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STAYING THE COURSE AT ONE COURSE

ob boards and peers can tell fibs. Social media masks reality better than an agitated parent hiding Easter eggs in the backyard.

Upon closer review, job hopping might not be as cool as it seems.

Managing editor Matt LaWell relied on connections and storytelling passion for our cover story about industry professionals who have spent entire golf maintenance careers at one course (One and only on page 18). In typical LaWell fashion, he brilliantly blends the art of human relationships with the science of extensive research. Matt celebrates six years with Golf Course Industry this month. He's a storytelling savant unafraid to pitch and pursue self-generated ideas.

Hopefully we've created a culture where a talent such as Matt feels valued and empowered. And hopefully that's part of the reason why a talent such as Matt remains motivated to perform at a high level with the same job title.

About job titles: We all have them, we all interpret them differently. Employers of choice implement numerous behind-the-scenes mechanisms to ensure continued personal and professional growth while helping employees achieve life goals. Utilizing these mechanisms can prevent a key employee from feeling "stuck," "blocked" or "unable to advance."

Supervisors must understand what matters to key employees through regular conversations and layered observations. Leaders should never assume they know what a co-worker needs or wants. Humans change and evolve. An employee who deems job titles frivolous in April 2025 might aggressively seek a new one in April 2027.

The golf industry is filled with skilled professionals at people-focused clubs making higher salaries and enduring less work stress than head superintendents at turbulent facilities. And what about seemingly dreamy jobs at "Top 100" courses? Proceed with abundant caution. Courses golfers brag about playing don't always translate into quality work environments. Look beyond recognizable logos if longevity and fulfillment matter to your career. Rewarding jobs abound in this industry for determined people with growth mindsets.

The people Matt interviewed for his story, Lee McLemore, Jason Stewart, Will Stearns, Bob Hingston and Craig Sondergaard, offer terrific examples of the possibilities when staying the course at the right course. Matt spoke with the quintet for previous Golf Course Industry stories. When he mulled sources for this month's profile, he immediately mentioned the above names. Matt knew the engaging quintet would speak openly and confidently about their experiences, because they work for people who don't micromanage employees' words, thoughts or actions.

Their insights combined with Matt's punchy writing and thorough reporting add perspective to industry career discussions. Matt profiled people who prove the forever job of our 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s contrasts visions harbored in our teens and 20s.

Following golf maintenance careers is a fascinating and fulfilling part of telling and distributing people-focused stories. I started with Golf Course Industry in May 2014 — fun goes fast! — and know many industry professionals who have switched jobs three, four and even five times during that stretch.

I'm sure their reasons for change were valid. We all have bills to pay, families to feed, challenges to conquer and dreams to chase. A jerk or two might have acquired the course or joined the board. That new general manager might be insufferable. Sometimes different scenery reignites passion, prevents complacency or satisfies curiosity.

Not every job leap goes as expected. We all know professionals who regretted leaving a position. Careers are gambles, and fibs residing on job boards and peers' social media feeds can lead to the wrong play. Unfortunately, I've seen superintendents leave stable situations and get entangled in club politics at their next stops.

We're wired to remember the negative more than the positive. But when you're surrounded by positive people like Matt, it reinforces how professionals pursuing passions for employers who appreciate their work proliferate the golf industry. We frequently visit or drive past courses and learn the club

has employed the same superintendent for a few decades. We applaud and admire both parties.

Loyalty doesn't need to be a split fairway. It can be a one-direction target where the situation becomes better as the landing area approaches.



Guy Cipriano Guy Cipriano Publisher + Editor-in-Chief gcipriano@gie.net

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COURTESY OF ELISABETH KITCHIN (2)



Glowing precision By Lee Carr

Elisabeth Kitchin and her Virginia Tech colleagues have been walking fairways after dark to research sprayer precision. What did they find out? Hint: the results are encouraging.

lisabeth Kitchin was raised on a small, family-owned farm in North Carolina. The main crops were asparagus and maple syrup, and to thrive, practical problem-solving was essential. With that upbringing, Kitchin is a natural fit in the turf industry and she is already a dedicated advocate for practical solutions.

