Matthew Woodcock.

“We’re far enough South to where we catch that rainy season in Florida with the hurricanes and tropical storms,” he says. “That starts mid-July, so July, August and September,

annual event is contested the first weekend in June. “Let’s say we’re dry and windy, which it has been the past two years. That dries the *Poa* out and kills it right before our

we get a pretty good amount of rainfall. The rain then starts slowing down toward early to mid-September, and we’re all watered up when temperatures drop to the mid-80s and maybe even the low-80s. That’s just prime Bermudagrass growing weather.”

Favorable spring weather, dry yet not too hot, in April and May yielded desirable fairway conditions for Highland Country Club’s past two member-guest tournaments. The

member-guest,” Warrick says. “It has landed on the perfect week the last two years. Dry and fast is good for member-guest conditions.”

Being in a humid subtropical climate zone means weather extremes. The climate makes timing product applications and cultural practices on fairways one of the trickiest parts of Warrick’s job. He switched from a granular to a foliar fertility program, because if it rains too hard following a granular application, intense pellet accumulation in low spots can kill turf. He uses higher rates of water when applying foliar to increase a product’s chances of penetrating the surface.

“I have come up with some good programs,” Warrick says. “We’re doing enough to where we are not receding on the tees and fairways. We might not be drastically gaining, but we’re not receding. That’s a very important aspect of it.”

THE PAST THREE decades of Don Beck’s career involves developing and tweaking programs to satisfy a private club membership enjoying a course without fairway irrigation. Beck is the longtime superintendent at Fishers Island Club on the eponymous island on the eastern end of

Long Island Sound. A 97-year-old **Seth Raynor** and **Charles Banks** design, Fishers Island Club is ranked ninth on *Golf Digest's* list of America's 100 Greatest Golf Courses. Experiencing 33 acres of fairways blending chewings fescue, creeping red fescue and colonial bentgrass in an authentic state on the seclusion of an island endear the course to members and guests.

"We have big, wide fairways and that's part of the nature of why the membership wants it unirrigated," Beck says. "It's a true links where it plays firm and fast and gives you angles into a lot of greens. It's just the way the members want it."

Fishers Island Club supports most of its 16,000 annual rounds from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Peak summer play can coincide with prolonged dry periods. The longest drought during Beck's tenure lasted

120 days in 1999. "We just had to wait it out," he says. "Everything turned brown. We had irrigation on tees, greens, approaches ... that's about it."

For most of the year, growing conditions are benign, according to Fisher. Trees are minimal and decades of growing the same grasses promotes the establishment of deep roots. Fairway dormancy, if it occurs, begins in June and rarely extends into September.

Spring and fall are the wettest seasons on the island, and Beck uses a weather consultant to help time product applications and cultural practices. Aerification occurs before the club opens for play in early May and again following Labor Day. The course closes the last weekend of October.

Beck started his first golf course maintenance job at a course that didn't have fairway irrigation at the time: Pequot Golf Club in Stonington, Connecticut. Advances in wetting agent technology represent the biggest change in maintaining fairways without supplemental irrigation since Beck entered the industry. But experience teaches him that patience is the best tool for overcoming a drought without fairway irrigation.

"A little Mother Nature goes a long way," he says. "If you don't do anything to screw it up, it usually bounces back pretty good."

NEITHER BROWN NOR dry shocks

NOT the best idea

What might happen if a course with a fairway irrigation system attempted to stop using it for playability, financial or environmental reasons? The initial results wouldn't be ideal, according to superintendents who maintain courses without fairway irrigation.

"It's going to be hard, because their grass isn't acclimated to that," Fishers Island Club superintendent **Don Beck** says. "Our roots are very deep. It's the nature of the grass that we use. We have a lot of fescues and colonial bents in our fairways, so they are acclimated and already have an established root system that's deep. Roots will typically grow the depth of the water, so they are used to getting spooned water every night with an irrigation system. You're going to have a very shallow root system if you shut that off."

Adds Highland Country Club superintendent **Chris Warrick**: "If you're watering on a consistent basis and you shut that water off, it's going to be initially devastating. It's going to be multiple seasons probably before it can adjust and survive those conditions. The most important thing would be to be very vocal with your membership. Let them know what's going to happen and what to expect. It's going to turn brown; it's going to look different. You need to be ready for that."

or bothers **Greg Brooking**, the superintendent at Natchez Golf Club at Duncan Park.

The 18-hole municipal course Brooking oversees possesses a fairway irrigation system on just nine holes. Brooking grew up playing the Mississippi course in the 1960s and '70s, when it consisted of the nine holes designed by Scottish pro **Seymour Dunn**. The holes, which comprise the current back nine, opened in 1916 and the city has never added fairway irrigation to them. Fairway conditions were primitive during Brooking's childhood.

"We had a rule when we played as children that you could 'get grass,'" the 66-year-old Brooking says. "People don't know what get grass means. That means you can roll your ball around off the dirt until you found a piece of grass. You could then put your ball on that grass. It's just insane to think of."

The process of elevating fairway

▼ Natchez Golf Club at Duncan Park has never had a fairway irrigation system on its 107-year-old back nine.



conditions without an irrigation system commenced in the 1960s with the transition from common Bermudagrass to 328 Bermudagrass greens, according to Brooking. Years of placing greens clippings and aerification plugs in fairways led to improved turf coverage. “By hook or crook,” Brooking says, “areas where that 328 is are now the most playable fairways grass I have seen in my life.” Brooking estimates coverage on the back-nine fairways was about 70 percent when he returned to Natchez in 2007 to lead the maintenance and management of his hometown course. He has expanded turf coverage by removing sod from areas where the clippings and plugs were dumped. The sod is transferred to bare spots. “It will eat

the common Bermuda up,” Brooking says.

Consider it one of the most methodical fairway conversions in American turf-grass history. Location and climate made converting fairways without an irrigation system possible. A city resting on bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, Natchez averages close to 60 inches of annual rainfall. Every month averages at least 3 inches of precipitation. Timing product applications, Brooking



You're very much limited to what the weather gives you, and the weather isn't always cooperative."

— Chris Warrick

says, is the toughest part of managing fairways without irrigation.

“I simply do not fertilize the back side until imminent rain,” he adds. “If it’s a deluge, I kind of have a problem. It will wash a lot of fertilizer away. That’s how I grew that grass on that side. I chose my fertilizer days for rain days and get it washed in. I can’t tell how many times I have had good, perfect rain. A slow half-inch over a six-hour period is just perfect.”

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Brooking doesn't encounter the same application timing dilemma on the other nine. The city added a second nine designed by Brian Ault in 1993. The Ault-designed holes are the current front nine. Fairways are covered with Tifway II Bermudagrass. An automatic irrigation system was installed when the city constructed the nine.

"What's surprising is the condition of the back side is so good that golfers don't know that the back side doesn't have ir-



A little Mother Nature goes a long way. If you don't do anything to screw it up, it usually bounces back pretty good."

— Don Beck

rigation and the front does," Brooking says. "The only time they know it is during a severe, severe drought.

The back side will eventually go brown. It has to be so severe because Bermudagrass is such a drought-tolerant grass. It takes a lot to turn Bermudagrass brown."

An accomplished golfer, Brooking is a proponent of

minimal fairway irrigation. Unless Natchez is experiencing a drought, he only deploys front-nine fairway

irrigation on swaths where players frequently hit shots.

"I never, but never, but never water a spot that's not where a ball ends up," he says. "I don't water where the ball lands, I only water where the ball ends up. I call them 'landing areas,' but I don't mean where the ball lands. I mean where it rolls to. Tees, greens, landing areas ... we don't do anywhere else."

Brooking adds that he's never seen dead turf on either nine due to lean irrigation practices or a lack of rainfall. "I prove it every day, we can do it with a lot less irrigation — or in the case of our back nine where there's no irrigation." GCI

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

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PYTHIUM CONTROL Q/A



Q&A WITH BRIAN AYNARDI Ph.D.

Northeast Research Scientist • R&D Field Research

1. What are the symptoms of Pythium root disease?

Pythium root rot occurs on creeping bentgrass, mixed bentgrass/*Poa Annua*, and ultradwarf bermudagrass putting greens. Often found in push-up greens that hold a lot of moisture, Pythium root rot results in orange or bronze irregular patches, as well as brown, "sizzled," shortened roots that can't properly translocate water and nutrients.

Pythium root dysfunction occurs almost exclusively on newly established creeping bentgrass putting greens. Plants with Pythium root dysfunction lack root hairs but may otherwise appear somewhat healthy. Stand symptoms appear more as off-color circular patches.

