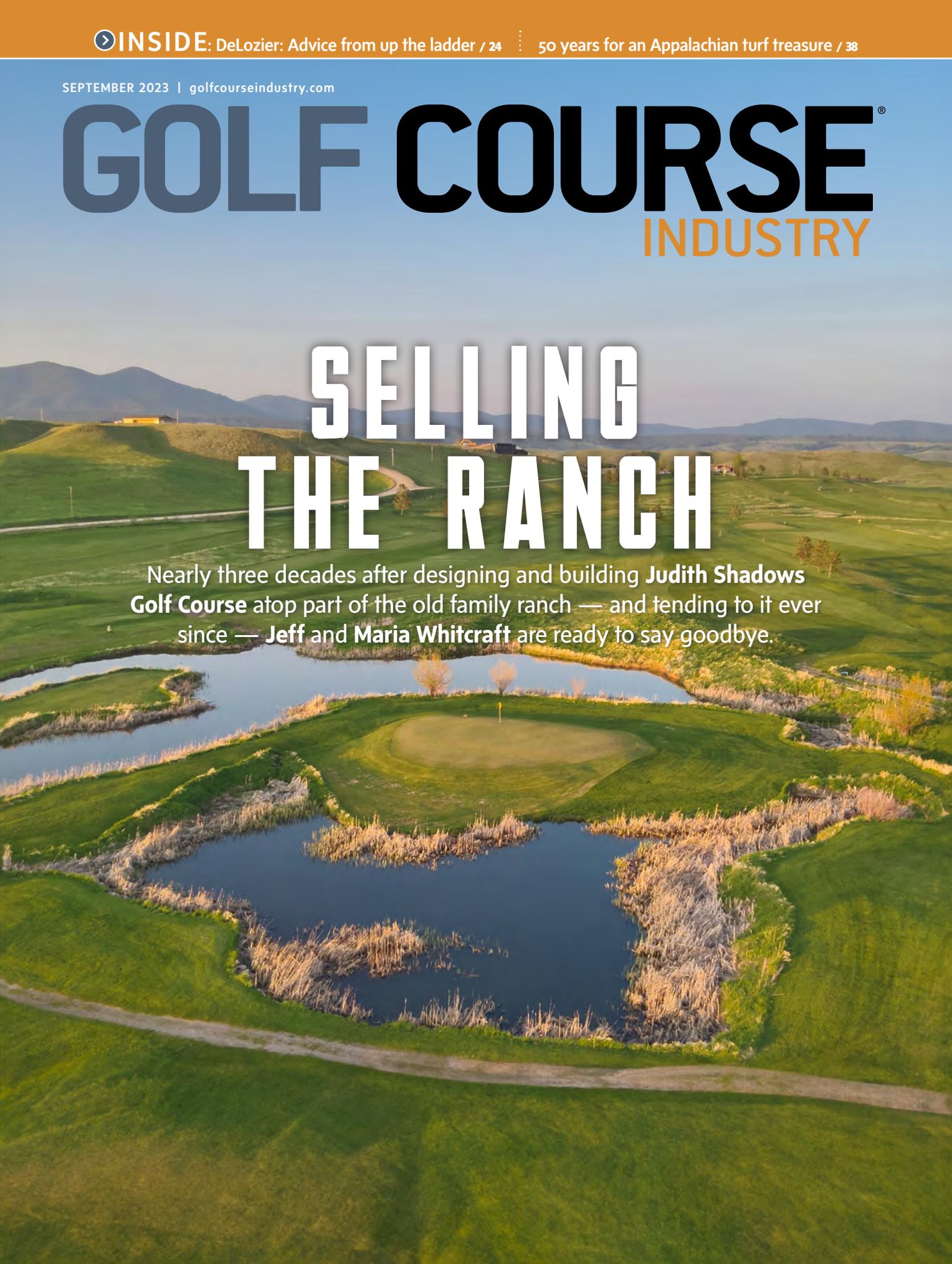


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Nearly three decades after designing and building **Judith Shadows Golf Course** atop part of the old family ranch — and tending to it ever since — **Jeff and Maria Whitcraft** are ready to say goodbye.



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# SELLING THE RANCH

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## EMBRACE THE POMP

**T**he major champion directed an alumni band as it played a song not heard as often during recent falls as better-known collegiate jingles.

Hail to the lame! Cheer, cheer for this to end!

*No bands should be allowed to trounce on golf turf*, thought a skeptical editor who spends his mornings, weekends and evenings pondering golf course maintenance.

The editor then met the people involved in the ceremonial opening of the Lehman 18 at Cragun's Resort in Brainerd, Minnesota, and realized pomp beats the alternative. Pictures from the day **Tom Lehman** led the band will adorn the Cragun's clubhouse walls for decades. Tales will be passed down to generations of vacationing Minnesotans.

Lehman, winner of The Open Championship in 1996, is a Minnesotan who attended the University of Minnesota. The school's best football run was 1934-1941, when the maroon and gold won five national titles, including three straight starting in 1934. The "Minnesota Rouser" had to be the most intimidating collegiate jingle of those days.

Around the same time, **Merrill K.** and **Louise Cragun** noticed tourism potential in the Brainerd Lakes area, a peaceful, secluded and wooded region 130 miles north of the Twin Cities. The couple built a few cabins along Gull Lake. By 1947, they owned 12 cabins and a lakeside lodge. Their son, **Merrill K. Jr.**, known throughout the region as "Dutch," started helping his parents operate the resort as a 9-year-old.

Dutch eventually assumed management and ownership of the resort and became a Minnesota tourism legend. Under Dutch's direction, the resort added numerous amenities, including 36 regulation and nine par-3 golf holes in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Ninety-one years old and one of the resort industry's great story slingers, Dutch remains omnipresent at Cragun's. He convinced Lehman in 2020 to examine the Cragun's Legacy Courses and submit a plan to revitalize the 36 holes originally designed by **Robert Trent Jones Jr.** Lehman's design team, which includes associate **Chris Brands**, concocted an ambitious plan to add nine new holes, some of which now border lots cleared to build new homes.

Work commenced in 2021, with the resort leaving at least 27 holes open throughout the entire process. The final nine will be completed next summer.

Having 36 finished holes — the Lehman 18 complements the 18 open holes on the Dutch 27 — represents a celebratory milestone for everybody involved in the project. Renovations, especially multi-year efforts conducted during the heavy-play, tight-labor, delivery-delay era, are grueling. We'll share more about the work at Cragun's in our October issue.

For the rest of the 2023 golf season, director of golf course maintenance **Matt McKinnon** and team are preparing a pair of distinct courses for visitors and members as crews from Minnesota-based Duinick Golf shift earth and strip and relay sod on the final nine.

McKinnon temporarily escaped the most demanding parts of his job to subtly participate in the pomp of the reopening ceremony. He sat at a side table with Dutch as Lehman, general manager **Eric Peterson** and director of golf **Jack Wawro** described to a room filled with supporters and reporters the nuances of the renovation. McKinnon lingered in the background while the band played and Lehman hit the opening shot on the first hole, a right-to-left, uphill par 4 featuring a fairway bunker right, three left bunkers leading to the green and abundant short grass flanking the putting surface. Once the pomp ended and the shotgun event started, McKinnon played the completed course with **Judd Duinick**, the leader of Duinick Golf.

After learning what the project means to McKinnon, Peterson, Dutch, Duinick, Lehman and the teams they oversee, the grumpy editor understood why ceremonies such as the one at Cragun's must be embraced.

Remember the golf construction slowdown of 2008-13? Panic surpassed pomp in Minnesota and elsewhere. Considering the not-so-distant past, hearing a one-minute song on a first tee symbolizes the industry's transformation.

Busy always beats the alternative. Pomp always beats panic. Lehman visited. The band played. Dutch told stories. The superintendent experienced the results of exhaustive work from a relaxing perspective.

You'd have to be pretty damn grumpy to think it wasn't cool. **GCI**



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# NOTEBOOK



## GOLF, TRACTORS AND MUSSELS, *OH MY!*

By Jacob Hansen

**O**ver the past three years, TPC Deere Run in Silvis, Illinois, has been breeding mussels in the club's irrigation lake, where it has now made a significant impact on the regional waterways. Before the project began, **Alex Stuedemann**—the longtime TPC Deere Run superintendent and now international and TPC agronomy director for the PGA Tour—and the team began reaching out, looking to get involved in the community.

The agronomy team participated on a local conservation board, where “We would get together with other vested entities, whether that be energy providers or landowners, farmers, municipalities, to discuss things that were working well in our operations,” says Stuedemann, who moved into his current position in 2022 after leading TPC Deere Run’s golf maintenance team for nine seasons. “Best management practices as

well as looking at future opportunities where we can get better.”

The agronomy team presented “what we do for our irrigation practices and water conservation,” Stuedemann says. They met a local wildlife and fisheries team from one of the local energy providers where they discussed what they did in managing the watershed. The idea of breeding beneficial mussels was conceived.

Mussels have an important ecological role. They keep waters clean by filtering out harmful algae and bacteria. Not only that, but “Mussels improve the clarity of water by removing total dissolved solids and other sediments that can cloud waters, whether that be around swimming areas or in their case, areas that may benefit their plants,” Stuedemann says.

Mussels are also an indicator of water pollution. While mussels filter out pollution, they can only handle so much. If waters are too polluted, the mussels

will die as they cannot escape polluted waters. Alongside helping the water, they provide a food source for various animals.

Having little knowledge of mussels at the time, Exelon Energy, now called Constellation, sent their biologist **Jeremiah Haas** to TPC Deere Run. “We walked our lake, getting to learn that there are so many different species that reside in our area and how they all can be beneficial,” Stuedemann says. “And just trying to determine those species that would best grow and exist in our lake here at the golf course.”

With testing of the water quality already being done on a routine basis at TPC Deere Run, the team reported things like pH levels, the total number of dissolved solids in the water, and the combination of well and river water in the lake. The biologists then determined what species best fit into the water.

The biologists then installed the

breeding canisters using a wooden pallet and plastic totes from the hardware store. Solar-powered aerators were also installed in the irrigation lake. “And then they’re all assembled, and the young mussels are placed in there to grow in our ponds, and they’re monitored typically on a monthly basis,” Stuedemann says.

Apart from losing some of the stock after a couple pallets were flipped over due to strong winds from a derecho storm event, the breeding has been a success. Constellation even transported 1,800 new mussels from the lake in a single summer to two areas along the Mississippi River watershed.

Among the mussels, Stuedemann and the team have started wildlife initiatives at other courses, including leaving brush piles for habitats in the woods, constructing bird houses and fostering bees. “We’ve got one of our clubs that just installed six beehives to not only fill the population of beneficial pollinators, but also they’re producing their own honey for their food and beverage departments,” Stuedemann says.

Stuedemann and the team continue to look at how they can do the best in the environment.

“We’re not doing this for notoriety,” Stuedemann says. “We’re not doing this to say ‘Yay! Here, look what we’re doing!’ We’re doing it because we’re caretakers of land. And especially at this property, we’re caretakers of land that belong to the family of John Deere. We are a community fixture, we are a part of the fabric that makes up the Quad Cities and the only way to enjoy what this earth has given us is to take care of it and do it in the right ways.”

Stuedemann encourages golf course managers/superintendents to do something to help out the environment.

“No thing is too small to undertake,” he says. “Every little thing that we can do as golf course managers, environmental stewards, will add up over time.”

*Jacob Hansen is a Kent State University senior participating in Golf Course Industry’s summer internship program.*



## Great VIII

Your opportunity to write any story you want for a national audience returns as we prepare to produce our annual Turfheads Take Over issue.

**O**ur media and publishing realm changes faster than the golf industry. Content programs begin. They linger for a year or two. Creators then shift their attention to another concept.

If a content program reaches Year 2, it’s considered a small victory. If a program reaches Year 3, it’s a major triumph. Anything that reaches Year 4, especially in the modern media landscape, surprises even the most optimistic idea generators.

This brings us to Turfheads Take Over. Launched in 2016 as a way for industry professionals to share ideas with a mass audience, the annual issue filled with reader-submitted content celebrates its eighth installment in December.

You can participate in the occasion by emulating dozens of your peers over the past seven years and contributing an article. The topic is up to you. You can hold any position in the industry to contribute. Our editors are available every step of the writing journey to help you tell the best story possible.

We know ... it sounds too laid back to be entirely true.

Now onto the guidelines. We promise they are straightforward!

Word count must meet or exceed 600 words. Why 600 words? Because that’s what fills a magazine page. Once you start writing, we’re confident you’ll easily reach the 600-word mark. Don’t fret surpassing 1,000, 1,500, or even 2,000 words. We’ll find space for great stories.

Our 2022 Turfheads Take Over issue featured an ode to a remarkable co-worker, an inside look at the value in using clever communication to explain winter damage to a membership, thoughts from a bibliophile, a case study in adaptation, and more.

We also must set a deadline. Send articles and high-resolution images to editor-in-chief **Guy Cipriano** ([gcipriano@gie.net](mailto:gcipriano@gie.net)) and manager editor **Matt LaWell** ([mlawell@gie.net](mailto:mlawell@gie.net)) by Friday, November 3.

Enough with the rules. Let’s shift to another way you can contribute to the December issue.

We’re still collecting recipes for the third annual Turfheads Guide to Grilling, a printed insert sponsored by AQUA-AID Solutions. The guide is packed with tasty recipes submitted by *Golf Course Industry* readers and social media followers. Recipes and photos can be submitted using the QR code inside this story or by emailing Cipriano and LaWell. Those who submit recipes published in the printed guide receive a #TurfheadsGrilling gift box and are eligible for a drawing to have us cook for their team in 2024. Deadline for that is also Friday, November 3.



## Tartan Talks 86



▲ Fought

**John Fought** won the 1977 U.S. Amateur Championship. He then earned PGA Tour Rookie of the Year honors in 1979.

Huge achievements? Sure.

Are they his most enduring accomplishments? Unlikely.

Fought joined the *Tartan Talks* podcast to discuss his nearly four-decade career as a golf course architect, which launched when a spine injury slowed his ascent as a player. Following a

stint learning the profession under **Bob Cupp**, Fought started his own design firm in 1995 and has relished providing products for everyday golfers.

"I was able to channel all that love for golf in a different direction," he says. "This sounds kind of weird and I realize I had some success playing as a young person, but I really feel like I'm a better designer (than player). I think my mind was better suited for it. I love going to a site and figuring out how to use the different elements. I love the people I meet. For me, it's just the greatest."

From collaborating with superintendents and builders to his work on the epic site that eventually became Sand Hollow Resort in Hurricane, Utah, Fought riffs on a variety of design subjects on the podcast, which can be downloaded on popular distribution platforms.

"Golf design and construction is a passion," he says. "You have really talented people who work on golf courses, and it takes a team of people to do it."