As a graduate student at Virginia Tech, Kitchin has been working to further understand sprayer precision. "Targeted applications are useful but not a lot is known about the quantifiable accuracy and the precision

of the sprayers when we are making them," Kitchin says. "We need to determine how different factors, such as speeds of travel and target sizes, influence results."

Each trial started with Kitchin mapping and spraying targets on the fairways of Virginia Tech Golf Course in Blacksburg, Virginia, during daylight. The turf was sprayed with a solution of UV dye mixed with water to act as a proxy for pesticides. "It's a xanthene dye that is typically used in sewage systems for water-tracing and plumbing purposes," she says. "It is com-

pletely biodegradable, relatively cheap and it's safe on the turfgrass. It's only about \$80 per gallon and easy to source."

At night, she and four other members of the VT Turfgrass team would push UV lights across the fairway. "I painted our targets with a neon paint so when we illuminate the fairway we are able to see the paint and the exact spray deposition," Kitchin says. "Not only are we able to see where we sprayed but also the pattern of the intensity of the dye, any skew and a very defined shape."

With the targets and deposition illuminated, they would use a drone to take images. All that can be seen is the orange target and the green illuminated UV dye that was deposited. "The sprayer we are using has individual nozzle controls and our targets are circular or like an oval," Kitchin says. "We can see what nozzles are turning on, the different shapes and patterns and things like that." That's visibly promising.

"The results are great. The GPS sprayers have incredible accuracy," Kitchin says. "The majority of the time they are hitting 100 percent coverage of the intended targets. There's a bit of overspray, like the sprayer turning on before it hits the target or staying on a little bit after." That's good from a

practical perspective. It's better to overspray than miss affected areas and have disease break through.

Kitchin reported that target size has no significant effect on the accuracy or the precision, from half of a meter to two meters in diameter. Speed was tested at intervals of $3, 4\frac{1}{2}$ and 6 miles per hour.

"Speed does have an effect. Going slower, around 3 miles per hour, has a significantly lower accuracy and a higher offset - more of a difference between where the machine is spraying and where we are telling it to spray," Kitchin says. That's good news for superintendents, too — get the job done with some speed for better accuracy.

Supporting the research was superintendent Jason Ratcliff, who started as a mechanic and has worked his way through several positions at Virginia Tech Golf Course during the past 29 years. "I've been fortunate to work with talented individuals on many research projects," Ratcliff says.

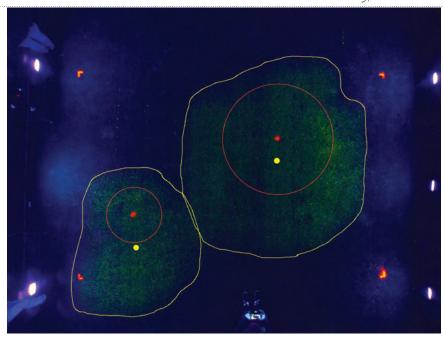
"Jason has been awesome and super accommodating," Kitchin adds. "The neon orange targets are obnoxious but the whole crew has been super nice. They let us come and spray the dye even though we had never used it with turfgrass before." The dye was water soluble, disappearing with the dew or a single rain event, but even so, Kitchin would wait about a week between trials.

Ratcliff promotes research for the good of the course, to acquire funding for future projects and to help students further their careers. "You can't put a price tag on that," he says. "My biggest fear is that I do something that will negatively impact the research being conducted. Communication with the students is key and I do this on a daily basis."

Kitchin will be sharing full results from her study this spring, when she is completing her master's degree. Dr. David McCall has been her advisor and will continue to work with Kitchin as she pursues her doctorate.

Kitchin served as a USGA Green Section intern and has positive experiences working with superintendents. She appreciates their openness to making data-driven decisions and recognizes that costs, time and labor availability can be barriers to adopting new technology.

"Technology has so much potential," she says. "A lot of effort goes into working with



GPS sprayers, especially with making targeted applications. People are adopting what is possible. It is up to us as researchers to make it more adoptable. It's not reasonable for us to say they should be using this technology if it's not feasible, it's very expensive or incredibly time-consuming. There is no use in having amazing technology if it's not going to be practical."