2. How to control Pythium root diseases?

A preventive fungicide program is essential with any type of root-infecting pathogen, as these Pythium species damage roots before above ground symptoms manifest themselves. Initiate preventive applications when soil temperatures are ~60°F at

the 2-inch depth and continue through the summer growing months.

Segway® Fungicide SC has been recognized as the industry gold standard for Pythium control for nearly a decade, and should be used in rotation with other products that control root Pythium pathogens. A 14-day alternating program of Segway (or Union® Fungicide SC, a premix product of cyazofamid + azoxystrobin) and Serata™ Fungicide, a new product from FMC, has demonstrated unparalleled Pythium root disease control in university research trials and on golf courses.

Fortunately, neither of these Pythium diseases typically result in death of a putting surface, and curative fungicide applications of Segway (cyazofamid) or Union (cyazofamid + azoxystrobin) fungicide result in recovery that is evident within 10-14 days after application.

3. What do Pythium blight symptoms look like?

Pythium blight is one of the most feared of all diseases in the turf industry, as it can

kill large areas of turf quickly. Pythium blight often starts in small, dark patches about the size of a human hand, and is associated with aerial mycelia when the pathogen is active. Infected areas are bronze in color, and usually move in irregular patterns with topography due to the pathogen's affinity for water. Symptoms on bermudagrass include black lesions when the disease begins to develop. Scout for Pythium blight in areas where there is little to no air circulation when conducive environmental conditions exist.

4. How to control Pythium blight?

Preventive applications for Pythium blight are imperative, and Segway is the premier Pythium blight control product. Because Pythium blight affects the foliage, a carrier volume of 2 gal./1,000 sq. ft. is ideal. As with root Pythiums, control of foliar blight is best achieved on shorter intervals, such as 14-days.

Pythium blight occurs on cool-season grass when daytime temperatures exceed 85F, nighttime temperatures exceed

65F, and relative humidity is greater than 90% for 14 consecutive hours. Pythium blight does not require the same strict conditions to develop on bermudagrass.

On that host species, Pythium blight occurs when significant periods of rain, high humidity and clouds exist, especially during the shoulder seasons or during tropical storms, but does not require specific temperature parameters.

5. How to control Pythium damping off?

Damping-off is a disease of emerging or newly emerged seedlings. There are no specific environmental conditions associated with damping-off. However, due to the potential for seedlings to be killed, a preventive application at the time of seeding or at seedling emergence is critical. Apply Segway or Union fungicide in sufficient carrier volume (2 gal. carrier/1,000 sq. ft.) and repeat applications on newly emerged grass as needed.

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Wonderful

WILD

LIFE

Watchers

Interesting visitors are part of the joy of working on a golf course. A few of your peers reveal memories and lessons from memorable animal encounters.

By Cassidy Gladieux

Birds, deer, coyotes ... roosters? Working outdoors comes with many opportunities, one of them being the potential to develop relationships with wildlife. A lot of superintendents must learn how to adapt and manage these relationships while still keeping the golf course in top shape.

While birds and deer are common in most parts of the United States, depending on where a course is located, it might have some more interesting visitors on the property.

For **Derek Hofer**, superintendent at Green Meadow Golf Club in Helena, Montana, seeing a mother moose and her calf was once a friendly and frequent occurrence.

"She would come through once a week," Hofer says. "She always had this calf. I think she had maybe three different calves. I don't know if the calf was born right here on our place, but you could always see that the calf was just a little bigger all the time, so it's kind of like a measuring stick."

Racoons, skunks, eagles and hawks comprise the majority of Hoffer's regular wildlife on the course.

It's less common to see a moose further south, but **Ryan McCavitt**, director of golf course maintenance operations at Bayou Oaks at City Park in New Orleans, has seen something similarly unique—a group of native roosters.

"They're fairly domesticated," he says. "They'll come up to your golf cart, they're not scared of the golfers or anything anymore."

In some cases, the animals are accustomed to seeing and even interacting with people.

"We're here every day and I swear some of the animals notice," Hoffer says. "They're so used to certain things that they'll clue us off when something weird is going on." The animals on Hoffer's course have had the privilege of hearing his rendition of Def Leppard songs while he's out working.

Similarly, **Leasha Schwab**, superintendent at Pheasant Run Golf Course in Sharon, Ontario, enjoys seeing a family of red-tailed hawks as much as they enjoy seeing her.

"They always have babies and juvenile hawks are quite funny," she says. "They'll grab a golf ball and throw it around, just being quite silly and they grow up around this and so they're quite used to us and will kind of just sit on the ground or they will follow you around the golf course in the morning."

While some courses have novelty visitors, they might not all be appreciated in the way the moose,



roosters and hawks are. Alligators and bears are two big-game wildlife that have superintendents taking extra precautions to keep their courses and people safe. "If the alligators get larger than 6 feet, we typically trap them and have them removed as a safety concern," McCavitt says.

alligators removed when they pose a direct risk to the golfers and employees. "When they come out of the water and eat someone's golf ball and they go back in the water, it's time to pull the gator," he says.

Davis attributes his no size-limit rule to the fact that his course is not residential and does not pose a fear to pets or homes. He also must be cautious and proactive on keeping bears away. "The bears come in occasionally looking for food, so we put in bear-proof Dumpsters," Davis says. "That's the thing in South Florida."

While it's important to keep the people safe, courses also do their best to keep the animals safe and comfortable as well. At Bayou Oaks at City Park, buffer zones are essential for coexisting.

"We leave acreage between golf and waterways or some native plantings and brush areas where the animals can hide, sleep and nest," McCavitt says. "We try to leave little pockets throughout the golf course and we try to leave the pockets together so they go from one end of the golf course to another and they're not really fully exposed in any given time."

With a 300-plus-acre property and most holes bordered by forest, Pheasant Run has gone a step beyond and added even more additional greenery to benefit wildlife.

"We do really try to put our wildflower areas at the forefront," Schwab says. "It's a project that we've been doing about eight years now and we've probably converted between two and three acres of our property into wildflower naturalized areas." Pheasant Run also has beehives and a large vegetable garden that attracts many deer and groundhogs.

Providing such a vast landscape



Darren Davis, superintendent at Olde Florida Golf Club in Naples,

of flora and fauna has proved to be increasingly important as many areas are rapidly developing. Because of this, courses have seen an increase in the number of wildlife visiting their courses, seeking an oasis.

“My area is developing rapidly,” Davis says. “I think it’s obvious that wildlife looks for new homes in corridors that they can survive.”

McCavitt has seen wildlife return to Bayou Oaks following the construction of the course. The rebuilt course inside City Park opened in 2017. “With all that traffic and machinery and stuff, things kind of scattered,” he says. “Then over the course of the last six or seven years, everything starts migrating back and kind of getting back in their homesteads.”

“Any time you’re building something on that scale, you’re always scared about impacting habitat,” McCavitt adds. “I think the park, in particular, and architect **Rees Jones** did a really good job of mitigating that and leaving a lot of natural areas.”

For highly maintained areas such as fairways and greens, it is still important to be

cautious of the wildlife.

Pesticide usage can have a lasting effect on the animals that come into contact with them. Hofer is lucky to not battle disease on the course regularly, which allows him to be more reserved in his pesticide and fungicide usage. “If it’s flowering time and it’s like late May or early June and there just happens to be a lot of bees around, pollinators and things, we might choose not to spray weeds for a while or so,”

he says. Hofer prides himself on staying up to date on GCSAA and agronomy standards, opting to wait to spray to allow the pollinators opportunity for success.

McCavitt is also cautious of application rates and water quality on the course.

“We put down such low doses and such low AI percentages that I don’t think we’re doing anything that has a negative impact on the environment,” McCavitt says.



This is certainly their home as well as our place for enjoyment and exercise but in my over 30 years, there haven’t been many problems.”

— Darren Davis





NUMBERS to know

What types of animals do you enjoy seeing the most at your course?

MAMMALS



44%

BIRDS



44%

REPTILES



10%

AMPHIBIANS



2%



“We’re really diligent about just spoon feeding and giving the plants exactly what they need and not overdoing it. I would gather to say that the water is leaving the golf course better than it came in but that’s a really hard measurement because there’s so many different things you can test and measure on, but I could say that we’re not negatively impacting the water.”

With the physical beauty of the golf course landscapes, another rare beauty exists — peacefulness. “In a world where everything seems so crazy all the time, it brings a peaceful feel to it out here,” Hofer says.

Adds Davis: “Others don’t have the opportunity to truly walk in my shoes and to see the beauty of a golf course and truly understand

the numerous environmental benefits not just for wildlife but also for water quality and everything else.”

Despite having to take some extra measures to ensure that both wildlife and people remained unharmed, the benefits of being able to coexist often make it worth it.