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## COURSE NEWS

TPC Wisconsin officially became the 30th property in the PGA Tour's TPC Network. Formerly Cherokee Country Club, the Madison course was redesigned by **Steve Stricker** and PGA Tour Design Services. The project involved re-grading the course to accent advancements by repositioning features and rebuilding all the infrastructure including greens, tees and bunkers, while implementing a new cart path system. A new irrigation system and new turf species were also installed. ... Ocean Forest Golf Club is nearing completion of a significant enhancement project handled by Landscapes Unlimited in collaboration with **Beau Welling Design**. Located in Sea Island, on Georgia's southeastern coast, the private club is re-constructing all 18 tee and green complexes with more than 37 acres of new grass



## INDUSTRY BUZZ

PBI-Gordon announced that Arkon Herbicide Liquid received EPA approval. Arkon is labeled for use on cool- and warm-season turf and can be used on greens, fairways and rough. Arkon features the proprietary active ingredient Pyrimisulfan and provides post-emergent control of numerous weeds, including sedges and kylligna. It will be available for sale nationwide in 2024. ... Audubon International added nearly 20 new members to its Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for Golf Certification and Green Lodging Certification tracks. From April 28 to July 28, 11 golf clubs across the United States, as well as one club in Bogota, Colombia, enrolled in the ACSF for Golf Certification program. In the U.S., there are six new members from California and one each from Alabama, Colorado, Hawaii, Missouri, and South Carolina. ... Syngenta launched Tuque

surfaces, as well as reimagining fairway bunkers. The course will reopen this fall. ... Troon has been selected to manage Tobacco Road Golf Club, a Mike Stranz design 25 miles north of Pinehurst, North Carolina. ... Resorts World Catskills reopened its Monster Golf Club following a major redesign guided by Rees Jones.

exoGEM, a fungicide created to help golf course superintendents with snow mold control. The formulation includes SOLATENOL technology, an advanced SDHI in FRAC group 7, and fludioxonil, a contact fungicide in FRAC group 12 with translaminar activity. ... Precision Laboratories introduced Cascade Tre soil surfactant in the golf course and sports field industries. ... Envu announced the root health solution Resilia is available for purchase in registered states. ... Moghu Research Center and Moghu USA announced that PoaCure has been granted registration for use on golf courses in California.

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# Morgan Taylor

MAGNOLIA GROVE GOLF CLUB

**M**organ Taylor missed out on the 2022 U.S. Women's Open. She was determined to be on hand this time around.

Taylor, an assistant superintendent at the Magnolia Grove Golf Club in Mobile, Alabama, was part of the team of volunteers that supported the recent U.S. Women's Open at Pebble Beach. She was tentatively scheduled to be part of the volunteer team that worked the 2022 Women's Open at Pine Needles — but couldn't get away from her job at Oak Hills Country Club in San Antonio. The wait meant she was more than ready to make the trip to California.

Appearing on the *Wonderful Women of Golf* podcast with **Rick Woelfel**, Taylor said she was particularly impressed with the dedication of Pebble Beach's full-time crew under superintendent **Bubba Wright**.

"You can really tell how much work goes into the grounds at Pebble Beach," she says. "The entire crew, everybody, is just 100 percent into what they're doing there. They love that golf course."

Taylor's working partner from the Pebble Beach crew customarily spent his workdays mowing the celebrated par-3 seventh hole. He's been doing it for 14 years. "He was like, 'I get to do this,'" Taylor recalls. "It was incredible to really see that reflected in the grounds crew at Pebble Beach."

Taylor's primary role during the Women's Open involved raking greenside bunkers on holes 10, 12, 14, and 18.

"It is just incredible to (come off the course) at the last hole and know that something you've done is being seen, especially during the final round," she says. "That's the last thing (spectators) see. It's just an amazing experience."

Taylor entered the turf industry by way of Auburn University. She began her academic career as a pre-med student before switching majors at the suggestion of a friend. One of her first classes was with renowned professor **Dr. Elizabeth Guertal**, who retired from her position at Auburn in June 2022 after 30 years. Guertal is now at Kansas State. "She was such an amazing professor," Taylor says. "She kind of set the hook and I never looked

back from that class."

Taylor eventually earned a bachelor's degree in agronomy and soils. She served an internship at the Peninsula Golf and Racquet Club in Gulf Shores, Alabama, and eventually accepted a job at the club as an assistant-in-training. Superintendent **Jamey Davis** mentored Taylor at a time when her knowledge of golf, to put it kindly, was minimal.

"(Davis) took me under his wing and kind of let me mess things up and get things right at the same time," she says. "I didn't even know what a fairway was or what was a pin location. I was so new to everything. I learned a lot and really enjoyed it."

In addition to the Women's Open, Taylor has volunteered at other events. She has worked the Augusta National Women's Amateur three times and helped the crew at the Sentry Tournament of Champions earlier this year.

"Every experience is different," she says. "And each one is very, very special in its own way. It gives you a huge opportunity to meet several different people and expand your network."

Taylor embraces opportunities to network with other women in the industry.

"With ladies there it makes it easier to get to know not only them but the people around you," she says. "I tend to be a little bit more of an introvert, so if I have someone there who kind of helps me meet other people, it really does help."

"If there's a group of ladies, it's a little bit easier for your presence to be a little bit more normal." **GCI**



I didn't even know what a fairway was or what was a pin location. I was so new to everything. I learned a lot and really enjoyed it."



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# LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELDS

**G**olf has been greatly enriched by the pandemic-fueled surge of new players. I've heard estimates of up to a million "newbies," and judging by how hard it is to get a tee time almost anywhere, I believe it.

But just as these rookies need to learn how to swing — as well as learn the rules and golf etiquette — they need to understand that one of the game's greatest features is its infinite variety. Unlike almost every other sport, each of golf's playing fields is unique, with its own charms and challenges, shapes and sizes, highpoints and hazards.

The more they realize that Baltusrol and Billy Bob's Goat Track are only similar in that a little white ball can be chased around on both of them, the better it is for all golf course superintendents. Even a smattering of knowledge gained by experiencing different green speeds, mowing patterns, bunker depths, sand textures, rough heights, grass types, native vegetations and everything else that

makes courses special should — we hope — make them better stewards of the game and our allies rather than enemies.

Let's compare golf — which is somewhere way down the top 10 of both spectator and participant sports in this country — with one of the most popular: Basketball, currently the second-most watched and most played. Every basket is 10 feet off the floor and center court is at, well, center court. Whether played on hardwood or asphalt, court dimensions and net height don't change. It's little wonder **Magic, Michael and Bird** could shoot free throw after free throw with their eyes closed whether at the The Forum, The Spectrum, Chicago Stadium, or either of the mythical Gardens — Madison Square and Boston.

The free-throw line is 15 feet from the basket, and not since **Rick Barry** did it underhand has anyone varied from the standard foul-shot delivery. But 15 feet from the golf hole could call for any number of shots and strategies. If it's a putt, is it straight or does it break, and

if so, right to left or left to right? And by how much? It also could be a chip, a pitch, a shot over a bunker or from a bunker. If it's just off the green, it could be hit with almost any club in the player's bag.

And this is

exactly what makes golf wonderful: Variety.

A par 3 can be anywhere from about 80 to 250 yards. And even if they're roughly the same distance, one can be uphill, the other down. Sand and water could be guarding the green on any or every side. The green could be flat or far from it. There could be wind, a surrounding shield of trees, and, at least one week a year, a mob of screaming fans ready to throw beer cans if a shot gets close.

I won't begin to try to enumerate the differences among par 4s and par 5s. You know them all too well already. And even courses that sit side by side — Winged Foot East and West, Baltusrol Upper and Lower, the many layouts at Pinehurst, Bandon Dunes, and Sand Valley — can be significantly dissimilar.

My point is, from course to course, design, topography, turf and environment vary, so making apples-to-oranges comparisons is not only dumb but insulting to me and you. The new golfer has to learn — or be taught! — that lumping all courses together does not properly represent our game or the hard work you and your crew do.

Comparing conditions, design, North vs. South or East vs. West, sea level to altitude, even carts vs. walking makes no sense — nor do the golfers who arrogantly try to do the same. The challenge of the game is in adapting to these changing conditions, not try to make them all the same from course to course.

*continues on p. 47*



Here's an idea: Post your annual maintenance budget, and that of any other courses for comparison, on the locker-room bulletin board. Add a note saying you're more than willing to discuss any line item or expenditure with anyone who asks.



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



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# SELLING THE R

Nearly three decades after designing and building Judith Shadows Golf Course atop part of the old family ranch — and tending to it ever since — **Jeff** and **Maria Whitcraft** are ready to say goodbye.

By **Matt LaWell**



# RANCH

© COURTESY OF LARRY PHILLIPS / PHILLIPS REALTY

**N**ot every story has a happy ending. This story does not have a happy ending — not yet, at least. In another year, or two, or five, it might. For now, its ending is open, still full of possibility.

It does at least have a happy beginning.

This is a story about Judith Shadows, a golf course in the middle of Montana, but it starts in 1867, after a Swiss immigrant named **Zacharias Tresch** traveled across the Atlantic Ocean with his brother **Joseph** and landed in New Orleans with gold rush dreams. They were headed for the territory, for the land where the West started and fortunes were panned from the earth. But the Confederate Army intercepted them, and mangled Zacharias's first name to John, and conscripted the brothers to fight in the Civil War. Joseph disappeared some time after the Second Battle of Bull Run. The Union captured Zacharias, who was now fully John, imprisoned him, then freed him in an exchange. Wanting no part of more war, he boarded the first boat he could up the Missouri River, finally, for Montana.

He landed in the wonderfully named Diamond City and mined enough gold at Last Chance Gulch to purchase a team of horses, craft a ring handed down through generations, and start a new life. He met a fellow Swiss immigrant named **Maria Danioth**, married her, settled on the homestead, built two cabins, helped raise six children, and lived until 1932. Maria lived until 1946.

Around that same time and not far away, a local man named **Joseph Charles McDonald** opened his first business, a sand and gravel plant in Brooks. He moved into concrete, launched McDonald Ready Mix Concrete, expanded his footprint. Starting in 1952, he purchased almost 800 acres in Lewistown. Part of it remained a gravel pit for the concrete business. Part of it became a hobby cattle ranch. He became a bit of a rancher and went by Bill.

The Tresches and the McDonalds remained on their land for decades. Some have never left. Some have traveled the country — the world — and returned.

John's great-granddaughter **Maria** is among the latter. She left home in Lewistown for Montana State University in Bozeman, studied education, and worked in the creative arts library, where she met Bill's grandson **Jeff Whitcraft**. He grew up in Kalispell but summured in Lewistown, where he worked on the ranch and had somehow never met Maria even though her mother had baby photos of him. He studied architecture, dreamed about buildings and travel. They married — 40 years ago this month — and, rather than homestead, hit the road for wherever. An uncertain economy pushed them to Arizona, California, Texas, Florida. He worked on plenty of projects. She substituted in so many classrooms. They welcomed two sons, **Dylan** and **Kyle**, along the way.

And then Grandpa Bill called Jeff.

“I’d like to think it was because he and I always got along really well,” Jeff says. “He was like a second dad. I spent my summers growing up with him. We were close. I didn’t ask him, but that’s what I’d like to think the reason was.”

Jeff says Grandpa Bill wanted him “to get the hell out of Montana in 1980,” but by 1994, approaching 80 years old, he wanted to bring Jeff back home. “He wanted us to not be in the city,” Maria says.

They talked about the concrete business, but Jeff “wanted nothing to do with that.” The cattle ranch, though.

“We started talking about a golf course,” Jeff says. “The fall of ’94, I came up here and we had a verbal agreement about how everything would work and what we would spend a month. I started wandering around the field with 6-foot-tall poles and flags, and going up on the hill and looking down and trying to visualize how it was all going to come together.” Never mind that Jeff had hardly even worked on a golf course, that the

extent of his design and construction experience in the industry was spending quality time with the bankers as a cluster of Florida courses popped up throughout the early 1990s, because, Jeff says, “I learned early on if you go golfing with the bankers, you’re a lot better friends than if you just meet them in the office.”

After planting those flags, Jeff went back to Texas for the winter, “and the next spring,” he says, “we packed our stuff and moved up.” The Whitcrafts were coming home.

This story does not have a happy ending, at least not yet. It does not always have a happy middle. Chaotic construction. Far more fallow years than not. False starts and a flash tornado and winters cold enough to freeze faces and turf alike. But also family and friends and a sense of community. Bringing the game to people who might have never otherwise played it and who now never miss league night. Finally making it—and finally making some money from the course.

And now saying goodbye, because after almost three decades, the Whit-

crafts are ready to sell.

But hold on to that bit of information, because that’s the ending, and this is still the beginning—and a new golf course, no matter the challenges, is a very happy beginning, indeed.

**THE WHITCRAFTS ARRIVED** back in Lewistown in early 1995 and started work on Judith Shadows almost immediately. In April, their original plan was to open nine holes on temporary greens by the fall and on permanent greens the next spring. In October, they hoped to open by the next summer. The next April, they hoped to open by July or August.

The front nine opened on June 1, 1997.

The back nine followed in August 1998.

The first word Jeff uses to describe those years of construction is *mayhem*.

“We hired a whole bunch of kids from my age” — Jeff was in his early 30s then — “down to high school. There were five of us.” Maria calls it “less than a skeleton crew.”

“We got up every day, and we went to work, and we worked hard,” Jeff says. “Moved some dirt, laid a whole bunch of pipe, whole bunch of wire, all the parts and pieces that go with it. Suppliers were pretty helpful steering me in the right direction.

“It was hard work, but I don’t recall it being horrible. I’m the type of person who, once I make the decision I’m going this way, I just go. You’re tired, it’s hot, it’s cold, you’re hurt, it doesn’t matter. You made the decision, that’s what you’re going to do, and you just keep going. That’s just

▼ After more than three years of work, Jeff and Grandpa Bill open the full 18 in August 1998.



how I work.”

Before heading north from Texas to Montana, Jeff talked with a golf course architect in Florida. Jeff knew plenty about architecture, just not *golf course* architecture, and wanted to pick up some veteran perspective. Jeff showed him an aerial photo of the ranch. *You could do this, you could do that*, the architect told him. “But he was building courses that cost \$20 million,” Jeff says, “and I wasn’t going to spend even close to that.” “Not even a million,” Maria says. “Our original budget,” Jeff says, “was under a million for 18 holes.”

Somewhere along the construction odyssey, Jeff talked with a contractor who had laser guided leveling equipment, perfect for tee boxes, “but his cost and my budget were on two different levels,” Jeff says, “so we went back to hand rakes and shovels and did it the old-fashioned way.

“There was no more money. That’s all there was. I didn’t buy sub-standard materials. We were just careful where we shopped. We know of another course that was built around the same time. They spent close to \$1 million on a pump station. We had about \$15,000 invested in ours. It pumps water, like it’s supposed to. It’s all in how you approach it and what you’re willing to do.”

Dylan and Kyle were both in elementary school for the move and throughout construction. After the course opened, they washed clubs — with the washer filched from the first tee — for \$2 a set and later mowed the course, their short legs aided by wood blocks zip tied to the accelerator and the brake pedal. But their earliest responsibilities on the course were far simpler.

“The first couple years was all construction,” Dylan says. “Tearing out the ground, putting in irrigation, running electrical lines for the sprinklers, dumping out sand. My first job was picking rocks. I picked most of the rocks off No. 1 fairway. It wasn’t a fairway when we started.”



“My recollection is that we worked all the time,” Kyle says. “That’s all we did, was work on the golf course. In hindsight, that’s probably not true. We were kids. Even if we thought we were working, we were probably screwing around more than anything. But Dylan and I both mowed for a lot of years. Once the course opened, we helped build tee boxes, plant seed, set sprinklers. But I’m sure we had plenty of time to go float the crick in town and do all that other fun stuff.”

Kyle remembers working alongside — or at least in the vicinity of — **Carson Robertson**, one of those handful of construction and maintenance team members throughout the early years. Robertson, now Dr. Carson Robertson and a chiropractor in Arizona, had worked maintenance at Pine Meadows and started at Judith Shadows as the first nine was being planted and construction on the second nine was just starting—a timeline that Maria says “may or may not have been a mistake.”