She really appreciates the work and the people she works with. "It's like a little sweet spot between my interests in sustainability and my love of working in turf pathology and in the turfgrass industry," Kitchin says. "We are lucky that everyone is open and supportive of each other. I hope I can continue to do this research and communicate these results to provide practical, adoptable solutions for turfgrass managers."

Lee Carr is a northeast Ohio-based writer and senior Golf Course Industry contributor.

Tartan Talks 105

Nathan Crace and Todd Quitno prove modern golf course architects are more friendly than adversarial.

The pair of engaging industry veterans who own and operate their own firms joined the Tartan Talks podcast

simultaneously to discuss numerous topics, including:

- · How they developed into friends and project collaborators
- The importance of peer relationships when working from home
- Balancing raising children with the rigors of a competitive industry
- · Family friendly golf course design
- How the last five years altered the industry
- Their 2025 schedules

Any banter involving Crace and Quinto makes for easy — and sometimes comical — listening packed with plenty of insight.

"The ASGCA has been big on members collaborating, so there are lots of examples of that," Crace says. "Maybe Todd and I are like the Starsky & Hutch of golf course architects."

The jovial episode can be found on the Superintendent Radio Network page of popular podcast distribution platforms.



Quitno, left, and Crace

NATHAN CRACE

TODD QUITNO



A YOUTUBE CHANNEL FOR **EQUIPMENT MANAGERS**

By Kelsie Horner

hen asked why he decided to start a YouTube channel, Ansley Country Club equipment manager Trent Manning was quick to respond: "The lack of content for golf course equipment managers."

His channel, Reel Turf Techs, started in 2021. His first video titled "How to Generating QR codes," received 36 views. The channel now has 94 videos and nearly 500 subscribers.

Manning's career in the golf industry began when he was just 16 years old at Ansley Golf club's Settindown course. After working a few various industry jobs, he returned to his home course as equipment manager in 2010.

Manning is also the host of the Reel Turf Techs podcast and helps teach GCSAA sessions. "One thing leads to another and next thing you know you're golf course industry famous," he says.

Thanks to working numerous jobs, travel and experience, Manning has learned many tricks, tips and techniques that are helpful for an equipment manager or technician.

Manning aims to create content that can help equipment managers in many capacities, giving them the guidance to help them fix problems and learn industry knowledge.

"That's my only goal, I want to help others," he says.

His channel has grown from screen-recordings to professionally recorded and edited videos and YouTube shorts. The post-film production requirements aren't enjoyable for Manning, so he hired Kevin Keegan of WoodlotMedia to assist him.

Manning and Keegan get together on Saturdays to film as much content as they can. Filming can range from eight to 12 hours a day. He also records videos during the work week, if something comes up that others can benefit from.

Watching Wes Work and Blondihacks are two channels that Manning draws inspiration from. Blondihacks is an educational channel on welding, electronics, machine work and more from Quinn Dunki. "She does an awesome job of explaining in detail how things work," he says of Dunki.

Some of his channels videos feature titles such as "How-To: Grinding a Bed Knife - My Method for Grinding a Toro DPA Bedknife on a Foley 673," "Air Tank Cheat Code - Save Time

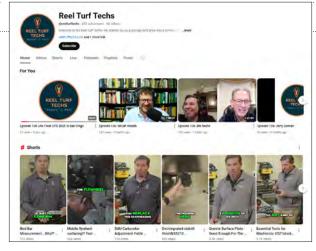


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With These Fittings" and "The Aggression Fork - Take The Guesswork Out of Setting Up Your Reel Mower." Manning also posts recordings of his podcasts and interviews with other industry pros.

His most watched video is from December 2022, titled "Ditch Witch Hydraulic Cylinder Rebuild," with 2,900 views. His YouTube shorts receive a lot of traction as well, with some clips receiving up to 17,000 views.

The equipment manager's plans for the future of the channel? "Grow it as big and as fast as I can."

Is there a video you'd like to see from Trent? Email him at reelturftechs@gmail.com to submit ideas.