“There are many that have a negative perception, but it’s because they’re unaware of the positive attributes,” Davis says. “We all coexist. This is certainly their home as well as our place for enjoyment and exercise but in my over 30 years, there haven’t been many problems.” **GCI**

Cassidy Gladieux is a Northeast Ohio-based writer and frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.

TIM'S 10 TURF COMMANDMENTS

For Lent this year, I gave up hitting bad shots. But during a recent afternoon round, after finding my ball in a bunker — again — then leaving my recovery shot short — again — I let loose my best Sergio imitation, looking skyward and screaming “rat farts!”

At that instant there was a flash of light and a boom, followed by a loud voice from above that bellowed, “Enough, Tim. You’re not good enough to get mad. As your punishment, you shall go forth for 40 days and 40 nights (or until the next aerification, whichever comes first) and preach agronomic sensibility to the masses. Educate the uneducated, be they greenkeepers, everyday golfers, club managers or television announcers, and bring them into the fold. For only Mother Nature and I can control their course conditions and playing abilities.”

Then the clouds parted, the sun shone down, and I knelt on the Pro Angle Sand (hey, enough people think it’s “Angel”) and promised, “I will be the messenger of your insights, but I can’t promise everyone is going to listen.”

At which point a seagull grabbed my ball from the green, flew off, and dropped it in a lake.

Thus, with said revelation, I bring you: **Tim’s 10 Turf Commandments**

1. You will have only these Golf Gods before you. The true words are spoken by the USGA, the R&A, the PGA Tour, occasionally the PGA of America, and one week a year, the Lords of Augusta. But not LIV.

2. Thou shall not have false idols (sorry, Greg) Nor shall you follow any golf teams named HyFlyers, Majesticks, or Iron Heads. However, I do kinda like RangeGoats.

3. Thou shall follow the Rules of Golf, revised or otherwise. Or the Five Golden Rules, the revised and condensed Rules, simple Rules, or local Rules. The jury is still out on the new Model Local Rule. So many Rules ... forget about it! Here’s the one and only Rule: Care for your course in the best way possible.

4. Thou shall not take the Lord’s name in vain even when three-putting from 5 feet. However, when my *Poa* control and pre-emerge herbicides don’t work, and spreading dollar spot continues to show itself late into fall, He certainly is

going to be hearing from me.

5. Remember the Sabbath Day ... but keep working. It would be nice if we could take Sundays off, spend some time with the family and find some way to commune with your deity of choice. But try saying you’re taking Saturday or Sunday off to your owners, green chairs and general managers as well as the 6:45 am foursome on the first, 10th and any other tee they can sneak onto.

6. Thou shall not kill ... except for billbugs, mole crickets, nematodes, goosegrass, *Pythium*, *Poa annua* ... you know your targets.

7. Thou shall not commit adultery and covet thy neighbor’s superintendent. Nor shall you covet his budget or equipment when your club is too cheap to increase the operating budget or pay you fairly.

8. Thou shall not steal your neighbor’s employees. Don’t raise your hourly wage to entice workers from nearby courses

over to yours. Pay and pave your own way. Get creative with your financing. Open your wallets!

9. Thou shall not bear false witness and tell your members that your neighbor’s green speed is slower down-grain than yours is uphill. Or that the revered course down the street that never aerifies has greens like mush that are nowhere near as firm as yours, even after that thunderstorm.

10. Do not covet thy neighbor’s maintenance facility, green committee chair, staff, equipment or anything you see on TV at Augusta National. Continually strive to do better at what you do but be honest with yourself.

Also, don’t forget to honor your mother and father. My father is the reason I am in the golf business, and he is always with me. Thanks, Dad.

Spring has sprung. May everyone have a safe, blessed and cool summer season. GCI



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CHANGEUP

When the pandemic shut down sports and shuttered stadiums, some turf pros weighed a move from sports fields to golf, others from golf to sports fields — and some made the leap.

By **Matt LaWell**

Three summers ago, as the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic paused the world, a small contingent of turf professionals considered a future without sports. Most of them worked for minor league baseball teams, whose 2020 season disappeared before it started — along with chunks of their salary. Others worked for colleges or parks and recreation departments.

As March gave way to June gave way to December, some picked up second or third jobs. One minor league baseball groundskeeper in Michigan plowed snow until the 1 a.m. calls all but shut down his body. Other turf pros shifted their professional gears to farm work. At least one dived into soil research.

And some followed through on an idea birthed during that spring and summer

without so many sports: They moved from sports fields to golf courses. Oddly enough, others moved the opposite direction, from golf courses to sports fields or local parks. No two paths were exactly the same and when you dig in — like a golf course maintenance team installing new irrigation or a baseball grounds crew rebuilding a mound — neither were the motives.

CURIOSITY

Kody Tingler kicked off the pandemic in what sure looked like a perfect position for a 27-year-old turf pro.

Less than five years out of Virginia Tech, Tingler had already logged a year each as the assistant director of grounds management for the Double-A Richmond Flying Squirrels and as a fields coordinator back in Blacksburg at his alma mater

before he landed with D.C. United as perhaps

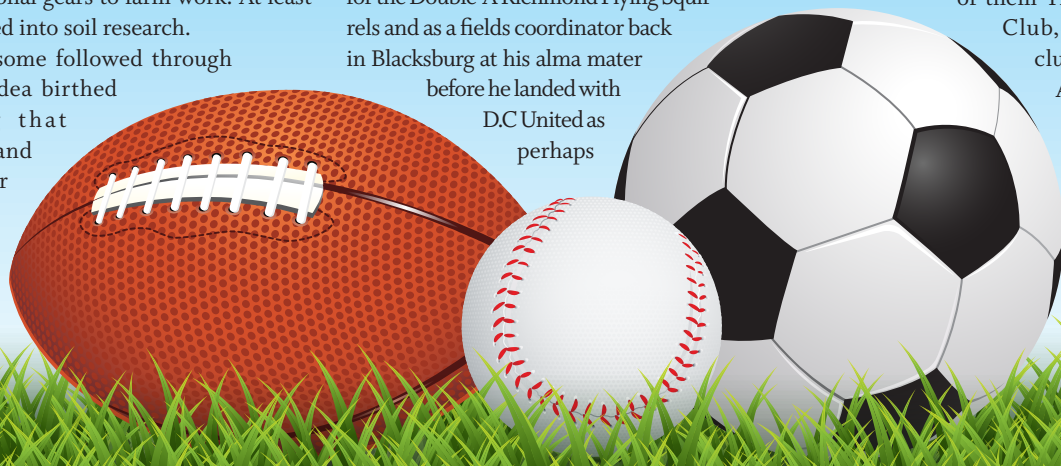
the youngest head groundskeeper in Major League Soccer.

Unlike most MLS clubs, D.C. United contracted out its field maintenance, so Tingler worked for an external company that also tasked him with a variety of outside projects, including high school renovations.

That all ended when MLS suspended its season and the company released Tingler. He remained unemployed for much of that first pandemic summer. He wanted to return to Richmond to be closer to his girlfriend, and when he did move back, he spotted a new opportunity.

“Sports were dead and golf was the only thing that was thriving,” Tingler says. “I reached out to two golf courses” — one of them The Federal

Club, a private club in Glen Allen, Virginia, that hired





him as an assistant superintendent. He clicked almost immediately with superintendent **Matt Drayton**.

“It was a good opportunity to try something different, get my feet wet in golf, and see if I liked it and if I wanted to go that route or stick with sports,” he says. “Plus, I hadn’t had much cool-weather (experience)

other than rye or fescue, and this was all bentgrass, so I saw that as another opportunity to broaden my horizons.”

Tingler worked with Drayton for two seasons, learning the

differences between three acres and 100 acres, brushing up on the Spanish necessary for communicating with a largely Latino crew, and falling for a part of the industry he had never considered before 2020.

“I moved because I saw golf was thriving and I know a lot of turf people were in the same boat I was — they got laid off during the pandemic because there were no sports, there were no jobs,” Tingler says. “Yes, the grass is still growing but the owners can’t afford to pay you. I was kind of surprised more people didn’t make the jump, because it looks like golf can survive anything.”

Tingler ultimately moved back to sports fields — he is currently a ball fields supervisor for Henrico County, which includes **Richmond**, managing five crew members and 20 parks — around the time Drayton also moved away from golf.

“Golf is a different animal,” Tingler says.

“You’re not watching the sports, you’re just constantly working. I loved it, loved all the guys — I just didn’t love pulling hose every day.”

LOVE

Tyler Lenz landed his first golf course maintenance job when he was just 15 years old.

He landed his second when he was 30.