Because Robertson was the only person there with any real mowing experience, he helped groom the front,

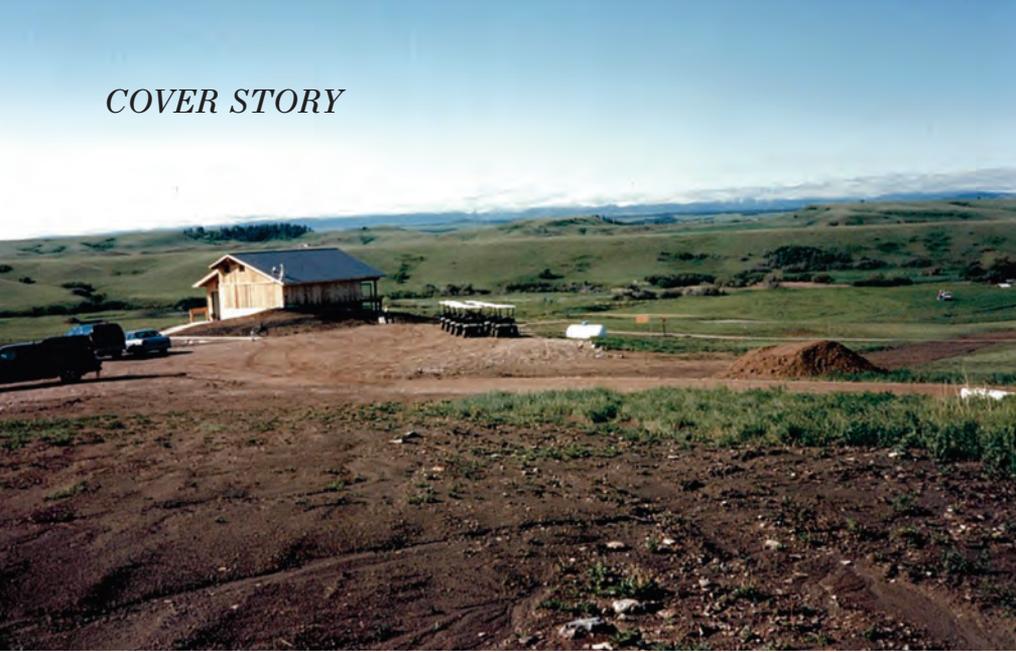
then helped build and mow the back. “There was very limited grass, hardly a tree to be found,” he says. “It was a wheat field a few years before. We used to carry guns on the back of the mower to shoot the gophers running by, until Maria put a kibosh on that. It was just a lot of dirt, a lot of mud, a lot of digging, filling in holes, putting in sprinklers — and digging them up six months later because the ground had shifted.

“It was a lot of work. And Jeff and Maria worked hard. You think you work hard, and then you see someone work really hard, hours upon hours, day in, day out—you just gravitate toward that and match it, or you get out.”

The early years were even more challenging than the construction.

**MOST 9-HOLE GOLF** courses — at least those constructed across Montana throughout the 1990s and locally owned — tend to build up a base of golfers and steady revenue streams before thinking about expanding to 18 holes. “For whatever reason,” Maria says, “we didn’t do that. We just went gung-ho and built the second nine.

▲ Judith Shadows has been a family business from the start. From left, Jeff’s father, Elmer Whitcraft, Kyle Whitcraft, Maria Whitcraft, Jeff Whitcraft, Dylan Whitcraft, and Maria’s parents, Diana and Earl Tresch.



different league nights — partnering with **Greg Smith** in the Wednesday night mixed league for more than 25 years. **Mark Malone**, who runs a farm and ranch supplies store and sold the Whitcrafts oils, tools, fasteners and other items throughout construction, seldom misses a league night, either. Same for **Ted Knerr**, who sold the Whitcrafts their grass seed back in the 1990s and loves Judith Shadows so much he still ferries visiting friends around all 18. **Wayne Riley**, who has lived in Lewistown for almost 60 years and started walking 18 holes most days after retirement, is another Judith Shadows stalwart.

“They’ve treated me really well up there over the years,” Riley says. “I’m just comfortable golfing there. They’re friends.”

“Once you discover the place, a lot of people find it comfortable and appealing,” Malone says. “I love the golf course. It’s kind of rustic. It’s not as refined as some golf courses, but there’s plenty of room out there to stay out of trouble. It’s like a little wildlife refuge. You never know what you’re going to see. The thing people complain about most is Jeff has unmaintained areas all over the place and they lose a lot of golf balls. I just buy used golf balls.”

▲ Big sky blankets the course, which has featured a handful of clubhouses and cart barns over the decades.

But then again, she says, “Most golf courses that wait to build the second nine never get it done. It takes so long to grow in up here. It takes so long to develop a clientele. It takes so long to do *everything*. Especially in Montana, it’s such a harsh environment. It takes years just to get turf to look like a lawn. Most of the golf courses we know that were going to do 18 have never done it. We went all in and did all 18.”

The course remained pretty empty during some of those early years. The Whitcrafts don’t track rounds played. They offer season passes, like a ski resort, with almost every round played by a passholder. The work schedule of most everybody in and around Lewistown means scheduled weekday tee times before 5 p.m. are rare. The family struggled for a while to attract golfers. The old Elks Club, a 9-hole course now called Pine Meadows Golf Course, sits 10 minutes south of Judith Shadows and benefitted from what Maria calls “a 50-year head start.”

“There are people here today who came out for our first year,” she says. “We’ve had some very loyal people, and we’re super grateful for that. A good crew. We did open the golf course in a small town that had a country club, and the country club wasn’t happy. When we opened the golf course here, they became public. They’re our competition.”

“Most of the people who golf here have been people we have developed as customers through the years. A lot of them had never golfed before —

the vast majority of them had never golfed before we opened. We try to bring more people to the game, and we try to pull them along with us. I think too many times the game of golf becomes too wrapped up in itself and doesn’t bring people into the game. If you’re not good instantly, there’s this perception that you shouldn’t be on the course. It’s our perception that if we bring someone along, and they’re comfortable here, and they’re not in anybody’s way, they will become a customer. That’s been our strategy since the beginning.”

“And it’s worked,” Jeff says.

**Larry Phillips** has been a regular since the course opened and jokes that he’s “still no good.” He plays in two

▶ Grandpa Bill welcomes guests for the course’s first tournament in June 1997.



Even with league nights and an expanding group of regulars, Jeff and Maria struggled for decades to build Judith Shadows into a financially viable golf course. An unexpected tornado ripped through Lewistown in August 1999, damaging or destroying more than 100 buildings. The old clubhouse was among them, its roof ripped off as Jeff and Maria hurried friends from the eye. They started to rebuild the next day. Montana winters were never easy. Regular repairs added up. Both Jeff and Maria balanced side work, Jeff handling architecture projects when not on a mower or fixing equipment, Maria adding embroidery and wood burning to her responsibilities outside of the clubhouse. A new cart barn, opened in 2016 and able to host more than 200

people for weddings and other events, has helped. So has the acquisition of a state liquor license. They have a small maintenance team during the season, with **Steve Olson**, a local high school teacher, mowing eight to 10 hours a day throughout the summer, **Mary Jennie** on fairways, **Dale "Shorty" Longfellow** on tees and collars, and **Lonnie Mannin** helping everywhere.

"It's such a tediously slow process to get to where you're even above water," Jeff says. "Those first years, if the course paid bills during the summer, 'Hallelujah, what a great year we're having.' You're certainly not going to turn around and invest another million dollars in something with that kind of an outlook."

But the course is finally profitable. The Whitcrafts are in a better position

than they have been since at least 1995 — maybe ever. And they want to sell.

**NOT LONG AFTER** Judith Shadows opened, Maria joked that if she and Jeff had understood how consuming the course would be, they might have never broken ground. By the time they figured it out, it was too late. "There are a few privately owned golf courses in Montana," she said then. "They're people with lots of money. This was just a family dream."

A dream for Grandpa Bill, who lived to see all 18 holes open — often driving his small pickup all over the course and requesting to help fix equipment, only for Jeff to fix it again later — before passing away in 2002 at age 88. A dream, too, for Jeff, who carved a course out of a field with next

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We were just careful where we shopped. We know of another course that was built around the same time. They spent close to \$1 million on a pump station. We had about \$15,000 invested in ours. It pumps water, like it's supposed to. It's all in how you approach it and what you're willing to do."

– Jeff Whitcraft

to no experience and a team greener than the grass it needed to grow. And, after a while, a dream for Maria.

"We've seen other golf courses come and go," she says. "There have been other people who have tried to start golf courses and not been able to do it. The one thing we are is

persistent. We're just too dumb to give up. We don't know when to say no."

So, why sell now?

"If it takes five years, that puts us at 66," she says. "And that's the catalyst for us to get out now, because we think it might take five to 10 years to sell. That puts us to retirement age, and

that's what's driving us."

Working with Phillips — the long-time regular with the same league partner the last quarter of a century who also happens to work as a real estate broker — they have priced the golf course at \$2.4 million. They are selling an adjacent 65-lot subdivision already passed through state regulations for another \$2 million. "We think those two things together can bring someone to the table," she says.

They explored other options. Both Dylan and Kyle talked with their parents about the course. They both worked at the course until they were 16, when their parents insisted they learn to work for somebody else. Dylan headed to Ace Hardware. Kyle wound up at Fabian's Machine &

**continues on p. 46**

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Reel cutting units should be checked regularly for squareness and have a fresh grind, both spin and relief, consistent with OEM specifications. Each cutting unit needs to be set up so the distance between the reel and bed knife is at its maximum distance but still cuts .005-inch paper clean with no jagged edges. You should grind as often as needed after your check with .005-inch paper. If it doesn’t cut clean, it’s time to grind.

To ensure cutting units are kept in top cutting condition, before performing any main-

tenance on a reel or bed knife, cleaning of the cutting unit and removing any debris that has built up over time is necessary. This ensures any damage can be clearly seen and corrected.

Due to the helical design of reel cutting units, OEM specifications recommend maintaining and correcting coning of the reel. This helical design means that processed grass and debris travels from one side of the reel to the other and can be processed many more times between the reel and bed knife (right to left), this results in inconsistent wear of both the reel and bed knife. Coning (tapering) is corrected by proper

grinding. If coning is not properly corrected, then achieving the scissor effect between the reel and the bed knife becomes increasingly difficult, which leads to poor cut quality.

“The cost associated with improperly maintained cutting heads can run the full gambit from using more fuel due to cutting reels requiring additional horsepower, more wear and tear on the engine and hydraulic systems, and extra money spent on chemicals and water,” Turner says. “It will add up in short order.”

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CU-Master Reel Grinders and the ACCU-Pro bed knife grinders provides ease of use coupled with industry leading measurement processes allowing you to ensure cutting units are maintained in top working order.

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## UP THE LADDER PERSPECTIVE

At some point in their careers, many superintendents wonder if they should pursue a move inside, away from the agronomic side of the golf business and into senior management. Three superintendents who have made the move successfully — **John Cunningham**, GM & COO at Grandfather Golf & Country Club in Linville, North Carolina; **Jim Wyffels**, GM at Spirit Hollow Golf Course in Burlington, Iowa; and **Carlos Arraya**, GM & COO at Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis — offer their insights and advice.

*At what point in your career did you begin to consider moving beyond the role of golf course superintendent to a senior leadership role?*

**Cunningham:** I have been working on bettering my management and leadership skills consistently over my entire career. It's ongoing and never ending.

**Wyffels:** I hadn't ever given any thought to becoming a GM. In fact, when I was growing in my second golf course, the management team asked me if I would consider overseeing the whole operation. At that point in my career, I thought the idea was a little crazy. A few years later, at that same facility, the GM position opened, and I was approached again. At that point I thought I had a good handle on the agronomic side, and since I had worked so closely with the outgoing GM, the notion of testing the water made more sense.

**Arraya:** I had no interest! In 2008, when board members suggested I had excellent leadership skills, I was invited to the board room meetings. The rest is history.

*What skills transferred up the organizational ladder from superintendent*

*to your current role?*

**Cunningham:** One of the most critical skills that is transferable to many other leadership positions is your ability to connect and leverage your relationships with people: selecting team members, mentoring, building relationships with department heads, developing a rapport with membership and committees.

**Wyffels:** Time management, ability to multitask, planning and the ability to create, manage and manipulate a budget on the fly. As superintendent, your problems are always expense only. As the GM, you are tasked with both expenses and revenue. Making both work is like walking a tightrope.

**Arraya:** As a GCS, I always looked ahead to manage weather impacts, historical trends and scheduling. As a GM, ironically, it's similar. I look ahead to forecast the business, weather impacts, trends and events. I always overcommunicated as a GCS. As a GM, I do the same.

*What skills did you need to learn or develop further as you advanced?*

**Wyffels:** Understanding the business. Hopefully, you already have a great understanding of the operation side of golf. You must be able to put yourself in the shoes of whichever department you are working with and help them be successful in achieving your club's goals.

**Arraya:** I realized people join and love the club for various reasons, not just the golf course. I needed to connect to their love for the club to best understand their position. I also realized that team members join the team for different reasons.

If they choose to work for us, I must be an active listener.

*What advice do you have for superintendents considering a move to GM, director of operations or another senior leadership position?*

**Cunningham:** We are all wired differently and have different aspirations, strengths and opportunities. Surround yourself with those who will push you to become better and those who will support you when faced with obstacles on your journey.

**Wyffels:** 1) Be sure the move is right for you. If you think that your schedule will be similar to what you have had as a superintendent, you are mistaken. You will be on call 24/7 — for members, owner, golf pro, chef, housekeeping, lodging manager, event coordinator. 2) Make sure you understand the goals and objectives of the club/owner. Consider if you think these are reasonable. 3) Stay attached to your original profession! Keep up your certification level. Continue to attend education classes and stay connected to your superintendent colleagues. I took a leave as GM to grow in another golf course. When that was complete, I moved back to the GM side of the business. If I hadn't stayed connected, it may not have been as easy to jump from one to the other. 4) Keep learning and don't be embarrassed to use other people's ideas. I have been lucky to work with and for some of the best GMs in the business. I never passed up a chance to pick their brain or ask for advice.

**Arraya:** Get involved. Be bold in your passion to lead; doors will open as you build relationships. **GCI**



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# GAME TIME

## GALVESTON COUNTRY CLUB SUPERINTENDENT JEFF SMELSER STICKS TO A WINNING PROCESS FOR PRODUCING QUALITY TURF IN A VOLATILE GROWING ENVIRONMENT.

By **Matt LaWell**

**T**here are neither secrets nor simple solutions to cultivating a healthy marriage. Honesty is important. So is listening. So is communication. Carving out time for date nights. Perhaps reconnecting after the kids move out. Common interests. Your own pursuits. Separate televisions. Wait ... separate televisions?

"I always joke about it, but I always say separate TVs," says Jeff Smelser, the longtime golf course superintendent at Galveston Country Club in Galveston, Texas. "I'm a sports junkie and I'll watch every sport there is." Smelser loves to watch the Chicago Cubs, his favorite team since he was a kid, and the Houston Astros. But he's not particular. Baseball, basketball, football, hockey,

golf, auto racing, cornhole if it's on. Everything looks good on his three-screen setup — an 86-inch atop a pair of 42-inchers. And to his wife, Kellie? Outside of playoff games, her viewing preference leans more toward true crime and paranormal.

The formula has worked for the Smelsers for more than 30 years, with one daughter, Karlie — a pediatric ICU nurse and a member of the Texas National Guard — and stints at two Texas golf courses mixed in.

Smelser worked at North Shore Country Club in Portland, Texas, for 19 years, almost all of them as the superintendent, then moved to Galveston Country Club, the state's first private club, in 2007. His situation sounds perfect: Smelser leads a maintenance team of 16 that includes himself, assistant superintendent Santos Guzman, equipment manager Mark Barron and 13 full-time crew members. He works with an "outstanding" board of directors and membership. Equipment leases mean the facility is always filled with the latest tech and, thanks to a four-year turnover, very little equipment downtime. And there are early talks about a master plan that could feature a new irrigation system and reduce the club's water usage by 40 percent — though there is no timetable for the project. It could happen next year or a decade from now.