NDUSTRY BUZZ

Envu announced a new partnership with BioConsortia, an innovator in microbial crop solutions, to evaluate and develop biological solutions for non-crop applications in the environmental science industry. The collaboration reflects the growing demand for sustainable alternatives for pest management and plant protection, driven by both consumer demand and increasing regulatory pressures. ... Syngenta launched GreenCast Connect, a mobile app designed to enhance how turf and landscape professionals manage operations. The app aims to streamline decision-making, optimize resource use and help managers meet quality standards. ... Barenbrug USA announced the launch of Pro Repair Sand and Pro Repair Compost powered by TurfMend technology, two products tailored for golf course superintendents, sports field managers and landscapers and designed for repair of divots, bare spots and stressed turf areas. ... Moghu USA is further expanding the distribution of PoaCure SC herbicide with the addition of a new partner. The new partner includes Advanced Turf Solutions for Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, Connecticut, New York, Missouri, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. ... Turfco unveiled its new patent-pending CR-20 Fairway Topdresser and Material Handler, and its T5000 Riding Applicator.



COURSE NEWS

Indian Wells Golf Resort in California's Coachella Valley announced the groundbreaking of the renovation of its Players Course. Led by golf course architect **John Fought** and his team, the renovation will see multiple holes rerouted — most notably the ninth, 17th and 18th. ... Members of Sarasota National in Venice, Florida, approved a golf course master plan design by Fry/Straka Global Golf Course Design. The multimillion-dollar renovation project will focus on enhancing the playability and improving sustainability. Work will begin in spring 2026. ... Zinkand Golf Design



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has completed a multi-year bunker and greens restoration project at suburban Chicago's Old Elm Club. ... Oakland University retained Christopher Wilczynski of C.W. Golf Architecture to develop a golf course architectural master plan for the Katke-Cousins 18-hole golf course, one of the university's two championship golf courses and home to the Golden Grizzlies men's and women's golf teams. ... Keswick Hall, a resort in Virginia Wine Country, is undergoing course renovations led by golf course architect Scot Sherman. Renovations are expected to be completed this month. ... Moncayo, a luxury development along Puerto Rico's eastern seacoast, recently introduced its Golf Club, designed in collaboration with UK-based golf course architecture firm Mackenzie & Ebert. The club will feature an 18hole championship golf course, a one-acre putting course and reversible 9-hole short course.

PEOPLE NEWS

Landscapes Golf Management promoted six corporate leaders for their contributions to achieving healthy returns at more than 60 golf courses, country clubs and destination clubs operated by the company. Mike Williams is now senior vice president, Scot Wellman was elevated to vice president of sales and marketing, Mark Young is now vice president of food and beverage operations, and Joe Goellner. Chris Jacobson and Brandon Wallraff were each promoted to vice president of operations. ... The USGA will present its highest honor, the Bob Jones Award, to Mike Keiser during U.S. Open Championship week in Pittsburgh this June. Presented annually since 1955, the award recognizes those who personify the character, sportsmanship and respect for the game as its champion namesake. ... Envu appointed Michael Miracle to the new position of golf national account manager within its Turf & Ornamentals division. ... As Fred Perpall embarks on the last year of his three-year term as USGA president, the organization has appointed Kevin Hammer as its president-elect and added two business leaders -Dianne Dixon and James Gorrie — to its executive committee, a 15-person volunteer board. ... Vereens added Brian Grill as the company's new director of product and market development, serving golf course superintendents, sports turf managers and industry professionals. Vereens also added Matt Pruitt as manager of its Keystone Heights, Florida, facility between Gainesville and Jacksonville. ... Foley Company announced the promotion of Tyler Barrett to North America sales manager.



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Heather Schapals

THE CLUB AT LAS CAMPANAS

he nature of the profession is such that superintendents rarely make a career at a single location. Whether for a better compensation package, family considerations, perhaps a desire for change or sometimes out of necessity, turf professionals often move. (To read about some turf pros who have spent their whole career at one spot, read One and only, starting on page 18.) Such was the case for Heather Schapals who, at the start of 2025, left Seascape Golf Course in Aptos, California, near San Diego, where she'd been the head superintendent since 2023, and headed east to The Club at Las Campanas in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a 36-hole private facility that features two 18-hole Jack Nicklaus Signature designs.

Schapals serves as the superintendent in charge of the Sunset Course and reports to Tom Egelhoff, the director of agronomy. Her husband, Michael, who worked alongside her at Seascape as an equipment technician, has assumed a similar post at her new position.