In between, Lenz — currently the assistant superintendent at Metairie Country Club, a 1922 **Seth Raynor** design in the New Orleans suburbs — worked all baseball all the time. Fifteen years, nothing but diamonds.

He started his baseball career when he was 8 and his uncle, **Craig Veeder**, the longtime groundskeeper for the old independent Bridgeport Bluefish, invited him onto the field before a game at Herschel Greer Stadium in Nashville. “And it was over,” Lenz says. “Astronaut, firefighter, those could go fly a kite. I was going to be a groundskeeper.” And he was. First at Bailey Park Baseball Facility near his childhood home, then with the Low-A West Michigan Whitecaps, the Texas Rangers, Florida Atlantic University, the Flying Squirrels, the Low-A Bowling Green Hot Rods and the Double-A Midland RockHounds — his first two head gigs, the first of



After starting his turf career with the Chiefs and Royals, Rick Jones is all in on golf in Florida.

© COURTESY OF WIL LANNON (TOP, 2); COURTESY OF RICK JONES (BOTTOM, 2)



which he got a day before turning 24—then Texas Christian University and the Atlanta Braves.

By the time he reached Major League Baseball, though, he was no longer single. And after two years with the Braves, he and his girlfriend-turned-fiancée-turned-bride, **Caitlin**, weighed whether to move closer to his family in Michigan, her family in Louisiana, or remain in Georgia.

There was no real choice: “The cardinal rule if you marry a woman from south Louisiana,” Lenz says with a laugh, “you will 100 percent move to south Louisiana.”

He worked one more baseball job, this time at Louisiana State University. But Caitlin, who recently earned her DDS, wanted to run her own dental practice and one opened up in Norco, about half an hour west of New Orleans. She had already followed him to Georgia. Now it was his turn to follow her. But without baseball connections in the Big Easy, what was the next job?

Golf, of course. Lenz has played most of his life and currently customizes clubs for friends and family, and the bug bit him hard during his Braves run, when he would sneak up to Sweetens Cove on plenty of off days. An assistant position opened

at MCC within weeks of the Lenzes moving to the area, and Lenz applied with an email: “Hi, I’m interested in the position. I’ve been in baseball for 14 years and the last time I worked in golf I was 15 years old and a sophomore in high school. But I know grass.”

Almost a year later, Lenz is as comfortable with golf as if he had never left it during high school.

“It was a decision I had to put a lot of thought into,” he says. “You do something for so long and you’re pretty good at it and then you flip the table

and start over at 30 years old, it was a little scary. But I’m a sponge. Teach me how to do it and I’ll refine what you teach me. I wasn’t too proud to say I don’t know.

“You watch, you learn, you listen, and you kind of pick up the cadence of how they manage things.”

CHALLENGE

The pandemic foisted one unique challenge after another, and the Class of 2020 received a big one. On the brink of graduation, they needed to adapt immediately to virtual classes.

Wil Lannon was finishing up his undergraduate studies at Virginia Tech during the spring of 2020, with parts of two semesters remaining; a switch from the two-year program to the four-year program extended his time in Blacksburg by about six months. He attended all spring classes online, then returned to campus in the fall—but only after his fourth turf internship, this one with the Country Club of Fairfax in Virginia.

After 2017 and 2018 internships with the Washington Nationals and the Texas Rangers, Lannon figured he was on a baseball path—or at least a sports field path—but he wound up at Longwood Cricket Club in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, in 2019, which he describes as “a

change, but interesting.”

When his internship at Fairfax expanded to a full-time position as assistant superintendent, he grabbed the opportunity.

“Since it was my first golf job, I went into it like I went into my first internship with the Nationals,” Lannon says. “I knew *some* stuff, but it was a whole new game. Learn as much as I could. It was nice going from baseball, where everybody is working on top of each other on two or three acres to being spread out over 100, 150 acres.”

Lannon figured he would return to a baseball field after his first year, but he stuck around for a second year, then a third year. He moonlighted each of the last two summers as a member of the tarp crew for the Flying Squirrels—an extracurricular he will avoid this year thanks to a new position: assistant superintendent at the Country Club of Virginia, a 54-hole private club in Richmond where Lannon shares James River Course assistant duties with two other Hokies, **Ryan Thompson** and **Brad Vandygriff**.

Because Lannon is so young,

◀ Wil Lannon, left and center, and Tyler Lenz, right and bottom, have both moved from baseball to golf since the start of the pandemic.



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PEOPLE

barely 25, and already has multiple years of both golf and baseball on his resume, he remains uncertain which way he will swing for the long term. Switch-hitting might work, though.

“I do kind of like the idea of going back and forth, and taking what I learned from one to the other,” he says. “Though it does seem like golf courses have all the money.”

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Has any turf pro worked in as many different corners of the industry since the start of the pandemic as **Tradd Jones**?

In March 2020, Jones was still the head groundskeeper for the Low-A Bowling Green Hot Rods in Kentucky. When Major League Baseball cancelled their season, he moved to the Thornblade Club, a private club outside Greenville, South Carolina, where he worked a year as assistant superintendent. Forever a baseball fan — especially of the Braves — he jumped at the opportunity to move closer to home and maintain Russ Chandler Stadium at Georgia Tech, and he added maintenance duties at the school’s Noonan Golf Facility after the assistant there retired. And then, last September, he left one dream job for another to join the team at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, prepping the field for the Atlanta Falcons, Atlanta United, the SEC Championship Game, a variety of other games and matches for “both forms of football” and, in three

years, some FIFA World Cup matches.

“Bigger stadium, brighter lights, bigger crowds,” Jones says. “I remember seeing an opening when I moved to Atlanta and I wasn’t interested at the time, just because I have a degree in grass” — the stadium switched last year from FieldTurf to CORE, a multi-layer, dual-polymer fiber — “but the longer I



I moved because I saw golf was thriving and I know a lot of turf people were in the same boat I was — they got laid off during the pandemic because there were no sports, there were no jobs. Yes, the grass is still growing but the owners can’t afford to pay you. I was kind of surprised more people didn’t make the jump, because it looks like golf can survive anything.”

— Kody Tingler

lived here and saw the Falcons on TV, United on TV, went to a couple concerts here, I noticed how nice the facility was. And one day the job just opened and I went for it, and now we're here."

Jones, 33, is a Horry Georgetown Technical College alum who worked on both golf courses and baseball fields during his time as a Fighting Mole Cricket, so he was already familiar with some of the similarities between sports, but he recently added a new overlap to his repertoire.

"The Stimpmeter," he says. "Before a recent United match, we did

some ball roll drills and it's the exact same thing as the Stimpmeter, just with a bigger ramp and a bigger ball. You pick a point, you roll it one way. Move it to the left, roll it that way. Move it to the right, roll it that way. And there were maybe eight different spots on the pitch where we did that. It was the same process as on a golf course, but our (turf) is perfectly flat."



Jones is thrilled with his new position — and again, those World Cup matches are a big draw — but if golf ever hooks him, Atlanta is packed with

◀ Before moving to MLS, golf and now parks and rec, Kody Tingler, center, worked on the Richmond Flying Squirrels' ground crew.

great courses.

"East Lake is right down the road, Chateau Elan is up there, Bobby Jones is right down the road," he says. "It's an amazing spot to be. There's no shortage of opportunities here."

THE TICK OF THE CLOCK

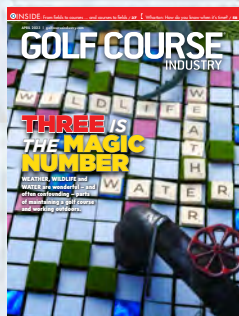
There are also no shortage of different paths to golf course main-

CHANGEUP continues on page 56

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ACELEPRYN



Q&A WITH LISA BEIRN, Ph.D.

Technical services manager, Syngenta

1. What are the key insects that Acelepryn® insecticide helps control?

Acelepryn continues to be a trusted solution on golf courses across the country because of its season-long control of all white grub species and turf caterpillars with just 8 fl. oz./A. At 12 fl. oz./A, one application will also provide season-long control of billbugs. Acelepryn is best known for control of:

- All white grub species
- Caterpillars
- Annual bluegrass weevil
- Billbugs
- European crane fly

2. When should superintendents apply Acelepryn to see the best results?

While other insecticides require multiple applications or must be applied later in the season, Acelepryn offers flexibility with a wide application window (April–June) for grubs, caterpillars and billbugs with just one application. Additionally, Acelepryn provides excellent control even when rainfall or irrigation are not available.



of surveyed superintendents agree that the spectrum and length of control of Acelepryn saves them from making additional applications throughout the season.¹

3. Why is Acelepryn ideal for courses where environmental impact is of concern?

Acelepryn is unique in that it has no known adverse effects on beneficial and non-target organisms including earthworms and honey bees. In addition, Acelepryn is registered by the Environmental Protection Agency under its Reduced Risk Program.² 80% of surveyed golf course superintendents said it is important to them/their members that Acelepryn insecticide has no signal word and no adverse effects on beneficial and non-target organisms including honey bees.¹

4. How does Acelepryn fit into the WeevilTrakSM Annual Bluegrass Weevil monitoring program?

Acelepryn is a critical compo-

nent of an effective, long-term strategy to control annual bluegrass weevil (ABW). Acelepryn is often one of the first products out each year, controlling ABW small larvae that feed inside grass stems. This same application often eliminates the need for subsequent grub and caterpillar applications. When rotated with Ference® and Provaunt® WDG insecticides, superintendents get GUARANTEED control of this difficult pest with the WeevilTrak ABW guarantee.