"We're lucky," says Smelser, a central Illinois native who headed south in 1988 to escape Midwest winters. "They allow us to do our job and they don't try to tell us how to do it. A lot of these boards of directors, they want to put their own stamp on the golf course. They allow us to do the jobs they hired us for. If we need something, we need to go through the proper procedures to get it, but we're generally pretty good."

Smelser has worked through professional challenges, of course. Earlier during his career, he traveled to both Florida and Mexico for extended work projects. The trip south of the border, to Playa del Carmen, where he worked 100-hour weeks growing in a golf course, instilled

in him the value of working with whatever was at hand.

"We had such a hard time getting products down there," he says. "There was a company, Bonus Crop Fertilizer out of Greenville, Texas, they shipped me two truckloads of fertilizer because you couldn't get it down there. You just had to work with what you had."

In Galveston, both the island city and the club have been hammered twice by hurricanes since Smelser arrived — Ike in 2008 and Harvey in 2017 — disasters only exacerbated by the course sitting just 2 feet above sea level. Aside from all the prep and cleanup that go with hurricanes, Smelser has learned the importance of good plant protectants.

"We have to be on a good fungicide program, a good growth regulator program, because we just don't know what's going to happen weather-wise," he says. "We may not get back out there for a week, a week and a half, two weeks. We spray Legacy in all of our fairways — and a lot of it has to do with if we get 30 inches of rain and can't get out there, we don't want it growing wild."

Smelser applies Legacy on tees and fairways every four weeks from April through October, 15 ounces to the acre. By his count, he goes through about 40 gallons every year. "PGRs," he says, "are such a valuable tool for everybody."

Smelser also employs Captain and SeClear algaeicides across the course's three ponds. He used to apply them himself, but he recently contracted an outside company to work on what amounts to five surface acres and 20 acre-feet.

"It would only take me two and a half hours, but I might get interrupted and only be able to do one lake right now, then have to do something else," he says. "Also, I had to have a boat, and an engine, and the engine broke down. Now it's one more thing for Mark not to have to worry about."

And maybe a little more time to catch another game. ■



# Finally full

Creative design and committed leadership have sparked Wisconsin gem Barn Hollow to record play.

By **Matt LaWell**

**F**or most of his first 15 seasons as the superintendent at Hawk's View Golf Club in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, **Damon Soderberg** could approach the 18-hole Barn Hollow par-3 course as more than an afterthought but less than a top priority. "Before, it was just, 'OK, when you finish your jobs on the big course, go do the little course,'" says Soderberg, a Wisconsin native and the son of a longtime superintendent. "Now, I'm pretty much forced to handle it as a standalone."

The pandemic surge played a key part, of course. Before the world shut down starting in the spring of 2020, a big day at Barn Hollow might have counted 50 or 60 golfers. With the game still surging, the short course now averages about 120 golfers per day, with plenty of summer sellout days topping 170. But Barn Hollow is more than a benefactor of circumstance. It is a genuinely great course. Every hole feels different, and every hole feels as if it could have been plucked from a standard golf course—perhaps even Hawk's View, which wraps around Barn Hollow like a horseshoe.

Designed by **Todd Clark** and **Craig Schreiner**, Barn Hollow sits on land used over the last century as a farm, then a concert venue, then Mount Fuji Ski Hill. New ownership opened all 36 holes in 2001 to immediate acclaim, if not booming play.

Clark had never designed an 18-hole par-3 course — and hasn't designed one since — and approached the project with a list of questions. "How do you keep coming up with different ideas?" he says. "How do you get variety? How do you get it to route? How do you make it exciting

so you want to keep coming back and playing it?"

Clark and Schreiner — who also designed Hawk's View — plotted numerous routings to maximize the location, "because it is a unique piece of property," Clark says. "Everything's on a hillside that slopes down to the river bottom down below. When you come in off the main street, you dip down into a valley, and then you have a steep hill where the driving range is now. We had to come up with some creative routings on how to navigate that hillside."

The course has maintained its shape through almost a quarter of a century and is finally attracting the round count it deserves.

Much of the recent success is owed to Soderberg, now in his 18th season, and general manager **Matt Boesch**, who started at the club as an intern and is in his 20th season. They have worked together to build up both Hawk's View and Barn Hollow in a state rich with great courses. They have also worked together long enough to build off each other's sentences.

"I haven't heard of too many rounds

under par on Barn Hollow in my 20 years here,” Boesch says.

“It’s harder to score on a par-3 course!” Soderberg adds.

“100 percent,” Boesch says.

“Honestly,” Soderberg says, “you miss the green, you gotta get up and down. You got no room to scramble, at all.”

“There’s no par 5s where you can take advantage of length, there’s no par 4s,” Boesch says. “The holes range from 126 (yards) to 202 and, on average, you’re hitting a 150-yard shot on every green. And the green complexes are not easy. There are some fun ones out there.”

The increased interest has altered how Soderberg and his team approaches maintenance on both courses. Soderberg normally counts 17 or 18 on his crew — including an equipment manager, a foreman, a flower specialist and himself — and now has to start two or three on Barn Hollow to stay ahead of play. “We’re just getting too busy,” he says. “Come 9 o’clock, there’s no room out there.”

Soderberg is still able to schedule some jobs a little later. “Or,” he says, “we just change *how* we do things. For instance, when we mechanically rake bunkers, I send two off on No. 1 of the



big course, but after nine holes, one of them has to get to the par-3 course, otherwise they’re going to end up running into golfers, and the other one continues on the big course.”

He manages the layouts not like two different courses but like 27 holes. “It’s just slightly different as far as how it gets used as opposed to a 27-hole facility,” he says. “It’s still just grass.”

Appropriate words for a man raised around and often on golf courses. Soderberg’s father, **Jack**, recently retired after decades as the superintendent at Western Lakes Golf Club in Pewaukee — about 20 miles west of Milwaukee and 40 miles north of Hawk’s View and Barn Hollow. “He initially tried to talk me out of it, as any good superintendent should,” Soderberg says. “Once he realized that I had the drive, he was supportive and helped me choose Michigan State despite being a (University of Wisconsin) grad.”

Boesch arrived with less of an agronomic pedigree. Born in Washington and relocated to western Michigan as a teenager, he learned the game from his grandfather, an Iowa native who reared him on some of that state’s numerous 9-holers. Two decades in at Hawk’s View, he sees himself sticking around for the rest of his career.

“Barn is in a really good spot,” he says. “We’ve had this conversation

dozens of times: Could we jack up the rates? 100 percent. We choose not to. We want to keep this an affordable, family-friendly, community-based place to have some entertainment.”

“The par-3 course is almost a public service,” Soderberg says. “Sure, we want to maximize money, but we also don’t want to price out that family being able to come out and introduce their kids to the game of golf.”

“When you have Grandma and Grandpa coming out with the grandkids, that’s just so much fun to watch,” Boesch says. “We want to keep that.”

Boesch says the course recently celebrated a 9-year-old girl who recorded her first ace while playing Barn Hollow. Soderberg adds that he noticed a mother playing with her 7-year-old son. Not the kind of moments common on longer golf courses, but almost routine at Barn Hollow the last four summers.

“We’ve seen this facility grow,” Boesch says. “It’s really satisfying.”

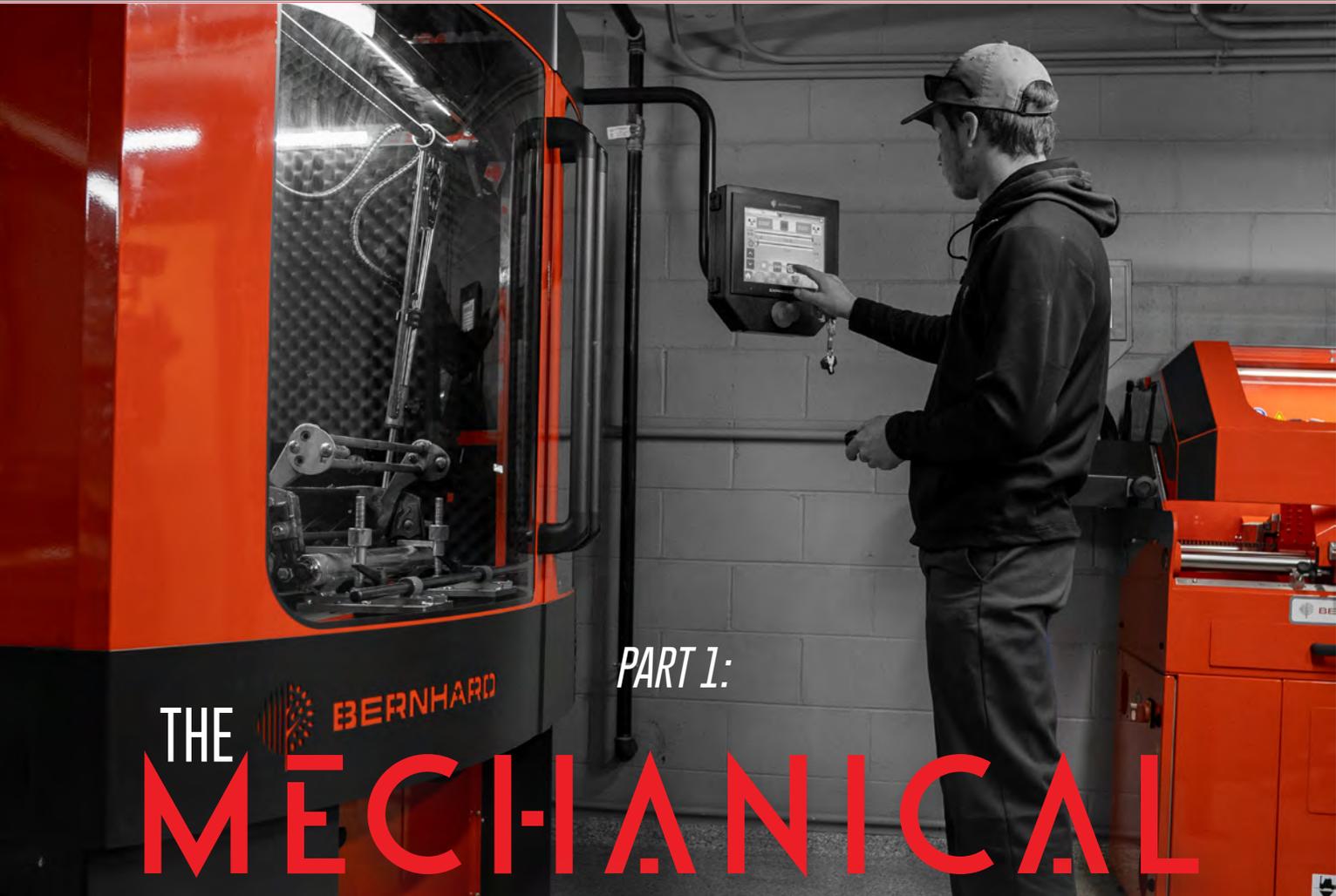
“Grow and mature,” Soderberg says. “Seeing the turf mature, but also the business. Living through some of the leaner years, seeing how we had to do things to get by — cut corners, pinch pennies — to where we’re at now.”

“We were a hidden gem for a long time,” Boesch adds. “Now we’re just a gem.” **GCI**



## 18 holes in (about) half the time

Where else can you play 18 different par 3s in a single round? The number of spots is surprisingly low (at least for now — some big names are working on courses as you read this story). We’ve found more than two dozen through travel, research and some help from Turf Twitter. For the full and ever-evolving list check out [www.golfcourseindustry.com/shortcourse18](http://www.golfcourseindustry.com/shortcourse18).



PART 1:  
THE BERNHARD  
MECHANICAL

# VOID

WHY EVOLVING EXPECTATIONS FOR GOLF COURSES AND SOCIETAL CHANGES ARE MAKING THE EQUIPMENT MANAGER ROLE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER.

By **Guy Cipriano**

**T**he magnitude of **Shawn Bergey's** job emerges when he begins quantifying the volume of equipment his team of three mechanically minded workers maintains.

He begins with fairways, the widest and longest swaths of maintenance-intensive turf at the

Philadelphia Cricket Club, a 45-hole, two-campus private facility supporting golf and other pleasant turf trimmings in southeast Pennsylvania. The club possesses eight fairway mowers to cut 75½ acres.

Bergey shifts to what he calls "large" rough units. *Four.* He transitions to "small" rough units. *Three.*

## SHOWING OUR SUPPORT

We're delighted to be partnering with *Golf Course Industry* on this exciting project, in which you'll see fantastic interviews with some of most talented Equipment Managers around North America. This new Equipment Manager series is something that we really wanted to get involved in, to help shine a light on the important role that the Equipment Manager can play in golf facilities—they are pivotal to the presentation and performance of a golf course.

Our teams spend a lot of time in the workshops with equipment managers around the world, so we see the major impact that having a person dedicated to managing equipment can make to the wider greenkeeping operation. Even with a good agronomy program, without the Equipment Manager ensuring that everything is set correctly, it'll be impossible to achieve the results you want and need.

The role of the Equipment Manager is as important as any on the golf course, but it's also somewhat a dying breed. A lot of the time, candidates will come from other industries such as the motor trade. Even if they've trained as a mechanic, making the switch to maintaining turf equipment is not easy. Working on cutting reels and units requires expertise and training.

There's also a lack of awareness of the position and the importance of that person to a golf course's operation. We believe that we're well-positioned as a manufacturer to highlight the role of Equipment Manager and encourage people into this side of the business. The opportunities are endless, and job security is as good as any other role in the industry. Plus, it's very good fun!

Among our North American team, we have an extensive background in equipment management, so we understand the importance of the role. They're not just there to sell product, they are also there to support, educate, and train customers and prospects. Helping to enhance knowledge will also help to push the industry forward. The development of the turf industry as a whole, is important to us as suppliers to the trade—everybody benefits from increased quality and attraction to the game.

Our recently revamped Bernhard Academy is our vehicle to help educate and develop the industry. That's where we can help sell the role of the Equipment Manager as a career and put the spotlight on those people. We want to retain good Equipment Managers that are already out there, and also develop more.

We're passionate about trying to give back to the industry that we've been a part of for so long—we're continuing to build on that with an elevated Bernhard Academy program. We have a lot of experience and knowledge within our network around the world, and we're trying to pass that on to help further this fantastic industry.

**STEVE NIXON**  
 MANAGING DIRECTOR  
 BERNHARD AND COMPANY



More counting aloud and further quantifying follow. He pauses a few times, including when he realizes the club utilizes two dozen walking greens mowers.

Finally, after 158 seconds of reciting and remembering, the list exceeds more than 200 engine-propelled units.

“It’s crazy when you start putting numbers to stuff,” says Bergey, a former assistant superintendent now in his third full year as Philadelphia Cricket Club’s equipment manager.

As golf continues to surge and conditioning demands increase, the value of a proven equipment manager has never been higher. Somebody, after all, needs to keep that pricey equipment operating at high levels.

Bergey is fortunate. Philadelphia Cricket Club receives equipment via four- and five-year lease cycles. Turf isn’t actively growing year-round in Philadelphia — yet. The club employs two assistant equipment technicians to help Bergey. His boss also understands the importance of investing in the equipment manager position.

“You can have all these philosophies about what you want to do,” says Philadelphia Cricket Club chief planning officer and director of grounds **Dan Meersman**, “but unless you have somebody who’s skilled enough to pull it off, you can’t produce the quality of product that your membership might expect.”