Appearing on the Wonderful Women of Golf podcast with host Rick Woelfel, Schapals said she had some familiarity with Las Campanas before accepting the position. She applied for a job there several years ago.

"I first looked into the club for an assistant's position," she says. "I was excited to get the chance to try again as one of the superinten-

Schapals sees the position at Las Campanas as an opportunity for personal and professional growth.

"It's a chance to learn something else unique again. It's at 7,000 feet of elevation, it's high desert, it's all bentgrass. There are a lot of interesting things they're doing with the state of New Mexico and the university on a moisture sensor study. There are a lot of things to learn."

Schapals says she received an enthusiastic welcome into her new work environment.

"I have never been a co-superintendent under a director, so it's a bigger crew and a bigger property," she says. "It took a little bit of driving around, separating out the two golf courses and figuring out where it was on the property. The core crew, they have been absolutely wonderful to me. I couldn't have asked for a better reception."

Schapals will be dealing with some water issues that are unique to the area.

"The interesting thing is going to come from the water conservation aspect of it," she says. "Controlling the water right up to the edges of the desert and seeing that interaction between those two different areas: the irrigated and unirrigated. I haven't had much experience with that.

"I'll be very interested to start understanding a little bit more about our water. Some of it does come from the Rio Grande and it does come from effluent water that we take in. We blend that and some of it I put out on certain holes of the golf course and other areas get more river water. There are some really unique differences that will be interesting to see how it affects the turf."

Schapals wasted no time starting the process of building a good working relationship with her crew, which will likely number around 20.

"I'm very fortunate," she says. "My assistant has put in over 15 years and this will be my foreman's fifth season at Las Campanas. So, I've got a good amount of background knowledge from them to start with. And I've been out there working with them, doing some winter watering — that's been a new thing. The irrigation system is blown out but there is a deep mainline with quick couplers for being able to put in irrigation cannons and being able to hand water tee surfaces.

"It's been a fairly dry, open winter up here so getting out on the grounds, and getting my hands dirty and working with the guys is one of the things that not only do I love to do, but it's very important for them to see me out there and be a part of what's going on."



It's a chance to learn something else unique again. It's at 7,000 feet of elevation, it's high desert, it's all bentgrass. There are a lot of things to learn."







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What to expect in 2025 and 2026

Radius Sports Group president **Gina Rizzi** shares sustainability trends, and how to prepare for them.

s a superintendent, it is up to you and your management team to prepare and adapt to environmental changes and trends. Radius Sports Group president Gina Rizzi works to educate golf courses for those expected patterns — and prepare for the unexpected flash points.

Radius Sports Group, founded by Rizzi, is a sustainable consulting business that focuses on golf and motor sports. The group focuses on educating superintendents on best management practices for sustainability. As Rizzi discussed expectations for the year, she described trends, which are based on developed patterns, and flashpoints, which are quickly established and more urgent situations.

In 2025, the first thing superintendents can expect is an emphasis on potential variances in federal-state-city environmental regulations and corporate responsibility.

"It's really looking at how do we arm superintendents with the right tools to be able to face whatever may or may not be wrapped around regulations and changes in regulations," Rizzi says.

BMPs for preparing for regulation changes can include keeping proper records of applications, pursuing environmental certifications and developing an annual irrigation budget.

Second, superintendents should prepare for changes in energy dependency and fossil fuel dependency.

Energy source regulations are constantly changing, and political changes and leadership can bring policy changes. Under President **Donald Trump**'s administration, drilling for fossil fuels is expected to increase and energy sources are being explored. Regulations vary by state, so remaining educated on key changes is essential. For example, in a state like Nevada, where most fossil fuels are imported, knowing about the political climate around fossil fuels is a necessity. In a state like New Jersey, where legislators are pushing for a transition to electric-powered blowers, it's crucial to understand the challenges and potential regulations and solutions.

Rizzi recommends tracking energy usage, inspecting pump systems and considering integration of electric equipment where practicable.