To learn more about Acelepryn, scan the QR code to watch a short customer experience video or visit [GreenCastOnline.com/Acelepryn](https://www.GreenCastOnline.com/Acelepryn).



¹ Source: Survey of 572 golf course superintendents conducted via Tech-Validate in March 2021.

² A reduced risk pesticide is defined as one which may reasonably be expected to accomplish one or more of the following: (1) reduces pesticide risks to human health; (2) reduces pesticide risks to non-target organisms; (3) reduces the potential for contamination of valued, environmental resources, or (4) broadens adoption of IPM or makes it more effective. Acelepryn qualifies under one or more of the above criteria.

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*Jonathan L. Larson, Carl T. Redmond and Daniel A. Potter, SCl. September 2011.

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Ready for double liftoff

Sometimes everything happens at once. Fortunately, The Club at Carlton Woods team has a thorough plan for beginning its run as a major championship venue while juggling a big renovation.

By **Rick Woelfel**

Half a century ago, Houston was the hub of America's ultimately successful effort to put a man on the moon. **Tim Huber** is now undertaking a mission of a different sort. Huber is the director of agronomy at The Club at Carlton Woods in the city's north suburbs. A Penn State graduate, Huber has been at the club since 2010 and the director of agronomy since December 2018.

Huber and his team guided the club's turf preparations for the Chevron Championship, the LPGA Tour's signature event, played at Carlton Woods's **Jack Nicklaus** Signature Course this month.

The event marked the beginning of a 10-year contract between Carlton Woods and the LPGA.

▲ The Club at Carlton Woods turf management team from left: Tim Huber, Mark Schulze, Sam Marrow, Heath Wisdom and Deanna Berry.

© COURTESY OF THE CLUB AT
CARLTON WOODS (2)



You never really know what rainfall you're going to get. You could get 10 inches, you could get zero."

— *Heath Wisdom*

Immediately following the tournament, the Nicklaus Signature Course, which opened in 2001, closed for a major renovation that includes refurbishing the greens and bunkers and the installation of a new irrigation system.

The estimated price tag? Not quite \$8 million, including \$3 million for the irrigation system. The timeline? The club hopes to have the Nicklaus Course ready for member play by Oct. 20.

In the meantime, regular play (the club hosts approximately 38,000 rounds each year) has shifted to the club's **Tom Fazio** Championship Course, which debuted in 2005.

So why was a major renovation scheduled as the club was preparing to host its first Chevron Championship? The impetus came in part from Nicklaus, who visits the club each May.

"We've solicited feedback from him over the years," Huber says. "What his thoughts are, what he sees, and a lot of it was just the comment that, 'The course was getting tired.' And to keep up with the demand of a high-end facility and our peers, we should think about doing a project."

Thus, the renovation was scheduled for the spring, summer and early fall of 2023.

Chris Cochran, a senior designer for Nicklaus Design, will be heavily involved in the project.

"The golf course was very well-built the first time," he says. "It's one of my favorites that Jack has done.

"I can't think of any fairway grading we need to do. Just a little bit of tee work. So, it's mostly just kind of rebuilding the pieces that are already there."

Cochran spoke to the quality of the course's greens, which are being restored to their original size.

"The greens are nice," he says. "There's no complaints about pin area or pitch or anything like that, so we'll just put

them back the way they were. As far as the bunkers go, they're beautifully done. We'll do a little bit more work to keep the surface water out of them, so they don't wash as bad. But it's actually a pretty simple job by my standards."

But first there was the Chevron Championship, which moved to Carlton Woods after 54 years at Mission Hills Country Club in Rancho Mirage, California, where, for most of its history it was known as the Dinah Shore or Nabisco Championship. Chevron became the title sponsor last year.

The competitive environment the LPGA Tour players experienced in south Texas in April differed from what they were accustomed to in Southern California in late March and early April, the tournament's traditional window.

The Nicklaus Course at Carlton Woods features Bermudagrass throughout its layout, including TiffEagle greens. Huber notes that the notoriously fickle south Texas weather in April factored into his preparations.

"Houston has unpredictable weather," he says. "In April, we should be good as far as temperatures, but

you never know with the rain and overcast skies, and we didn't feel like it was the right thing to do for our membership for us to oversee the golf course. We don't want a harsh transition period after the overseed checks out and we're stuck with this piqued Bermudagrass.

"We decided we're not going to oversee for the event. We're going to try and push the Bermudagrass early and that's a tough thing to do between March 15 and advance week, (the week of April 10), so we had about a month. That's really our window to try and grow some (419) Bermudagrass, and get the rough a little bit thicker, get the fairways to a little more dense.

"The greens are probably the easiest part of it, but it's really the rough and the fairways. (The greens) have



SPOTLIGHT

various types of Bermuda. They're not pure TifEagle, which is what we're after when we're through with this renovation."

Heath Wisdom is the superintendent in charge of the Nicklaus Signature Course on a daily basis. Wisdom, who has an associate's

degree from Western Texas College, has been at Carlton Woods for a year and a half. He oversees a team of two dozen employees.

"The trick really for me is keeping up with the demands of daily member play in the middle of all this," he says. "That's probably



In this world we're living in, it's not as easy to say 'Hey, I'll order it.' It's been a lot of 'What's available, when can we get it,' and then, when they tell you, how comfortable you are with your vendor. We wanted to make sure that we had as much contracted as we possibly could eight to nine months out from the start of the project."

— *Tim Huber*

the biggest hurdle for me. But altogether we have a great team, we have great vendors and contractors, and we all work together to produce one product.

"As far as daily member play, we do what we need to do with typical schedules and procedures. But every day something new comes up with the tournament and/or the renovation and we just fight fires and get it done."

Like Huber, Wisdom was concerned about the south Texas weather in the weeks leading up to the tournament. "You never really know what rainfall you're going to get," he says. "You could get 10 inches, you could get zero."

Wisdom is also alert to the possibility of frost in late March or early April. "It's a slim chance, but it's possible and would affect how the grass is two to three weeks after the frost when the tournament's here."

Following the conclusion of the Chevron Championship, the renovation effort proceeds full speed ahead. In some respects, it had already started. For the project to be completed by Huber's self-imposed deadline,



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several pieces of a larger puzzle must fit together seamlessly. Chief among them is getting water to newly planted greens.

“That became the first problem for us to solve,” he says, “and so we came to the agreement that we could potentially start doing the mainline irrigation this winter, ahead of the PGA event, to try to get a jump on getting some pipe in the ground, therefore alleviating that time crunch from May 1 to call it July 1. (By July 10) that irrigation system has really got to be ready to start throwing water to some of these greens. That’s just too tight a window.”

Crews have been on site since January working to install the main irrigation line, trying to get as much of the mainline pipe installed before the Chevron Championship. Huber

took steps to ensure the crew had everything they needed to complete the job on time well before January.

“(A big step) was getting all the stuff, getting the irrigation heads, getting the valves, getting the valve boxes, getting the mainline pipe, selecting the contractor and working around the delays and the tight time window,” he says.

Huber’s primary concern is avoiding the supply chain issues that could jeopardize the timely completion of the project.

“In this world we’re living in, it’s not as easy to say, ‘Hey, I’ll order it,’” he adds. “It’s been a lot of ‘What’s available? When can we get it?’ and then, when they tell you, how comfortable you are with your vendor. We wanted to make sure that we had as much contracted as we possibly could eight

to nine months out from the start of the project.”

As a result of all this, Huber had an extensive collection of parts and equipment on hand as dual final countdowns continue to both the Chevron Championship and the renovation.

“We’ve got reams of pipe. Contractors have got a lot of equipment on site,” he says. “We’ve got a cart barn full of boxes of irrigation heads that we’ve bought and paid for. They’ve been sitting there for a few months. They’re going to be sitting there a few months more, but we do have them, and we know we’re not going to get into that situation where we need them and can’t get them.” GCI

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



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Under umbrella weather

Where does dollarweed occur? What leads to its emergence? And when and how should it be controlled?