**OF ALL THE** labor issues facing golf, none is as debilitating to the industry as a shortage of qualified equipment managers. A mega-club such as Philadelphia Cricket Club can absorb the angst of a mower hitting a rock or suffering a hydraulic leak. The margins between a tidy day or a messy day, week or month are slimmer elsewhere.

“What we do is extremely important,” says **Bryan Epland**, the equipment manager at ArborLinks in Nebraska City, Nebraska. “I won’t be humble about that at all. If you’re somebody who doesn’t have an assistant and maintains a fleet as big as I do, it would be tough to get away *period* any time during the growing season.”

The fleet Epland maintains includes more than 60 units. Like many facilities, ArborLinks has experienced play and revenue boosts over the past three years. Recent investments include a new topdresser and tractor. Both units will elevate the product ArborLinks offers members. Both products also require regular maintenance. During the peak season, the ArborLinks crew swells to around 30 employees, many of whom Epland must help train on equipment usage

and care.

Epland is currently developing an assistant, **Kelson Griever**, to help handle the additional workload. Griever arrived at ArborLinks earlier this year with no mechanical experience. **Eric Rebman** made the switch from mowing Philadelphia Cricket Club’s turf to maintaining the equipment that mows the club’s turf after Bergey noticed Rebman showed interest in happenings around the shop. Before Bergey landed the head equipment manager role at Philadelphia Cricket Club, he was the lone year-round employee devoted to equipment maintenance at nearby Llanerch Country Club.

“Working without an assistant is very tough,” he says. “It’s more like, ‘What are you expected to do as one person? Are you going to get your butt reamed out if there’s oil all over the fairway? If so, as a one-man show, you can’t be out there following everybody.’”

Bergey and Epland experienced quick ascents to desirable equipment manager jobs. Bergey previously worked as an assistant superintendent until 2015; Epland worked as an automotive mechanic until 2016.

Quick career rises are possible because experienced turf equipment managers are increasingly difficult to find. **Tyler Bloom**, founder of the talent acquisition and workforce development firm Tyler Bloom Consulting, added equipment managers to his placement services in 2021 because demand for proven equipment managers in a more demanding golf market has surpassed the talent supply.

“That role has been elevated beyond just being an equipment manager,” says Bloom, a former superintendent who started his business in early 2020. “They are helping with facilities. In some cases, they might be out working on the golf course because you don’t have enough staff. They are managing people and they are a part of the onboarding of new employees.”

“The demand now is not just for the technical and turning wrenches component. It’s actually more from the organizational standpoint because it’s become a much higher-level position.”

Once somebody develops the versatile skillset, opportunities to change equipment manager jobs are plentiful. **Joe Moreira** recently accepted the equipment manager position at Etowah Valley Golf Club & Lodge in western North Carolina after six years in the same role at Lake Toxaway Country Club. The marketability of his skills started resonating with Moreira — who made \$16 per hour in his first industry job a decade ago

## ▶▶▶▶▶ ABOUT THIS SERIES

*Golf Course Industry* is partnering with Bernhard and Company to tell the story of today’s golf course equipment managers. The series will explore the importance of the position, the backgrounds of the people filling roles, what the work entails and what turf’s mechanical future holds.

**PART 1: September:** The mechanical void

**PART 2: October:** Golf’s most fascinating backgrounds

**PART 3: November:** Routines and relationships

**PART 4: December:** What’s next



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— when he left his native Florida for Lake Toxaway. “It became something I knew I would do as a career when about six years ago I realized I could write my own terms,” Moreira says.

Moreira experienced the current demand for equipment management skills in the job search that ended with him landing at Etowah Valley, a 27-hole facility 30 miles from Lake Toxaway. Through the years, he’s received offers from courses in nearly every part of the United States and encountered opportunities in other countries, including the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica.

“This has become a niche of a career. Not a lot of people are getting into, unfortunately,” he adds. “It allows me to get into these bigger golf courses. I’m younger and the old-timers have been getting out of it. When I found out I could write my own ticket, that’s when I said, ‘I could do this forever.’”

**THE CONFLUENCE OF** added job responsibilities, heightened conditioning expectations, a limited talent pool and competition from other industries seeking experienced mechanical talent is forcing golf facilities to invest more into the equipment manager position.

Retired superintendent and industry historian **Mel Lucas Jr.** says he paid “mechanics” 50 cents more per hour than crew members when a need for the position developed in the early 1970s. The gap between operators and equipment managers has significantly widened in the past 50 years. The GCSAA job board listed more than 30 open equipment manager positions in early August, with pay for experienced candidates ranging from \$18 per hour at an 18-hole course in Missouri up to \$145,000 per year at a new 48-hole private facility in Georgia.

“With what they have to deal with today, if there’s a club that doesn’t have

a qualified mechanic, then they are far from being on the top,” Lucas says. “You really need to have a top-quality person as a mechanic at a club. They are worth their weight in gold. Whatever they make, they deserve.”

The value of the position becomes further evident when hearing equipment managers—an innately humble group of professionals — describe what they do in their own words.

Epland: “I would just call myself the dirty hands guy. In a nutshell, you’re a mechanic, you’re a welder, you’re a plumber, you’re a carpenter.”

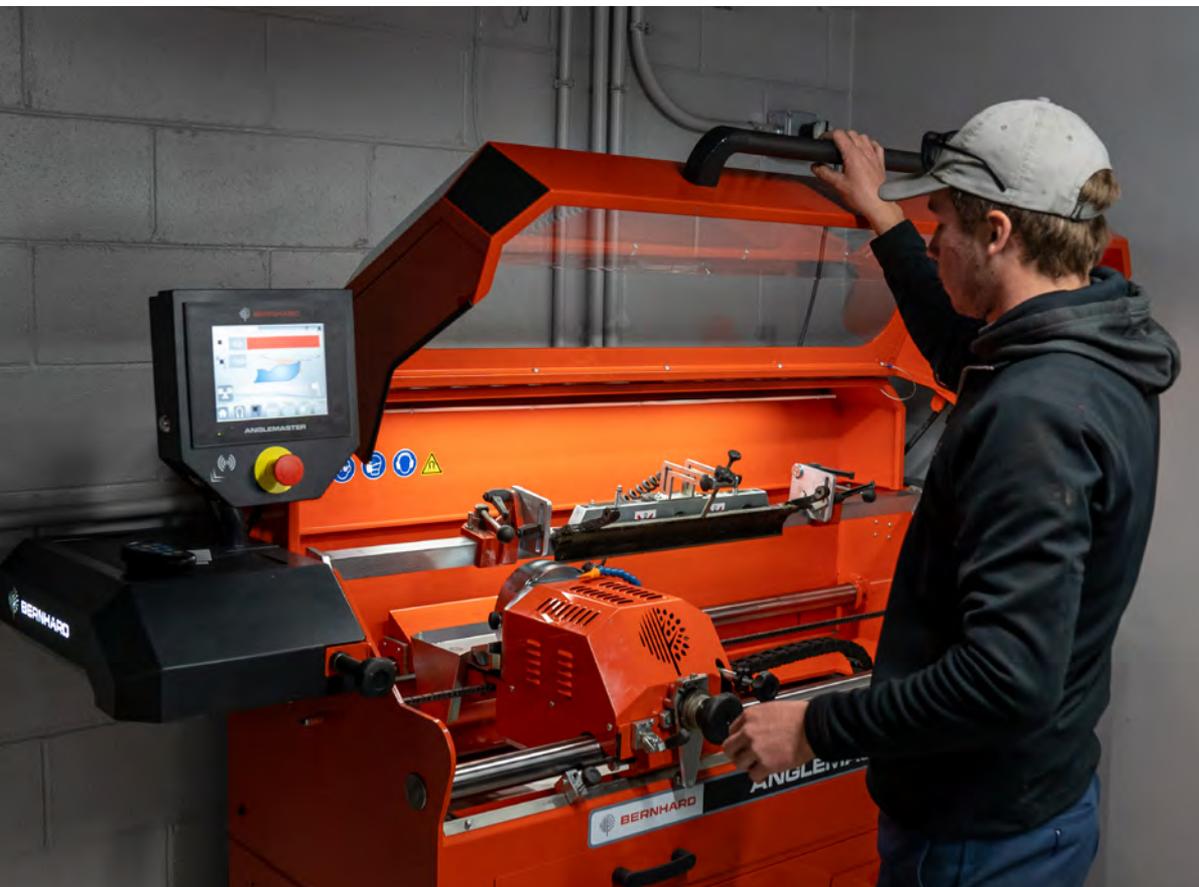
TPC Tampa Bay’s **Ken Nail:** “I repair, fix and babysit everything it takes to maintain a golf course, from machines, to toilets, to ice machines, to the crew.”

Kenosha (Wisconsin) Country Club’s **Justin Prescott:** “As far as the golf course, I like to joke that the superintendent is good at growing grass, but I’m good at cutting grass.”

The role wasn’t always this complex — or this tough to fill.

The equipment manager position, according to Lucas, a second-generation superintendent and author of “Golf’s Cause and Effect: A History of Greenkeeping,” started becoming widespread in the late 1960s and early ’70s. The position’s emergence coincided with the introduction of mowers with hydraulic lifts to adjust cutting heights in the ’60s.

“The new breed of super-



intendents that came out of places like Penn State and UMass recognized they were professionals and that they had to be more professional in their chosen field,” Lucas says. “They weren’t really mechanics. And when hydraulics started to come into golf course equipment, that was a little more overwhelming to the majority of golf course superintendents. They recognized these machines needed somebody to care for them because they were costing a lot of money.”

Referred to as “mechanics” by Lucas and his peers, the new employees being integrated into golf maintenance operations were relatively easy to find, especially in densely populated places. Lucas, for example, led turf teams on Long Island, where advertisements in daily newspapers such as *Newsday* often attracted a surplus of qualified candidates. “It wasn’t just me,” he says. “All the big clubs were finding mechanics who wanted to be mechanics on a golf course.”

What happened to golf isn’t much different than what occurred in the ensuing decades in other industries requiring people with mechanical backgrounds. “Let’s face it,” Lucas says, “kids, even into my era, the 1950s and 1960s, when you got your car, you were working on it. That isn’t the case today.”

**PRESCOTT IS A** modern anomaly. The son of a Wisconsin firefighter who also taught classes at a Gateway (Wisconsin) Technical College, Prescott says his father, **Michael Prescott Sr.**, instilled a passion in him for learning hands-on tasks, including mechanics.

“I hate to be that person that goes, ‘Oh well, everybody is on their phone or computer now,’” Justin says. “Well, I had that stuff growing up. We had a computer my entire life and I had video games, but I still wanted to go outside. I wanted to be in nature, I wanted to be in the garage and the shop.”

Prescott’s jobs as a teenager ranged from working at a restaurant to a maintenance position at a Bible camp.

Prescott then received a building maintenance job at Alpine Valley Resort in Elkhorn, Wisconsin, that required him to help on the ski hill. He joined the resort’s golf maintenance crew in his early 20s and ascended to an assistant superintendent position before seeking a career change. Prescott enrolled in welding school and quickly learned the trade wasn’t for him. He returned to golf in his mid-30s as the equipment manager at Kenosha Country Club.

Possessing a mechanical background helped Justin obtain a comfortable job at a respected club less than an hour from his hometown. “Once you get that experience, the jobs are out there,” he says. “They come up quite often.”

Multiple people interviewed for this series cited less exposure to mechanical and technical fields in secondary schools as a reason for a shortage of qualified equipment managers in golf and other industries. Career and technical education (CTE) credits earned by United States high school students dropped by 14 percent between 1990 and 2009, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

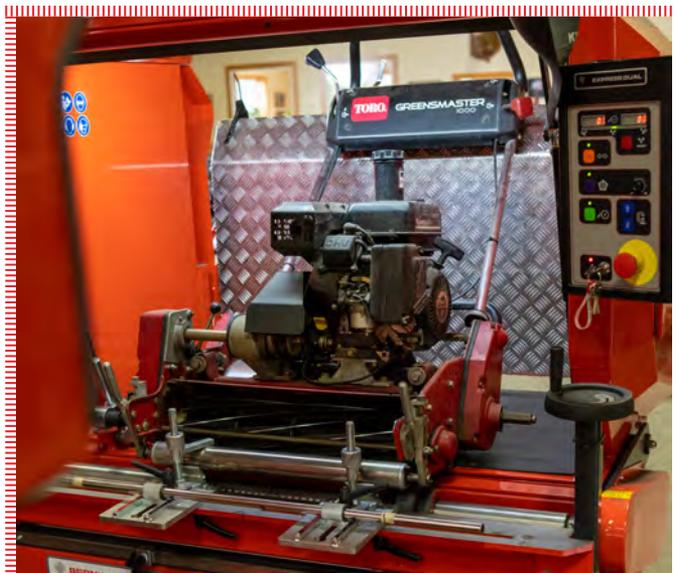
“One thing that doesn’t sit well with me is that our high schools are taking away the wood and metal shop and those kinds of programs,” Justin says. “It kind of scares me, because these vocational trades need to be taught just the same as all the other things that they are sending kids off to school for. They are trying to put a

closed-focused way of life into every kid’s mind instead of adapting to help kids find their path.”

As larger societal changes continue to filter into golf course maintenance, finding and keeping solid equipment managers will continue to challenge the industry.

More play. More complex mowers. Lower heights of cut. Fewer qualified people to tie it all together.

“Ultimately, it’s supply and demand,” Philadelphia Cricket Club’s Meersman says. “For the few people who want to learn how to do this the right way, there will be a really good market for those individuals.” **GCI**



## About Bernhard and Company

Bernhard and Company boasts an extensive history producing grinders and other tools to help golf courses and equipment managers perform at high levels. The company’s North American presence includes:

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# MEMO

## THE ALL-PURPOSE REOPENING MEMO

To: Green Chair

From: Consultant

Re: The delicate matter of your course reopening after a major renovation

Date: Today

**C**ongratulations on walking your club through a major renovation. After months of managing budgets, overseeing schedules, meetings with your superintendent and construction team, too many club meetings, and countless emails, you are about to reclaim your golf course.

By way of advice, a few pointers.

I have seen this dozens of times, that too early a return to normal ends up compromising turfgrass quality and leads to long-term decline that takes a year or two for recovery. I know you are impatient — as is your membership — to get back to golf. But your job is not over.

Be cautious and don't expect the golf course to be fully regrown upon reopening, even if the turfgrass looks ideal. The surface does not betray the root structure. Too much early traffic and pounding will have serious long-term consequences. The native roughs, mounds and haul roads will not be close to fully re-established; nor will the bunker faces be strong enough to take the impact of golfers walking up the faces.

The grass is particularly tender. All that money you spent on importing commercially cultivated sod has produced lush-looking turfgrass, but the blades of grass have never been subjected to the kind of traffic you are about to impose upon them, and they will quickly

show wear and tear.

The newly seeded areas also have a long way to go to develop the depth of root structure and the strength and resistance to handle the pounding imposed by 150 to 200 rounds a day — including from cart traffic and maintenance vehicles. If the club was smart and used fully cultivated and played-upon areas like tees and the fronts of fairways for harvesting sod used for low-mow turf expansions, those areas are likely to hold up best.

The most tender areas are certainly going to be the edges of those newly expanded/reclaimed putting surfaces. However carefully you cut out the old growing medium and replaced it with a suitable mix, those areas will take the longest to fully establish; they are growing in a medium that bears the burden of years of topdressing accumulation and thus exist in a less-than ideal environment for greens-quality turfgrass.

Moreover, they are now on the edges and subject to mechanical degradation due to foot traffic and the wear from mowing units turning. And no matter how much tree management you achieved, you will find these expanded areas subject to marginally more shade and marginally less sunlight than the centers of your greens.