Superintendents can also expect effects of urban sprawl and loss of biodiversity in the industry. Population density and increased Built Environments can create pollution, habitat loss, urban heat islands and other environmental and human factors. Urban sprawl could threaten golf courses due to the public not recognizing the benefits of green space, so using your voice to educate about the environmental work being done on your course should be a top priority.

To counteract these consequences, identifying threatened wildlife species, selecting plants to attract pollinators and preserving native plants and species can all help reverse loss of biodiversity.

A major flashpoint golf courses will see are the effects of water scarcity and management. "Water conservation and water quality management are going to continue to be trends," Rizzi says. Water quality continues to be monitored, especially in the Northeast, and water conservation continues to be essential in areas such as California, Texas, Arizona and high drought states.

The final trend Rizzi shared in our conversation was waste and plastic pollution. Although regulations around golf courses are few right now, they can come at any time. Rizzi recommends superintendents and general managers be aware of plastics being used on the property and suggests implementing recycling and biodegradable systems.

This year's trends will still be here in 2026. "They're not going to go away," Rizzi says. She predicts water and pesticide regulations will continue and energy regulations will vary between state and federal governments.

To best manage sustainability trends, Rizzi stresses the importance of developing BMPs at your facility. "The BMPs are a way to be armed," she says, "to be prepared, and to have a way to substantiate efforts and show the efforts that are being made."

Kelsie Horner is Golf Course Industry's assistant editor. To submit ideas about conservation-focused programs or actions at your course, email her at khorner@gie.net



A CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

embership drives are common practice among golf courses. Traditionally, the focus of those campaigns is, of course, attracting golfers. However, a non-traditional membership drive is now underway whose focus is not only on people — specifically superintendents — but also on butterflies. Monarchs, to be precise.

Audubon International, a leading non-profit committed to promoting sustainable practices and environmental stewardship, has relaunched its Monarchs in the Rough membership drive with the objective of saving America's iconic monarch butterfly.

It's an effort worthy of our attention if for no other reason than monarch butterflies bring beauty to every place they announce their graceful presence thanks to delicate flashes of their orange wings. Beyond that, they contribute to the health of our planet by pollinating many types of wildflowers. They're also an important food source for birds, small animals and other insects. And did we mention that they are a sight to behold?

Unfortunately, they're also in danger.

Recent studies have shown dramatic population losses of monarchs, ranging from 50 percent to more than 90 percent.

Their search for food is increasingly affected by climate change, increased use of pesticides and natural disasters, all resulting in a loss of habitat.

The Monarchs in the Rough initiative, which is supported by The FairWays Foundation,

It's an amazing and compelling story many of your members and guests will find fascinating."

is aimed at protecting and restoring important habitats for monarchs and other pollinators. The program connects and supports superintendents and other golf course staff as they plan, install and manage habitat projects for monarchs on their courses.

The nourishment they seek is milkweed.

The genus Asclepias, commonly known as milkweed, comprises more than 100 species, the best known of which are North American wildflowers. Milkweed is the host plant for the monarch butterfly and its only food source. Monarch caterpillars and butterflies breed only where milkweed grows.

And here's where superintendents and other keepers of sports fields and neighboring open spaces can help. Here are three steps to make an immediate impact:

- Enroll in the Monarchs in the Rough program. Audubon International helps superintendents by providing milkweed seed for distribution into out-of-play areas on North American golf courses.
- 2. Learn and teach about monarchs. Weighing less than a dime, monarchs

travel a migration path of 3,000 miles
— a journey that requires generations to complete. It's an amazing and compelling story many of your members and

guests will find fascinating.

3. Start your own monarch gardens. Planting both milkweed and nectar plants to encourage monarchs to feed and breed requires only a plot of 100 square feet.

Outdoor container gardens are also a good option where space is limited, according to Monarch Gardens.

Audubon International and the Monarchs in the Rough program make protecting monarchs easy. Audubon will provide regionally appropriate milkweed seed — enough to establish an acre of highquality monarch habitat (primarily in U.S. states west of the Mississippi, along with Great Lakes states and central Canada) when planted with wildflowers supplied by the course. Milkweed plantings can be supported in other areas on a case-by-case basis through other sources of funding as they become available.

"By joining Monarchs in the Rough, golf courses can do their part to prevent further monarch losses while gaining recognition as an environmental leader and connecting with their communities in new ways," Audubon International CEO Christine Kane says.