By **Guy Cipriano**



The average adult reads at a rate of around 250 words per minute.

Whether it's life or turf, anything with a dollar involved can keep readers occupied for at least a few minutes.

The commitment over the next four minutes involves a concept using dollar in the first

part of its nomenclature — and we promise this isn't another financial or dollar spot story.

Work on a course in the Southeast within a few hours of a massive body of water? Does the course get rain? Are there low-lying areas on the property?

Consider it time for a dollarweed refresher. Even if your course doesn't fit into the above

categories, we suggest you keep reading. Perhaps your career will take you where the weed lurks.

A broadleaf weed also known as pennywort, dollarweed can interrupt uniformity and spoil aesthetics on nearly any warm-season turf species and variety covering fairways, approaches, roughs and tees. Dollarweed is a perennial. Left untreated, it

will emerge next year ... and the following year ... and maybe the year after that.

"It's a perennial and it has rhizomes," says PBI-Gordon Southeast research scientist Dr. Eric Reasor. "A small patch will become a bigger and bigger and bigger patch. It's a weed that will persist every year and get bigger and bigger every year."

How big? Leaflets can exceed two inches. That means nasty, unsightly lies in rough-height turf. Playing golf in Florida wind is already tough enough without having to muscle the ball through dollarweed. "In rough, it can form a bit of a higher canopy," Reasor says. "You can kind of close a ball in it or the ball will bury down in there a little bit."

Dollarweed looks distinct: rounded leaves resemble silver dollars (hence the name) with waxy edges. Weeds are often confused with other weeds. In dollarweed's case, the biggest mix-up occurs when a property also possesses dichondra, another perennial broadleaf weed that likes water. Two familiar shapes we all learn at young ages help determine the difference between the weeds.

"Dichondra will have one deep lobe where the stem meets, so it's almost like a big, heart-shaped leaf," Reasor says. "Dollarweed has a higher circle with the stem in the middle, kind of like an umbrella."

Dollarweed is associated with umbrella weather. Courses in Gulf Coast states, especially Florida, are susceptible to dollarweed outbreaks, according to Reasor. The range extends up the Atlantic Coast to Virginia's eastern shore. Courses in the mountains of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, and northern parts of Mississippi and Alabama are less vulnerable to outbreaks.

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Water accelerates and promotes dollarweed growth. In fact, it can grow submersed in water. Dollarweed will overtake parts of the course where shade inhibits Bermudagrass. It struggles handling significant traffic.

"It's not going to tolerate cart traffic or foot traffic like a turfgrass would," Reasor says. "High-traffic areas, if there's dollarweed there, it's going to get beat down and you're going to end up with bare ground until that turf can recover."

In Florida, spring is prime dollarweed season. Outbreak timings are pushed back a few weeks or months in other Gulf Coast states. "It likes a little bit of cool weather and that wetter season," Reasor says. "That's not to say it

won't persist in the heat of summer, but it just likes that cooler bit of weather, not those 90- and 100-degree temperatures."

Reasor adds that dollarweed "can tolerate a lot of different environments," thus limiting the scope of cultural practices to halt its spread. Basics include avoiding overirrigation, enhancing drainage in low-lying areas and managing trees to decrease shade.

Effective dollarweed control programs primarily include a curative approach using postemergence herbicides, according to Reasor.

"Any preemergence you put down, if there's seed in the soil, you're going to control that," he says. "That will control weeds

EXTRA benefits

What do the two hanging letters in the SpeedZone Southern EW Broadleaf Herbicide for Turf mean? And how do they help golf course maintenance professionals in tussles with broadleaf weeds?

We'll let PBI-Gordon Southeast research scientist Dr. Eric Reasor explain.

"The EW part stands for emulsion-in-water," he says. "It's a water soluble. It doesn't have the petroleum-based solvent. It cuts down on the odor and it cuts down on the volatile organic compound, so it's more environmentally friendly from that standpoint. There's a lot of work on the formulation side and you have to make sure the formulations are working from the field side. It's a lab and field approach with the development of it."

like crabgrass and goosegrass, but you're not going to control those new plants coming from rhizomes with a preemergence. Nine times out of 10 you will need a postemergence herbicide application."

Scouting should commence when air temperatures start averaging around 55 degrees. Once dollarweed is spotted, Reasor recommends curtailing it as swiftly as possible. The sight of dollarweed means it's most likely "thriving pretty well," he adds.

Density determines how many postemergence applications are required for control.

"It can sometimes take two applications, especially in a dense stand," Reasor says. "It can form a real thick canopy and those leaves are real waxy, so it can be hard to get herbicides into those weeds at times. I wouldn't say it's a difficult-to-control weed like others, but it can definitely be a little bit tricky. Two applications provide absolute best control, but sometimes you can get it pretty good with one app."

Herbicides possessing 2,4-D as an active ingredient are a popular and proven selection for dollarweed control. 2,4-D is one of four active ingredients in PBI-Gordon's SpeedZone Southern EW Broadleaf Herbicide for Turf. "It has a lower amount of 2,4-D for the Florida area," Reasor says. "It's safe to use on all those different turf types that

can be down in Florida. It's a good mix of contact and systemic herbicides."

The presence of a systemic herbicide in SpeedZone Southern EW allows the formulation to reach the underworld of dollarweed.

"It's important that they get in the plant and move down and into the rhizomes, so the plant will transport that herbicide down into those underground stands," Reasor adds. "That's really where you get the best control, is with systemic herbicides moving down into the roots and the stands underground. If you have too much of a contact herbicide, it will just kind of burn the top leaves off and then it regrows right from those rhizomes. A good mix of contact and systemic with systemic herbicides being the most important."

In addition to having a reliable herbicide for control, there is another significant positive regarding dollarweed: The weed doesn't appear to be migrating.

"It's still around those coastal areas," Reasor says. "Is it a sandy soil thing? Is it just coastal weather? Does the ocean influence it? It doesn't seem to be spreading quite like some of these other weeds. It might have to do with the amounts of seed it develops aren't the same as *Poa* or goosegrass or even doveweed. For the most part, it seems to be just chilling where it is." **GC**





BACK TO THE OLYMPIC CLUB

I spent a recent weekend touring golf courses in the Bay Area. Among the half-dozen courses I studied was the famed Olympic Club, over on the west side of San Francisco.

It is a property I've been visiting on and off since my first West Coast trip in 1982. Back then, still on 28 years old and having published exactly two golf articles in my life, I was gearing up to caddie in the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach for **Bernhard Langer** and had a few early free days on hand. It didn't help my tourism agenda that I was, like any good caddie and aspiring freelance writer, dead broke and needed some spending money. So, I talked my way onto the caddie ranks and double-looped a two-day member-guest that covered the club's two 18-hole courses, Lake and Ocean.

I was curious to see the work in progress there. The club is midway into a massive rebuild of its famed Lake Course — that has been home to U.S. Opens in 1955, 1966, 1987, 1998 and 2012, and the 2021 U.S. Women's Open. Director of golf maintenance **Troy Flanagan** is dealing with an army of laborers and equipment under the direction of architect **Gil Hanse**,

“Gone are the short-grass surrounds introduced for the 2012 U.S. Open. Gone, too, so to speak, is the anomaly of a championship course with only one fairway bunker influencing a tee shot — on the par-4 sixth hole.”

with construction work by Total Turf and fine feature shaping by Hanse's in-house team of Cave Man Golf.

Not a bunker or green remains undisturbed with work that began with a course shutdown in November 2022. The place is getting the works: new irrigation, all new bunker drainage and transformation of all greens into USGA-grade construction.

After years of tinkering and fixing things in place, Olympic Club has entrusted its future to its past. Thanks to Hanse's boldness, the course is going back to its original design. Gone are the short-grass surrounds introduced for the 2012 U.S. Open. Gone, too, so to speak, is the anomaly of a championship course with only one fairway bunker influencing a tee shot — on the par-4 sixth hole. Aerials from the 1930s reveal fairway bunkering on at least a half-dozen holes, including the last three. They are all being put back, thus undoing one of **Robert Trent Jones Sr.'s** biggest changes for the 1955 U.S. Open, when “the Open Doctor” turned his back on the past and marched boldly into his own future.

Along with fairways widened by 25 percent, greens 35 percent bigger and overall bunker-

ing another 30 percent larger in total area, there will be a far more demanding set of tee shots when the course re-opens later this year. Golfers of all stripes, from high-handicap-

pers to championship contestants in the 2028 PGA Championship and 2033 Ryder Cup, will now have to contend with an expanded version of the Lake Course's gravity-defying, terraced fairways.