To that end, a few suggestions for limiting early impact of play:

- For at least the first two months, go to 12-minute tee times.
- Make every effort to discourage mechanized cart use and to encourage walking through pull-cart usage.
- Implement an absolute ban

on more than one solo cart in each group; golfers must share carts.

- Enact extremely tight geo-fencing of carts and close monitoring from pro shop.
- Do not utilize hole locations in those newly reclaimed areas of putting surface.
- Train the pin-setting staff to avoid using hole locations that would entail more walk-off traffic through sensitive, newly cultivated areas.
- Send out a memo to all members reminding them to avoid sodded/seamed areas, or walking up bunker faces, and reminding them to enter/exit bunkers from low point only.
- For the first two months, morning play should proceed from first tee only, one hour later than normal, to give the maintenance crew time to adjust to demands of a totally new, expanded set-up regimen.
- Make sure the superintendent is provided with an expanded budget, equipment and staffing, including at least one experienced/academically trained assistant, plus additional labor.
- No outside outing events for the first two months.
- Limit guest play to no more than one per member per round until further notice.
- Don't blame the superintendent for evident wear and tear if you fail to implement these provisions.
- Let those who voted against the plan and now love what you've done be the ones to claim credit for it.
- Stop listening to the naysayers.
- Enjoy your golf course. Be patient. **GCI**



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

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TSP GCI JUL23 R1\_04-06-23

# BEST USE OF FUNGICIDES ON WARM-SEASON TURF

**M**anaging disease on warm-season turf requires prioritization.

Pick a disease to control. Determine the seasons to best handle the pathogens. Select the right fungicide. Let the fungicide's components do their job.

Using a solution safe to apply year-round such as Navicon® Intrinsic® brand fungicide helps a superintendent prioritize a warm-season turf disease control program. A DMI and strobilurin combination with mefen-tri-fluconazole and pyraclostrobin as active ingredients, Navicon Intrinsic brand fungicide can be applied "any time of the year, any time you have disease, whenever it makes sense to use it," says BASF senior technical specialist Dr. Emma Lookabaugh.

Summer sprays, Lookabaugh adds, are a necessary — and sometimes overlooked — part of controlling disease on warm-season turf.

"In the past, everybody used to say, 'You don't need to spray fungicides in the summer if you're growing warm-season turf-grass.' Unfortunately, that's not the case," Lookabaugh says. "A lot of these pathogens are most active in the summer and doing quite a bit of damage, and

we might not see the damage until the fall, or maybe we don't see the damage until after winter. However, those pathogens were active a lot earlier, so summer applications are still necessary and needed throughout much of the Southeast."

Fairy ring, take-all root rot, spring dead spot and large patch are among the diseases Navicon Intrinsic brand fungicide effectively controls on warm-season turf. Lookabaugh calls Navicon Intrinsic brand fungicide a "jack of all trades," and the utility allows a superintendent to establish disease control priorities.

"It has so many different fits," Lookabaugh says. "We can use it in the middle of the summer, we can use it in the fall, we can use it as that turf is greening up, and we have no issues. Of all our fungicides, Navicon is probably the most versatile. You

can use it so many different ways and it's effective on many different diseases. And it gives you a DMI in places where historically we have left DMIs out."

Take fairy ring control, for example.

Soil temperatures above 55 degrees trigger fairy ring, according to Lookabaugh, and the disease potentially requires year-round diligence in lower parts of the United States where warm-season turf covers golf courses. Navicon Intrinsic brand fungicide, along with Maxtima® fungicide, are summer rotational options for courses with extended fairy ring seasons. Navicon Intrinsic brand fungicide is labeled for three applications per year at the high use rate of 0.85 ounces per 1,000 square feet.

"If you have nine months where you have to be making fairy ring applications, then you are definitely going to need a rotation that includes multiple modes of action," Lookabaugh says. "We like to position Navicon and Maxtima in the warmer

months because we don't see the same growth regulation effects that some other DMIs can cause. So with Navicon and Maxtima you have the opportunity to safely use DMI chemistry in the heat of the summer to control late season fairy ring."

The versatility of Navicon Intrinsic brand fungicide also expands take-all root rot control options. Take-all root rot occurs on Bermudagrass greens facing the usual suspect of stresses such as low mowing heights, poor drainage, excessive irrigation, poor fertility and abundant thatch. Pathogens are most active, according to Lookabaugh, when soil temperatures hover between 77 and 86 degrees.

"Start early, keep going and hopefully you cover your whole window for take-all root rot," she says. "The good news is that a lot of the fungicides that you would be putting out in the summer, whether it's for fairy ring, mini ring or even as we move into early fall for spring dead spot, those are most likely doubling up for your take-all root rot applications as well."

And what about courses where controlling large patch on zoysiagrass and seashore paspalum is a priority? Navicon Intrinsic brand fungicide is labeled for use on both turf species.

"We need to manage large patch a lot like how we manage spring

dead spot," Lookabaugh says. "Usually, you can get by with two apps in the fall and then two apps as you're coming out of winter and greening up. That's a standard program. If you have a particularly mild winter and your soil temps stay above 55 degrees, you might need to continue large patch applications longer into the fall as well." ■



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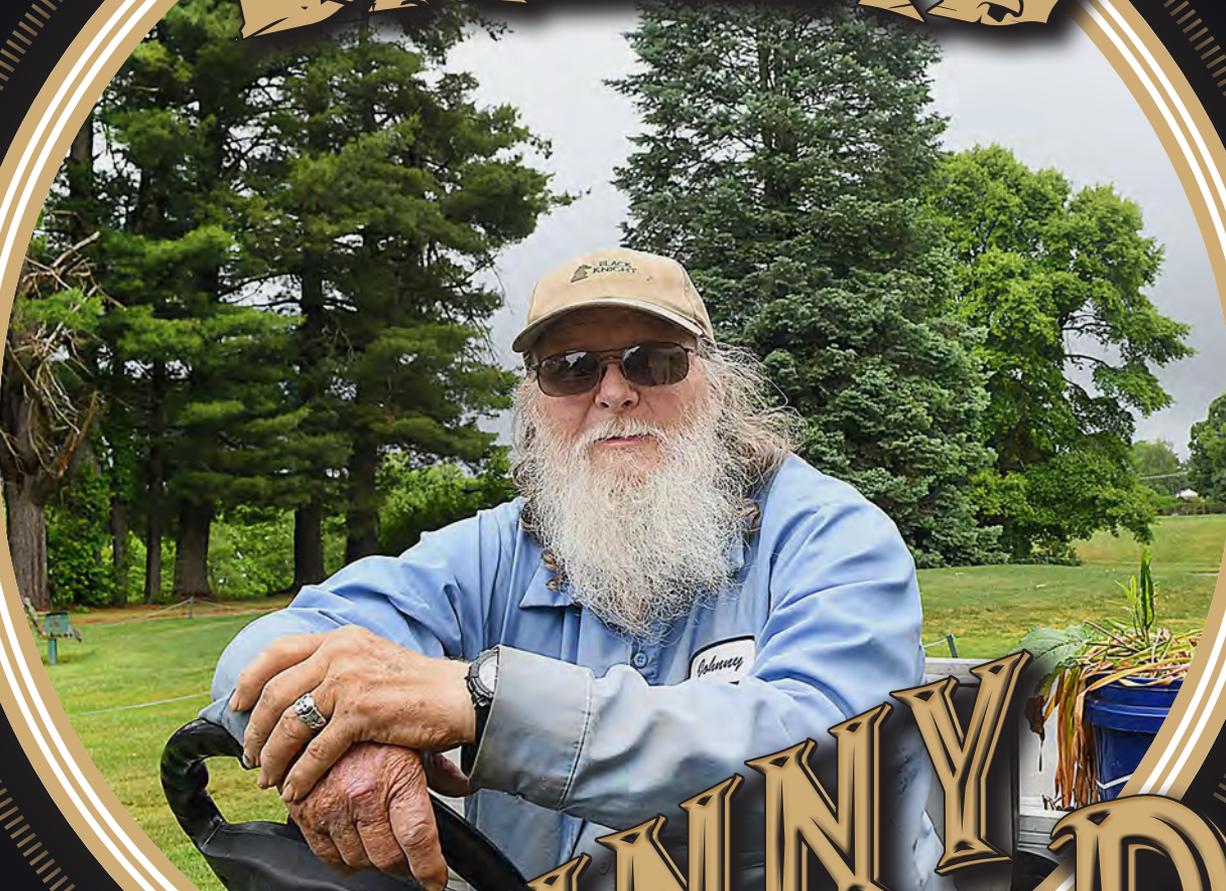


Muirfield Village Golf Club | Photo by Brian Laurent, Superintendent Network

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The

# BALLAD



# of JOHNNY KING KINGAID

By JACOB HANSEN

PHOTOS BY RICK BARBERO

WHAT  
HAPPENS WHEN  
SOMEBODY WORKS AT  
THE SAME SOUTHERN WEST  
VIRGINIA GOLF COURSE FOR  
58 YEARS? THE STORIES,  
MEMORIES AND KNOWLEDGE  
BECOME LOCAL  
TREASURES.

**J**ohnny Kincaid has been working at the Historic Black Knight Golf Course in Beckley, West Virginia, for 50 years. He carries stories and memories. He has observed changes to the course. Even at age 68, Kincaid has no plans of retiring from his job as superintendent.

Historic Black Knight opened in 1929. The **Fred Findlay**-designed course sits on a 67-acre property once owned by Raleigh Coal & Coke. The “Black Knight” originated from the trademark of the coal company, which had a large presence in southern West Virginia.

Raleigh owned the course until 1950. The company halted operations and, in 1951, members bought the course, owning it all the way up until 2011 when current West Virginia Governor **Jim Justice** bought the course. In May of 2018, the City of Beckley purchased the course and for the first time in its history, it became a public facility.

Kincaid joined the Black Knight team when he was 18, but it wasn't his first job. At 16, Kincaid worked as a horse boy. Three months later, he became a mechanic, working at two different shops until he arrived at the course. He discovered he didn't “like being inside. I can't handle working inside.”

He started as an hourly worker on the crew. “They gave me a lawn mower and a gallon of gas and then pointed towards the trees,” Kincaid

says. He moved on to bunker maintenance, raking the sand. “Then they found out I could work on the equipment,” he says.

After his boss passed away, Kincaid took over as superintendent in the late 1970s — although Kincaid prefers the title groundskeeper. “I'd been working with him,” Kincaid says. “I knew how to use the spray chemicals and everything, what to use and what to watch for.”

Kincaid was sent to different schools, including Virginia Technical Institute. He also went to several classes, some conducted by Jacobson that required him to answer questions and demonstrate how to handle various equipment. Kincaid made the most of the opportunities, asking questions and talking with members.

Kincaid is a self-taught superintendent. His ability to learn through observing helped him grow professionally.

“In the morning, I could watch the dew,” he says. “If you see light spots, you know you're getting a hotspot there. You watch how everything is doing, the different colors of the grass and everything.”

To keep the course in good shape, Kincaid talked to plant protectant sales representatives. He now uses plant growth regulators on the tees, fairways and greens. “It helps here so we don't have to cut them every day,” he says.

Kincaid also talked with members

to learn new things. “We had one witness exterminating. I talked to him quite a bit, he was a member,” Kincaid says. “He said when the ground turns yellow, it's time to put out the pre-emergent, which is right, it makes sense.”

What really made Kincaid so valuable to the club was his ability to fix things, or as **Micah Davis**, director of golf at Historic Black Knight, described it, Kincaid's ability to “make things from nothing.”

“There'd be times I would speak to Johnny when it was private, and he'd say ‘Well, this broke today,’” Davis says. “And then I'd say, ‘Oh, goodness. Well, what are our options?’ And he's like, ‘Don't worry, I've already fixed it.’ I was like, ‘What do you mean? That was rather substantial.’ And he goes, ‘No, I had an old barbell on hand and I gutted it and welded it, and it's fixed.’”

It was part of the value he brought to the job, as Davis described Kincaid as taking “one stooop of peanut butter and three sandwiches.” His talent to fix things is how Kincaid climbed his way up. “They usually laid the summer help off during the winter, but they found out I could work on equipment,” Kincaid says. “So, they kept me on for several years.”

For 89 years, Black Knight was a members-only course. When the city bought the course, Kincaid was part of the deal. **Leslie Baker**, director of Parks and Recreation in Beckley, asked if Kincaid would like to stay



## DOWN THE ROAD

How many superintendents have a street named after them?

At least one.

In June, the City of Beckley named a street after longtime superintendent **Johnny Kincaid**. The street is the back road that leads to the Historic Black Knight Golf Course's maintenance shed, which now reads: "Johnny Kincaid Way." Kincaid has worked at the course for 50 years, which was what sparked the idea.

"A co-worker said Johnny had mentioned to this southern gentleman in conversation one day that this year will make 50," Historic Black Knight director of golf **Micah Davis** says. "It was the gentleman that first suggested that we name the maintenance building after him. We talked about it a little bit and I talked to my boss and the problem was a building can come and go. Things can happen with a building: a fire can take a building down in a heartbeat and it's gone. And I said, 'Why don't we just name the street then?' Funny enough, Johnny always said he wishes that street had a name. So, in case he wanted to order Uber Eats, he can give them an address. It didn't have a name at all before, it's not like it was renamed."

Beckley director of parks and recreation **Leslie Baker** says: "It's something we do in the city, not very often, only for people who really have been very active in the community or noteworthy like a politician."

The decision was not hard after Davis mentioned the idea to Baker. "It just seemed appropriate, it really did," she says. "This is a road that he has traveled every day of his working life and how fitting it would be to name it in honor of him." Baker adds that the mayor, council and other city officials supported the naming.

The city purchased the course in 2018. Kincaid is now a permanent part of the property, although he says, "I told them when I leave, it's going with me."

Kincaid says has been trying to get the street named for 20 or 25 years — though not necessarily for himself. He just wanted any name. Kincaid appreciates what the city did, adding that he originally wanted to name the street "Billy Capps Strap" in honor of Black Knight's former golf professional.

"I didn't think they'd actually ever do anything like that," he says, "but the city has been real good to me since they took over."

— *Jacob Hansen*

on. He replied, "I would if I could."

The decision to keep Kincaid on was not a hard one for Baker. Not knowing a lot about golf or the course, Kincaid's experience and years of work was valuable. "He knows every inch of that course," Baker says. "He was there when they laid the irrigation system. He was there when some of the trees were small and were planted. He knew the history. He knows the wet spots, the problem areas, and that was going to be the guy that we're going to need to help bring that course back to its former glory."

Not only did Kincaid decide to stay on and not retire, but he has turned down other job offers. "He has been offered jobs at other properties, making more money, doing different things," Davis says. "Some of these jobs he's been offered are doing the exact same thing, which would be a very easy, very lateral move on his part. But he likes where he is, likes doing what he's doing. He's comfortable there."

"But at this, he's watched it grow, he's watched it develop. He likes being part of this particular property, getting better and getting healthier and getting more notoriety. He likes being a part of that property. So, it's not just him succeeding, he likes to see the property succeed."

When the city took over the course, it was strange for Kincaid as he had to get used to some things. "If it's on the calendar, they get the day off. To me, that's crazy," Kincaid says. "Holidays is when you normally have your most business. They're closed on holidays. It's not right. But they turned it completely public, which I still have all the old members still come out and play. They stop and talk to me every time."

Kincaid had been fixing things for the majority of his life. Back when the course was private, "He did some side gigs where he would work on people's cars here and there," Davis says. "He always stated under the premise that he was

going to make a couple extra dollars but then he usually ended up not charging anybody more often than not because he really genuinely just liked to help.”