Most of the course sits on sandy ground — a geological incur-sion that allows the ground to dry out faster than in many other parts of the Bay Area. That has proved to be a godsend this past winter, which has already seen 3 feet of rainfall since work started. And yet somehow the crews have continued making good, steady progress,

When I was there the focus was on the famed short par-4 18th hole. When the crew is done, they will still leave behind a tiny green. While the new one at 3,000 square feet will be a lot more manageable than the old, 2,000-square-foot green, there will remain that infernal slope halfway down. And when viewed from the fairway, the target will still look miniscule — and as if totally engulfed in sand across the front.

The work is informed, as is all of Hanse's restoration, by the seemingly contradictory goals of making the golf course both more receptive and more demanding. There's more room for the wayward shot, more ways for golfers of different skill levels to play the same hole. But there's also more opportunity to set the golf course up on its edge and force good players trying to make birdies to take risks.

Golf at the Olympic Club's Lake Course was never meant to be easy. It's just that from now on there will be more of it to deal with. **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).



BOARDING





EFFICIENT spring training

Properly acclimating new employees with your course's equipment, practices and people is a non-negotiable part of the job. Four experienced turf leaders share what they have learned about making the process smooth for all parties involved.

Training new employees can be a year-round task and finding the time while also preparing the course for early-season play can be exhausting. However, not training employees properly can be costly in more ways than one. It's essential to find an efficient and effective way to ensure your entire crew is fully prepared for the busy season ahead.

FIRST STEPS

Typically, the first step in the hiring process involves a lot of HR information and paperwork. Once the employee is prepared on the technical side of things, it's time to get into the dirty work.

"I think it's pretty popular in our industry to start new employees on simpler tasks that don't involve as much equipment operation, but probably involves more manual labor," says **Brian Green**, director of golf course maintenance at Lonnie Poole Golf Course in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The pandemic and labor shortage had forced some courses and superintendents to accelerate the training process.

"When you're short-staffed, you're trying to find the most efficient ways to do tasks,"

Green says. "Sometimes you have to put up with tasks not getting done to the best of someone's ability because they had more tasks to get done than normal."

Now, Green has begun refining the details of his training program.

"We've really started focusing more on fine-tuning the way that we do things, trying to get back to the most ideal way to do things that's going

to provide the best product," he says. "That's something we've kind of shifted gears on and focused more on in the last year."

Managers or veteran employees responsible for training co-workers are tasked with instilling best practices into new hires. The practice can become muddled or inefficient — and fail to develop well-rounded employees — if those responsibilities fall onto just the superintendent.

"For us, it was important to develop a core group, and then use those people to retrain because it takes everybody," says **Bob Davis**, COO and director of golf course operations at Chartiers Country Club in Pittsburgh. "The superintendent can't be solely responsible for training every single person on his staff, so there have to be levels where things are delegated."

USE YOUR RESOURCES

Utilizing veteran employees as trainers and mentors is the ideal way to delegate the responsibility of training. It also allows new employees to bond with staff.

"I think the new employees might be a little more comfortable being trained by someone who they can kind of look at as a peer," Green says. "They might not be as intimidated as they would be in front of a supervisor."

Having veteran employees take an active role in the training process is beneficial on both ends.

By
**Cassidy
Gladieux**

Veterans get more experience training and take on more responsibility and leadership roles. For turfgrass students working on courses, this provides an active learning opportunity.

“It gives them the opportunity to learn how to be a trainer, which is part of what they can learn here as far as real-world stuff to supplement their classroom learning,” says **Don Garrett**, superintendent of The Walker Course at Clemson University. “A lot of our turfgrass management students that work for us, they’re going to be assistant superintendents when they get out of here and they need to learn how to train people and be thorough.”

Speaking of being thorough, when training new employees, there are multiple ways you can approach it. It’s all about adapting and knowing what’s best for the person being trained.

“I don’t think there’s a cookie-cutter recipe to training somebody,” Davis says. “Everybody’s different. Someone might be physically stronger and be able to lift their machine onto a trailer safely, but someone else might not be able to do that. You have to have realistic expectations on what each person can and cannot do.”

Once you establish an employee’s skillset, you can begin working to enhance those skills and improve on other aspects of training.

“Certainly, hands-on training and demonstrating things is the most effective way to train someone,” Green says. “Someone can read something on a piece of paper and not grasp it. There’s going to be certain situations that you can show them out in the field that you can’t demonstrate otherwise.”

In addition to being thorough, patience helps the trainer execute his or her duties. Whether you were a new employee 20 years ago or 20 weeks ago, you can likely remember making a mistake or two. Remember to give the trainee some slack.

“Not everybody’s going to learn the same, not everybody’s going to kick it off as quickly as

somebody else,” says **Peter Rappoccio**, superintendent at Concord Country Club in Concord, Massachusetts. “You need to be patient and kind of find what works and how to communicate with somebody. That’s the big piece.”

Training tactics and practices have changed throughout the years.

“I think the old term ‘initiation by fire,’ throwing them in there, isn’t always the right thing,” Davis says. “Taking baby steps, in my opinion, is the best method and not just throwing people into situations. You don’t want to set somebody up for failure.”

Taking the necessary time upfront to build a new employee’s confidence and bandwidth will only benefit your course and team in the long run. This comes from being detail-oriented and setting expectations.

“Having a training program where you have everything kind of spelled out and you take the time to show someone how to do something properly ... there’s no pushback if equipment comes in and is broken or banged up,” Rappoccio says. “You kind of eliminate that, so it helps protect your equipment and, more importantly, keeps the individual operating it safely.”

SAFETY

As a course employee, you’re around and operating perhaps millions of dollars of equipment and materials daily. Ensuring they are used properly and safely from the start will potentially save you from financial damage as well as injury.

“I think safety has to be No. 1 with what we’re doing on a daily basis,” Davis says. “It’s not just, ‘Hey, we can go out there and make a mistake and kill a lot of turf, because we can grow grass again.’ If somebody were to get hurt, those things would be harder to live with if we could’ve prevented it.”

By setting the precedent that safety comes first, you establish an example for the employees and potentially save money and lives. For Garrett, machines like the woodchipper are taken very seriously.

In addition to watching a safety video from the manufacturer, new trainees must also go out with an experienced employee until they are trusted to operate it alone.

“I don’t care if a guy came in here and applied for a job and had 20 years’ experience with a tree company and ran a chipper all his life, he’s still gonna watch that video,” Garrett says. “Don’t make exceptions, because once you make exceptions, you’ll have an accident.”

TO THE TRAINEE

The role of trainee is just as important and the trainer role. Trainees are essentially students of the course for a while. Just like in the classroom, it’s OK for them to ask questions and be nervous. Encourage trainees to be curious and strive to learn new things.

“A lot of times when you’re a new employee, or learning a new task, you don’t want to feel like you’re not intelligent and you are hesitant to ask questions,” Green says. “I would encourage new employees to not be intimidated to ask questions. I think that if you are not intimidated, it kind of shows initiative and shows your eagerness to your supervisor and trainer and they’ll be more apt to introduce you to more things if they see you have an interest.”

Everyone working on a golf course was a new employee at one time. It’s the responsibility of the trainee as much as the trainer to ensure the future of the course is in good hands.

“When it comes to training, essentially you’re building a team,” Davis says. “There’s a lot of things that go into that. There’s culture behind what you’re trying to do.”

“We’ve invested a lot in projects on the golf course, but you have to invest in your people as well. That’s all very important when you’re trying to get to your end goal of putting out the best product that you can on a daily basis.” **GCI**

Cassidy Gladieux is a Northeast Ohio-based writer and frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.