But after the city purchased the course, there wasn't as much of a need for repair work. “If we needed something, they

usually get it for us. Need a piece of equipment, they'll find some way to get it,” Kincaid says. It took some getting used to for Kincaid.

“Now, I've actually had to retrain in a sense,” Davis says. “I had to break him of his old habits. He used to keep everything because he *had* to keep everything and now it's more like, We can get rid of something because now we can afford to replace. He's just like, 'I hate to throw it away,' and I'm like, 'I know, I know how it is, I was right there with you.' Now space becomes more of a value.”

Baker noticed a similar thriftiness in Kincaid, who has been helped by the city investing more than \$100,000 in equipment for the course.

“One of the first things I asked him was for an inventory and what he needed the most,” she says, “and I think that he had never had that kind of opportunity to say I need this, this, this, and this.”

Although it was a change for Kincaid, Beckley has been very good to him. “I was off because I had a heart attack,” he says. “They paid all my deductibles on my insurance. They kept my job position open, so when the doctor released me I came back to the same job I had.”

Before, Kincaid didn't have any health insurance, and “we have really

good health insurance at the city,” Baker says. Even before the heart attack, the city assisted Kincaid with his health.

“Micah and I kind of worked together to figure out a way where Micah could say, 'You need to go now, you need to get your diabetic medication,’” Baker says. “And as we saw him progress and do better and get his medicine, and then we have a wonderful HR department that works with you too, if you have any questions, and she would call him and talk to him and reassure him that he wasn't going to get a lot of bills.”

Kincaid described the course as home and family. Kincaid even used to live on the course. “There were two houses on property, one for the golf pro and one for the greenskeeper, then the third floor of the clubhouse there was an apartment for the general manager, an apartment for the executive chef,” Davis says. “So, Johnny lived on that property for years as well. And actually, his oldest son was born in the old house that still sits there.”

Kincaid even planted a pine tree in the house's front yard, now adjacent to the maintenance building. “That tree belongs to him,” Davis says. “Living and working on the course for so

long, Kincaid knows the ins and outs.”

“They always had what they call a program and invitation, which was the two big tournaments every year,” Kincaid says. “(Former Black Knight pro) Billy (Capps) always had me place the pin placements. It wasn't easy, nobody birdies. I enjoyed that.”

Like many longtime superintendents, Kincaid has spots on the course he returns to again and again. “Couple spots are in my favorite list. One is roughly between 3 and 8, where it runs, basically in the middle of the course,” Kincaid says. “There are no houses nowhere close, and in the evening when the sun's gone down and you got the sun setting and everything, it's nice. In the fall, when all the trees are all changing, it's one of my favorite places.”

Kincaid originally intended to retire and travel with his second wife, Janet. But after she passed, Kincaid says he “has no reasons” to retire. “I'd like to keep going as long as I can,” he says. Kincaid adds he has “a lot of memories. A lot of good ones, some bad ones, but that's life. I've just enjoyed being there.” GCI

*Jacob Hansen is a Kent State University senior participating in Golf Course Industry's summer internship program.*





**BILL**

**MATT**

**NOT**

# **YOUR NORMAL NEIGHBORS**

**FLORIDA SUPERINTENDENTS **BILL DAVIDSON** AND **MATT TAYLOR** SHARE MUCH MORE THAN THE BORDERING NAPLES TURF THEY MAINTAIN.**

BY TRENT BOUTS



▲ A chain link fence and a power line are all that separates the golf course maintenance facilities of longtime friends Bill Davidson and Matt Taylor.

**T**here is a lot made about the golf course superintendent fraternity but in few instances does it match the lived experience of **Bill Davidson**, CGCS, and **Matt Taylor**, CGCS. It is going on 17 years that Davidson, at the Country Club of Naples, and Taylor, at Royal Poinciana Golf Club, have been professional neighbors. If not for the chain link fence between their shops on Solana Road, you could literally putt from the doorstep of one to the other.

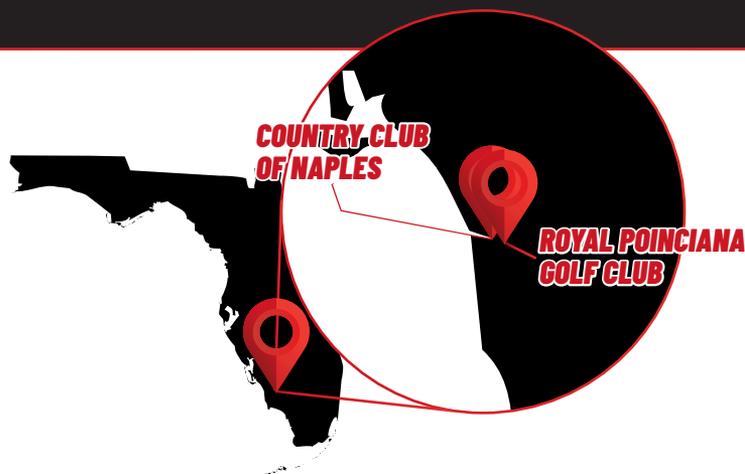
Remarkably, though, they might be closer still in spirit.

Each refers to the other as the brother they never had, the counsel they trust implicitly and the “shrink” they don’t have to pay. “These are the relationships we’re supposed to have in our lives, right?” Taylor asks rhetorically. The kind that Davidson says keeps you upright when you need it and always honest with yourself. “Matt must have told me a hundred thousand times, ‘Shut up! You don’t have any idea how good you have it,’” he laughs.

While they have been hip pocket neighbors since early 2007, their professional relationship dates beyond that. Taylor was assistant superintendent to **Tim Hiers**, CGCS, at Collier’s Reserve Country Club when Davidson interned there in 1995. It took a week or two before Taylor realized they’d met earlier still.

“One day, Matt says, ‘Hey, Davidson. Do you have a sister named Toni?’” Davidson laughs. “I said, ‘Yeah.’ And he goes, ‘Oh, yeah, I dated her.’” That was back in middle school and while Taylor clearly recalls, Davidson, 10 years younger, was very much Billy the kid at the time. “I don’t ever remember that, thank God!” he says.

Naples was a smaller presence on Florida’s golfing landscape then. Taylor says there were only three high schools. “Everybody knew ev-



erybody,” he adds. “It was a sleepy, sleepy town many moons ago,” Davidson says. “And Matt grew up here like I did, hunting and fishing and just being a beach rat. We have so much in common, in our personal lives as well as professionally.”

Today, *U.S. News and World Report* says there are 19 high schools in Collier County and the National Golf Foundation says that, per capita, Naples is the most concentrated golf market in the country. It’s not just that there are 92 courses in and around the city on the Gulf of Mexico, it’s that so many of them are so high-end. Keeping them that way demands a similar concentration of highly talented, highly motivated superintendents.

All of which has allowed those “beach rats” to rise in the profession without having to roam like so many of their peers elsewhere. And neither could be more grateful for being able to retain that proximity to their roots as well as to each other.

“Billy and I go way back,” Taylor says. “We’ve always been friends. We know each other’s families. We have a deep mutual respect for each other. We have a lot of the same friends in the business. We fish together. We have a good time together. I never had brothers, but Billy is one of those guys for me.”

After graduating from Lake City Community College, Davidson returned to Collier’s Reserve in 1996 as a spray technician working closely with Taylor, then an assistant,

for about six months before Taylor moved to Bonita Bay Club East. Even then they saw plenty of each other. Davidson was good friends with some of Taylor’s assistants.

“I would run into Matt all the time when I would go play golf with them or to check out some project they were doing,” he says. “And because we were both Tim Hiers’ disciples, because we had that in common, we would always catch up with each other at meetings and events.”

Like Hiers, and very much at his instigation, Taylor and Davidson both served long stints at an association level, including terms as president with the Everglades GCSA and Florida GCSA. “Matt and I never talked about serving, we just did it because Tim was always conscientious about developing that in us,” Davidson says. “Having both worked for him, being raised in that discipline of involvement and his standards, we just drank the Kool-Aid and we bonded over that.”

That bond holds like glue today, at work and away from it.

In May, Taylor was about to round out preparations for the Florida State Mid-Amateur Championship when he had a roller go down. “It was about as critical a time as it could have been for us,” he says. “In five minutes, I had a roller from Billy and it really kind of saved my bacon.”

Sometimes, the phone call, either way, is asking for a second set of eyes on a turf issue. Sometimes it’s for

simpler things — a hydraulic fitting, an irrigation fitting, a hose, an oil filter, whatever it might be.

“It’s always, ‘Yeah, come and get it from the parts room,’” Davidson says. “And that’s extended beyond us to our employees fostering great working relationships with each other. My mechanics are good friends with his mechanics, just like our assistants. They’re always collaborating, bouncing things off each other.”

Sometimes the phone calls are more earnest.

“You know, this is not the easiest profession. Sometimes you need a shrink,” Taylor says. “There are times when you really don’t want to take it home. And it helps to talk to somebody who understands and maybe can help you with your per-

spective. It goes both ways. I may be 10 years older, but there are times when I’m in his office.

“There’s been times when one of us has said, ‘I don’t think you really want to go about it that way.’ The fact we are such good friends means we’re able to take that with a grain of salt, and maybe we don’t agree right then, but if we think about it a little bit ...”

Davidson recalls Taylor being an enormous help during a divorce some years ago. “I’d call Matt and he would come and play doctor and I would play victim,” he says. “And at the end of it, he would say, ‘Right, you’ve got five minutes. Then quit feeling sorry for yourself and suck it up. Life goes on.’ He’s played a lot of roles for me, but most importantly as a great friend.”

There was also a time when Taylor had to come to the rescue far from the golf course. It was late one afternoon when Taylor was hosting the whole family for Sunday dinner. Davidson called. He’d been boating and, almost out of gas, headed to Snook Bight Marina in Fort Myers Beach to refuel, only to



© TOP: BRIGIT MC LAULHIN  
BOTTOM: BILL DAVIDSON

find the marina was closed.

“He was screwed,” Taylor says. “His truck and boat trailer were down in Naples.”

Taylor grabbed his youngest son, a couple of gas cans from his storage shed and kissed his wife on the way out the door with the news he’d be back in a few hours. “She knows Billy. She knows the relationship,” he says. “There was no ‘Where the heck are you going on a Sunday?!’ She never questioned it. Billy was in a bind. ‘Gotta go.’ And he would do the same thing for me, I know.”

That trust is absolute.

Davidson, who is in the midst of a major renovation, was spraying out fairway grass when his sprayer gave up the ghost. As has happened countless times between both properties, a loan

was requested. This time, for once, not for long, but for a few seconds, Taylor admits having to think about it.

“That’s kind of a huge ask. I mean, I’m kind of weird about it but I would never put Roundup in a sprayer,” he says. “Not when I use it on greens. I know you can clean it and neutralize it and stuff like that but . . .”

Even so, Taylor told Davidson he can use it. “That’s because you know. You know the guy is going to do the right thing,” Taylor says. “We have the utmost professional respect for each other, not just personal respect.”

All of the above speaks to the kind of relationships that Davidson says every superintendent needs to have and needs to work at.

“It’s never a question of whether you are going to need friends, it’s a

matter of when,” he says. “I tell my assistants, God forbid our building burns down and one day we show up and we have nothing. But I can make three phone calls and I’ll be able to get enough equipment here to take care of business. Whether it’s for someone who can do that for you, or be a mentor, a counselor, a confessor, you need to develop friends like that.”

Taylor concurs.

“When you spend any sort of time in this profession, you go through some things,” he says. “It’s nice to know that when stuff hits the fan, that there’s somebody on the other side of the fence to go talk to.” **GCI**

*Trent Bouts is a South Carolina-based writer and frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.*

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continued from p. 20

Welding. Then they went off to college, dived into other interests, built careers, started families. Dylan lives outside Seattle now with his wife, **Nicole**, and 3-year-old son, **Oliver**. He's a licensed financial adviser and works with small businesses — many similar to the one his parents have built. He understands the challenges. Kyle and his wife, **Lisa**, are closer geographically. Their home sits at the end of the course parking lot, just 100 yards from the clubhouse. Kyle plays four rounds most weeks, normally nine holes and home. He sees how hard his dad still works — out on the course before Kyle starts his own workday in quality assurance and human resources, and often still out after Kyle is home for the night.

How do you say goodbye to the course you've known for all of its life and most of yours?

"They've been working on this a long time," Dylan says. "This is their retirement plan, and we've always known this is where it's going, and I'm happy for them. But to all of a sudden

think of it of not being the first place I drive into when I go to Lewistown, it's just different. There was some sadness, but in the big scheme of things, I'm happy for them."

"How do I look at that?" Kyle asks. "It'll be what it is, I guess. It'll be tough, for sure. It'll be hard on my folks. When we talked about it the last time, my first question was, What if it's not a golf course? And the answer to that is the guy or gal or group who comes in can do what they want with it. It'll be theirs. It's tough to think about. But it's equally tough to think about if somebody were to come in and buy it and keep it a golf course and run it poorly or have a country-club attitude. There's no hierarchy, no pecking order. It's always been the workingman's course. If you pour concrete or if you're a banker, it doesn't matter. I think to see someone come in and ruin it that way, I would almost rather they turn it into a hayfield."

The best possible buyer, Kyle says, is either somebody so wealthy they just want to own a golf course, money be

darned, or . . . or "a young couple with a lot of ambition that can continue what my parents have done."

**WHENEVER JUDITH SHADOWS** sells and Jeff and Maria hand over all the keys, they say they want to travel. Australia. New Zealand. Easter Island. Iceland. Africa. A whole bunch of the United States. Everybody who knows them, though, figures there will be some other project.

They are, to hear Kyle tell it, "pretty incredible people."

Until then, they are happy to maintain the land they have shaped, to keep opening their doors and their course to anybody who wants to play or just hang out for a while.

Dylan drove into town a few weeks ago with Oliver. His son had never experienced the course. Maria drove her grandson around in a golf cart. He loved that. "He got to run his little heart out," Dylan says. "He was in seventh heaven.

"I want to say it was almost overwhelming." **GCI**

*continued from p. 12*

Take putting greens. While it might make our lives easier if they were uniform, they should be shaped and sized differently, positioned uniquely, sloping, draining and angling distinctly to affect approach shots and half the score of each hole.

How about bunkers? They're supposed to be hazards, penalty areas, places where golfers should not be. How they look and how they play are affected by wind, sun, shade, rain. The sand within them varies, shifting and moving with the elements.

Fairways vary in firmness, drainage, lie, drought or moisture, soil and grass types, trees, altitude and inputs. And course to course, fairway condition is not the same — from scheduled times for cultivation, fertilization and cultural practices. And just off the fairways, rough heights depend on microclimate and terrain (and these days, the ability of labor to tend to them).

How about the architect? Think they

have anything to do with course creativity? Likewise, the builders and shapers. And when things go really wrong, the greens committees!

But in the end, you, the course superintendent, get to take all the blame, suffer from the sins of others, and do your best to make the best of what you've got. When one of your members gets to play that snooty club down the street — or worse, a top-100 track or regular Tour venue — who gets to hear about the putting surfaces like pool tables, the fairways like carpet, the bunkers like sugar? Without any information about budget, equipment, club politics or labor, golfers second-guess their superintendents all the time.

Here's an idea: Post your annual maintenance budget, and that of any other courses for comparison, on the locker-room bulletin board. Add a note saying you're more than willing to discuss any line item or expenditure with anyone who asks.

One more problem to be aware of. Much of golf's recent growth is "off course," that is Topgolf, simulators and alternative layouts, where the pattern is swing, sip and swing again. That type of play is fun, but it does a disservice to the essence of the game. We all want to move these off-course golfers on course, but we shouldn't do it without giving them a better, more rounded understanding of what the game is all about. Are you listening, USGA, PGA and GCSAA?