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PEOPLE

CHANGEUP *continued from page 41*

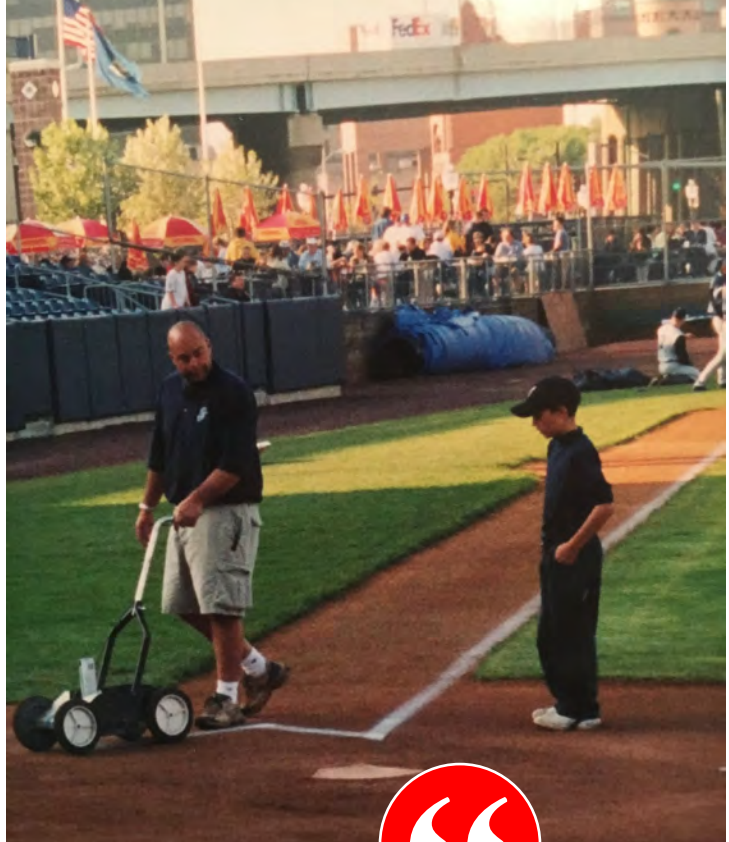
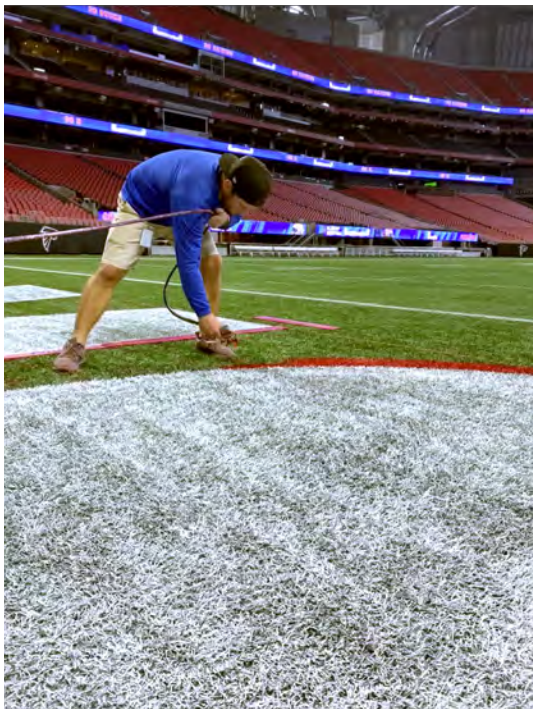
► Tyler Lenz was just 8 when he fell in love with turf thanks to his minor league baseball groundskeeper uncle, Craig Veeder.

tenance. **Rick Jones** started his as an engineer, then a billiards hall owner, before starting work as an environmental cleaner with the Kansas City Chiefs when he was 41. Eight years later, he is an assistant superintendent at a 54-hole private golf community in Vero Beach, Florida. How the heck did that happen?

“If you don’t know something, don’t act like you know it,” says Jones, no relation to Tradd Jones. “Just ask questions and be persistent about it. And if you fail, get back up again until you succeed.”

Jones cleaned for the Chiefs for parts of three years before he backed into a spot on the turf team, jumping in on maintenance and climbing the ranks before adding responsibilities with the neighboring Royals. After close to a decade in Missouri, he moved for part of a year to Georgia Tech, then to the University of Arizona, before heading to Florida for a turf managerial role with ABM Industries. The lack of consistency with that position prompted him to look for something more stable—and that took him to John’s Island Club in Vero

▼ Tradd Jones has worked on a minor league ballfield, a private golf course, a college baseball field and golf course, and now at an NFL and MLS stadium—all since the start of the pandemic.



Beach, where he’s currently an assistant superintendent.

“I was scared to give up what I knew,” Jones says. “I can take care of a football field, I can take care of a baseball field. But now that I’m over here, I love it.”

“In golf, you’re constantly learning. You have 18 different tee boxes, you have 18 different

fairways, you have 18 different greens. You have multiple problems every day and you’re not going to see the same thing on every surface. And you have the opportunity to really cultivate and grow in turf.”

Jones’ old boss, Chiefs head groundskeeper **Travis Hogan**, proved years ago that the jump from one side of the turf industry to the other—and to do so incredibly successfully—is entirely possible. Hogan worked at Pebble Beach Golf Links and Spyglass Hill Golf Course before returning to

It was a decision I had to put a lot of thought into. You do something for so long and you’re pretty good at it and then you flip the table and start over at 30 years old, it was a little scary. But I’m a sponge. Teach me how to do it and I’ll refine what you teach me.”

– Tyler Lenz

Missouri to work as a superintendent at Sullivan Country Club and the wonderfully named Murder Rock Golf Club. Hogan moved back to the Chiefs in 2009, when he was in his early 30s.

Jones is only as old as he feels—and he doesn’t feel 49.

“If I had known about turf out of high school,” he says, “I would have been doing this a long time ago.” **GCI**

Matt LaWell is Golf Course Industry’s managing editor.

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STARTING OVER

How does one know when it's time? That's a question I posed to legendary golf course managers **Tim Hiers** and **Ken Mangum** back in 2016 when I hosted the *Golf Course Industry Tech Conference*. And Tim's answer has lived in my memory ever since. "I don't know, but what I do know is this: If the other opportunity doesn't scare you, it is not worth leaving for." Ken affirmed Tim's words.

I first met **John Cunningham** in 2015 when we both attended the Syngenta Business Institute. John is now general manager at Grandfather Golf and Country Club in Linville, North Carolina, and he always says, "If you're comfortable, you are not growing. The only way to grow is to get uncomfortable."

By now I believe most of you know I recently changed jobs. After nearly 18 years at Carolina Golf Club, I am now at the helm of Idle Hour Country Club in Lexington, Kentucky. Uprooting your life, your family and everything you've established is not an easy decision.

Professional turfgrass managers make countless decisions every day. We are problem solvers and the best of us anticipate potential problems and stop them before anyone notices. But life decisions ... life decisions are different.

My wife and I talked at great length throughout this recent process, and I said over and over that the easiest decision would be to remain at Carolina Golf Club. I knew the property better than the back of my hand, had long-standing relationships with the team and membership, and we were settled, living com-

fortably in what we described as our dream home.

Today I am now sitting uncomfortably in a new office, one without personal touches or familiarity — yet. In my first week it has rained twice, snowed and now the temperature struggles to reach 40 degrees. The golf professional texts me to say the weather has been awful since I arrived. We both chuckle.

There are some who thought this move would allow my family to get closer to home as both my wife and I grew up in rural southwestern Virginia. But this move really did not make that much difference as my hometown of Castlewood, Virginia, is 220 miles from Charlotte and 200 miles from Lexington.

Despite those weather-related challenges, my new team managed to aerify all the greens and approaches the first week. All while I was busy meeting with members, co-workers, industry representatives and realtors. I expressed my gratitude to them for being invested in the process and seeing it across the finish line.

There are many things I need to do unrelated to my new position. I need to schedule a home inspection and a termite in-

spection and write a check for earnest money. My mortgage lender needs a copy of my first paystub, and I don't get paid for another week. To say things are a little chaotic would not be inaccurate.

But I find myself energized by the new challenges ahead. Creative juices once dormant are beginning to flow. And I know all the life stuff will sort itself out, hopefully before warmer temperatures arrive. Tim, Ken and John were right. In order to grow, personally and professionally, you need to get outside your comfort zone and challenge yourself in new ways.

I left behind many friends in the Carolinas GCSA, but the warm welcome expressed so far by folks here in the Kentuckiana GCSAA has been uplifting. We say it all the time, this profession, this brotherhood and sisterhood, really is the best in the world.

Our lives and our mental wellbeing are our responsibility. We cannot be good stewards of our employer's property if our lives are in disarray. And sometimes what feels comfortable can also contribute to the imbalance we sometimes face.

Change, whether forced or chosen, is kind of like rebooting an electronic device that is not functioning properly. You are responsible for yourself and there are many people within your lives who are counting on you, your family, your team, your co-workers and your employer.

So if your creative juices are not flowing, take a deep look within yourself and your environment to see if a change of scenery is needed to restore them. Because there are people counting and depending on you to be your best version of yourself.

And when it comes time, you will know. I can't tell you how, but you will just know. **GCI**

“Change, whether forced or chosen, is kind of like rebooting an electronic device that is not functioning properly.”



MATTHEW WHARTON, CGCS, MG, is the superintendent at Idle Hour Country Club in Lexington, Kentucky, and past president of the Carolinas GCSA. Follow him on Twitter @IHCCGreenkeeper.

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