Nothing against basketball, but other than sharing the same basic objective — put a round ball into a round hoop or hole — they can't be compared. The thrill of golf is conquering the unknowns, the elements, the land, what nature provided, and man produced. The course. Your office, your domain, your responsibility.

And it is your responsibility to make sure every golfer knows just how special each one is. GCI



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## TRAVELS WITH TERRY

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



### WHEEL PORTABLE SPRINKLERS

**E**ight- by 7-inch recycled golf cart wheels were turned into portable sprinkler heads to irrigate alongside the roadsides at the 27-hole McCall (Idaho) Golf Club. A 1-inch-plus diameter hole was cut with a torch into the side of the wheel and then a 3/4-inch galvanized nipple was welded into place. A 3/4-inch diameter galvanized elbow was installed with another 3/4-inch nipple screwed into the Hunter PGP sprinkler head pipe threads. A 3/4-inch garden hose adapter and a “Y” hose thread adapter were installed so three portable sprinkler heads could be used in series using one manual valve. Additional units are going to be built to irrigate isolated fairway dry spots. It took about 30 minutes to build each wheel and no cost for the parts already in inventory. Golf course director **Eric McCormick** and equipment manager **Ted Austin** are a formidable duo.



### GOLF CART TRAFFIC EXPERIMENT

**G**abe Gallo, director of agronomy at the 36-hole Fiddlesticks Country Club in Fort Myers, Florida, communicates effectively with the green committee and membership through his YouTube videos and digital photos. In February 2021, to further communicate with the green committee about the effects of golf cart traffic, Gallo roped off a temporary mock “GUR” for a two-week period and then presented these photos as further evidence. The committee was blown away at the amount of traffic affecting the playability and aesthetics of the Celebration Bermudagrass rough during the height of the winter golf season. After the experiment, it took two weeks for the “GUR” — after the ropes and stakes were removed — to show the same wear just like the surrounding traffic areas.



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## DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

**B**rand names have been around for as long as consumers have been making purchases. Although there are multiple brands of the same product, there are always those brands that rise above all others when it comes to consumer trust.

When I was growing up, Fram Oil Filters were considered the top of the line. They had a commercial with the catch line, “You can pay me now, or pay him later.” *Him* referred to the mechanic you would eventually pay bigger dollars to when your car needed repairing because you used a cheaper brand oil filter. Marketing genius.

When my wife and I settled in Lexington, Kentucky, earlier this year, the house we purchased needed a little work. OK, it needed a lot of work, some of which is still ongoing more than four months after closing. Yes, we changed paint colors, light fixtures, and made other cosmetic alterations to suit our personal tastes. We also had to replace items that weren’t just out of date or style — they were in dire need of replacing.

We’ve installed a new roof, gutters and downspouts, new windows, and new hardwood floors on the main level. The kitchen was totally gutted because it wasn’t functional and, to be honest, was dangerous. The basement floor is next on the list and may very well be completed by the time you’re reading this.

My late grandfather used to say, “You shouldn’t ask if anything needs to be done, there is always something needing to be done around here.” And my wife has recently been saying, “The previous owners didn’t love this house, they just lived in it.” She

is right. You must give your home love and attention so it can provide the shelter and protection you and your family desire. You can’t live in a home safely if you keep deferring necessary maintenance.

Sound familiar? The same is true for golf courses. We all tout to our members, owners, and/or boards and committees that golf courses are living, breathing things. Like my grandfather’s house, something always needs doing at the golf course to keep things maintained.

Last month here at my new club we started a fairway bunker project. This was a continuation of a project initiated by my predecessor the prior year where they completed all greenside bunkers in conjunction with green surrounds and tee surrounds.

Our project this year involves removing all the old grasses from the bunker faces and shoulders, finding and re-establishing the true bunker edge, inspecting the drainage, removing old sand, installing new grass, and installing new sand.

Bunkers aren’t living aspects of a golf course, but they can behave like one. Over time, if not addressed, the edges of bunkers may wander and shift, as if they were adrift on the tides. The high edge becomes higher from mechanical edging as operators apply pressure and remove just a bit too much from time to time.

The low edge can become overgrown as grass overtakes the shifting sands. Bunkers

always raked by pulling sand toward the back edge creates a buildup that grasses will overgrow. Periodically peeling back the layers and finding the true edge helps maintain bunker integrity and performance.

Many aspects of a golf course have a useful life expectancy and paying attention to how the components of your golf course’s infrastructure are aging is an important aspect to your role as superintendent. Irrigation, drainage and bunker sand are just the tips of the iceberg. There’s so much to do each day above and beyond the daily mowing routines to ensure the golf course is performing at the highest level.

Next time you find yourself sitting across the table from your committee or the board requesting funds for capital improvements, you may want to remind them that deferring maintenance will be more costly down the road. Like the Fram Oil Filter guy, if you don’t make the investment to keep up the features and infrastructure of the golf course in some capacity on a continuous basis, you will eventually spend more money to repair or replace it later.

In other words, later is today in some cases. Be a good homeowner and a good superintendent by being a good steward looking after both environments. Pay close attention to things that look, smell or sound out of place, and don’t ignore the signs of something needing repair. Take care of your course and it will take care of you. **GCI**



**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.



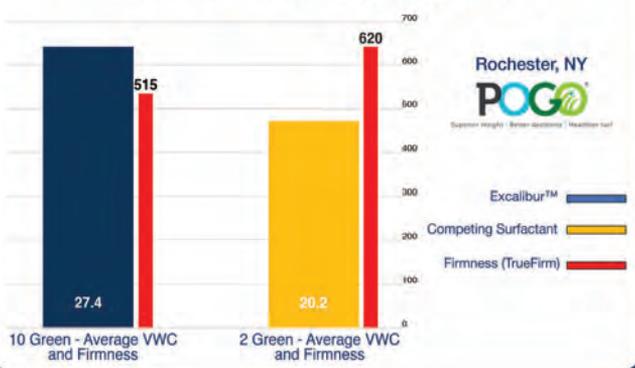
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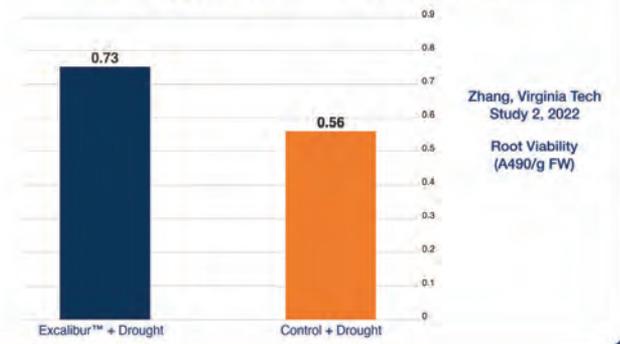
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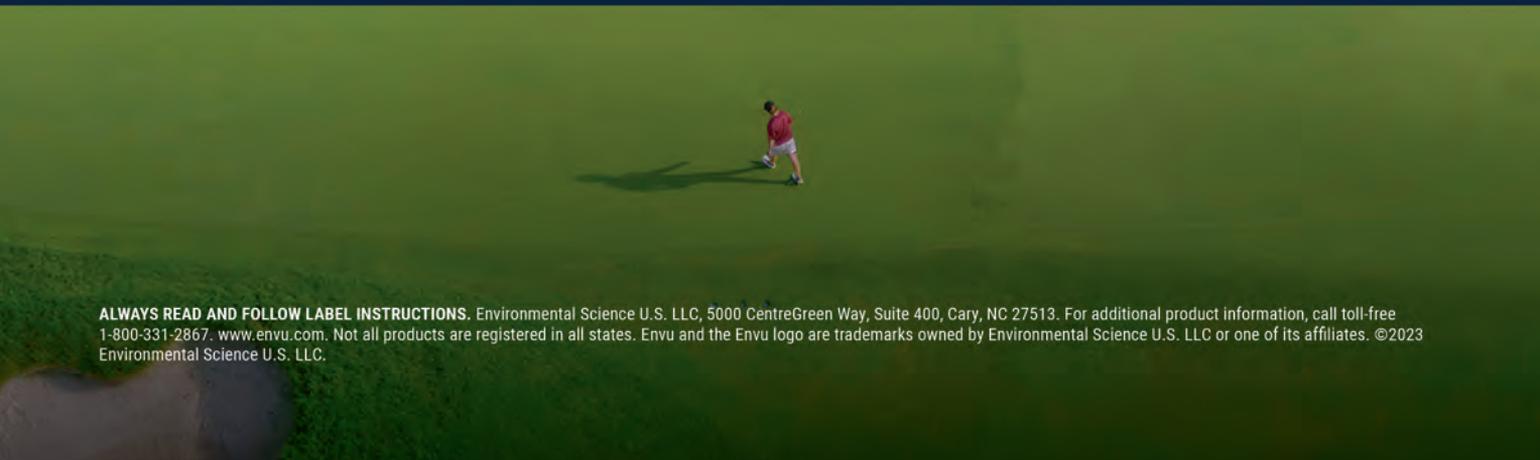
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THE REVIEWS ARE IN:

# Encartis Fungicide Has Quickly Become a Go-To Product for Supers

Photo by Evan Schiller / [www.evanschillerphotography.com](http://www.evanschillerphotography.com)

We checked in with superintendents and BASF agronomy experts in a couple of the nation's toughest disease regions and heard it loud and clear: Encartis fungicide is a great new tool for fairway dollar spot and a host of other disease issues as a bookend or in-season solution.

## Encartis<sup>®</sup> Fungicide

### By Pat Jones

It was just a few years ago that BASF launched a flurry of innovative new products, including Maxtima<sup>®</sup> fungicide, Navicon<sup>®</sup> Intrinsic<sup>®</sup> brand fungicide and Alucion<sup>®</sup> 35 WG insecticide. Along with those big new actives, they introduced a fourth new weapon for turf pros: Encartis fungicide, an enhanced combination product.

Encartis fungicide was designed primarily as a fairway "bookend" spray to be used at the start and finish of the disease cycle most courses go through every year. The concept was simple: Start clean and finish clean, and you're less likely to have disease breakthroughs or nagging issues that suck up time and budget. The new formulation added a broad-spectrum control to the remarkable effectiveness of a foundational product like Emerald<sup>®</sup> fungicide.

### The Math Makes Sense in Chicago

Craig Kight has worked around the country for several management companies, but for the past eight years, he has awakened daily to care for Eagle Brook CC, which sits 45 miles west of Chicago in Geneva, Illinois. It's a community club brimming with fun events, families and kids, but that's not the only site he's thinking about: He serves as a regional superintendent for Arcis Golf and works with superintendents at six other facilities in the region.

Eagle Brook is a big property, nearly 500 total acres, and the golf course has 40 acres of mostly bentgrass. "Our challenge starts with Illinois soils that don't drain well, so fighting anthracnose and dollar spot on our fairways has been the number-one issue. It's been a battle with those two active fungi," he says.

One important goal was to getting the job done and minimizing labor demands and inconveniences for members. "Based on that, we decided to try Encartis [fungicide]. We were due to spray [on] Labor Day — this was 31 days after a Maxtima [fungicide] app — but we were in the middle of a bunch of stuff. I was tired, and storms were coming, [so I] decided to let it ride and push the Maxtima [fungicide] way past normal limits. Predictably, we lit up with dollar spot over the weekend. We had active dollar spot on 65% of fairways and our tee boxes."

He decided it was now or never for the new product. "We put the Encartis [fungicide] out that day. By Thursday, I had zero pitting and zero disease activity. I didn't spray fairways again until our snow mold app in December. I couldn't believe it."

Kight was astonished. "Normally have two to three apps after Labor Day through snow mold. It was unbelievable — it just shut it down. We had perfect dollar spot weather the rest of the season and didn't see anything."

This year, all of the clubs he oversees in the Chicago area are scheduled for a spring/fall Encartis fungicide program. "I'm looking forward to taking this mindset into those other clubs. We all just used tebuconazole previously, but after seeing the Encartis [fungicide] results, we all rethought our strategy."

The math also makes sense for Kight. "I figure it's always been about \$2,000 per app, not counting labor, for those generic fairway apps. If I'm now saving \$5,000-\$8,000 in spring and fall, that's pretty big. [When I look] at rates and costs, there is zero reason to use generics for this, in my opinion."

*Continued on next page*

The other thing that helps the financial side is early order. "When I started here, I was spending close to \$75,000 annually on fungicides and using a lot of generics. Now, with agency

products purchased through EOP, the rebates actually make it cheaper than my generic program was eight years ago. So, in my opinion, generics really don't save us money."

## No Worries at Spring Lake

Tad Miller's life got simpler in 2013 when he was able to regrass Spring Lake CC with V8 bent and Crystal BlueLinks bent on fairways. "It's a lot better managing a newer bent than Poa," he says. But nothing is perfect, and he soon discovered that he had to be very aware of brown patch in his steamy part of Illinois near the Mississippi River. "That's why when Navicon [Intrinsic brand fungicide] and Maxtima [fungicide] came along, we started using them religiously. I'm a BASF believer."

So, when Encartis fungicide arrived, Miller was intrigued, but he also saw an opportunity to use it in-season on his greens instead of primarily just as a fairway product applied early and late. His basic greens program now is Honor Intrinsic brand fungicide in April, Navicon Intrinsic brand fungicide in early May, Lexicon Intrinsic brand fungicide around Memorial Day and then Encartis fungicide in June at 3.5 oz/1,000 to knock out the brown patch. "We get pretty hot here, but with that program, you have no worries," he says.

From that point, Miller will go with Xzemplar fungicide in mid-July and a final Lexicon Intrinsic brand fungicide app around August 1. Then he'll do a second Encartis fungicide app in August. "I'm always trying to change chemistry," says Miller. "I know they talk about it at the beginning and end of the season, but I like using it in the middle of the season here."

He'll finish strong with Navicon Intrinsic brand fungicide and Xzemplar fungicide in September and Maxtima fungicide in early October, but he won't be done with Encartis fungicide on his greens — he plans to use it as his snow mold app the first week of December.

On fairways and green banks, Miller is fighting soil-borne diseases, so the strategy is a little different. "I do Maxtima [fungicide] in April and May, then, in June, I will use the Encartis [fungicide] again." He'll use a chlorothalonil-based spray after that, then return to Encartis fungicide at [the] end of July. "I'm

spraying Encartis [fungicide] more in the heat because of how well it fights the brown patch."

How's it working for him? "I had my best year last year with Encartis [fungicide] in the mix. It was a tough summer for most people, but since I've gone to this program, we've stayed clean. I know it won't let me down, so I build my program around those key BASF products."

"Emerald [fungicide] has been used with confidence by superintendents for many years as an early spring and late fall cleanup for dollar spot. Now, with the addition of chlorothalonil in Encartis [fungicide], I am seeing superintendents get great results applying Encartis [fungicide] in-season for control of dollar spot, leaf spot and patch diseases. Encartis [fungicide] gives superintendents another nice option for in-season chemistry. Easy to mix and apply, Encartis [fungicide] isn't just for the shoulder seasons anymore!"

— Andy Morris, BASF Turf Midwest

What stands out most for Miller? "I don't have to worry about the brown patch creeping up on me. And the price isn't that bad either. It's so much easier because it's a premix. It just comes right out of the jug, ready to go. It mixes well with other things too."

For Miller, the bottom line for Encartis fungicide is effectiveness. "It isn't that much more [expensive] than mixing it yourself. I'd usually get some breakthrough when I mixed it myself. The Encartis [fungicide] works, and we didn't get any breakthrough."



See more insights from superintendents on the value of Encartis fungicide.

Photo by Evan Schiller / [www.evanschillerphotography.com](http://www.evanschillerphotography.com)

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