More than 900 courses have signed up.

Golf course superintendents are consistently reliable environmental stewards. The beautiful monarchs offer one more way to demonstrate that stewardship.



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



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In an industry where just about everybody moves on to a new job at least a couple times, what can you learn from turf pros who never have?

By **Matt LaWell**

hirty-eight years later, Lee McLemore remembers the advice, even if he doesn't remember who shared it.

McLemore was concluding his final months at Auburn University, checking out the bulletin board packed with turf jobs and conferring with his girlfriend, Amy, about where he should apply.

"Our plan was, Where were we being led to go?" Mc-Lemore says. "I really wanted to stay in the Southeast." And someone — A professor, perhaps? A classmate? A visiting superintendent? — told him: "If you land in a major metropolitan area, at a big club, you'll be able to make that next move a whole lot easier."

Sound advice, yes, but sound advice that McLemore has never actually used.

McLemore received offers to start his career in March 1987 as an assistant superintendent at Belle Meade Country Club in Nashville, working under Doug Ward, and at The Country Club of Birmingham, working under Brian Bowles. At the time, Nashville was home to about twice as many people as Birmingham, which checked that major-metro recommendation. But Birmingham was only about 90 miles from McLemore's hometown of Moulton, Alabama, and he had worked there as an intern each of the two previous summers, one of them filled with 80-plus-hour construction weeks.

"I really felt like I was being led to Birmingham," he says.

He stayed in Alabama.

And he has never left.

McLemore's situation is not unique in the golf course maintenance industry, but it is rare. Working at one club or course — and only one club or course - for a career is almost impossible. Almost every turf pro moves at least once or twice during their career. McLemore has not. Yes, he worked a couple high school summers at his hometown course - Deer Run Golf Course in Moulton, then a new 9-holer — but he has worked his entire professional career at The Country Club of Birmingham. Including his two intern summers, he has tended to the 36 holes and many more people there for the last 40 years.

At The Country Club of Birmingham, longevity is "part of the culture," McLemore says. West Course superintendent Tim Kocks arrived almost alongside McLemore and has worked at the club for 40 years. East Course superintendent Bobby Knight is celebrating 30 years. Landscape superintendent Jeff Rainwater is over 20 years, as are seven fulltime maintenance team members. Director of golf Eric Eshleman, who is also the current PGA of America secretary, is only the fifth pro in the club's 127-year history. McLemore-whowas promoted to superintendent after just six weeks as assistant back in 1987 after Bowles left for another position and is now the director of golf

course operations—is only the sixth or seventh person to lead maintenance efforts.

"I'm pretty loyal, and they are too," McLemore says. "And the club has also been loval."

LONGEVITY AND LOYALTY are

prevalent for every superintendent who has worked their entire career in one place. Take Jason Stewart at Brickyard Crossing at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Speedway, Indiana. Or Will Stearns at Southers Marsh Golf Club in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Or Bob Hingston at John P. Larkin Country Club in Windsor, Vermont. Or Craig Sondergaard at Racine Country Club in Racine, Wisconsin. Sondergaard is entering his seventh season as superintendent at his hometown club and his 13th season overall and. like McLemore, has only a handful of predecessors over the club's 116year history. "That's a pretty cool thing to be a part of," he says.

Sondergaard first worked at Racine Country Club as a teenager, caddying three or four years



before leaving for his only job off the grounds: working behind the counter at a Papa Murphy's takeand-bake pizza shop.

Sondergaard returned to the club seeking more money - and while he did manage a 75-cent raise to \$9 an hour, he was working four fewer months per year on superintendent Mike Handrich's team than he was prepping pizzas, first as an intern, then as a crew member. Sondergaard did make up the difference by sticking around during his second winter: "Embarrassing as it is," he says, "I was a server in the clubhouse." And, by his own account, he was not a very good one.

"On the golf course, we want the water out of the containers and on the turf," he says. "So, I thought, in the clubhouse, why do I want this water to stay in a cup?! Let me spill it all over the floor." He pauses for a few seconds, then confirms, "That's a joke, obviously."

He returned to the crew the next year and, late during the season, around the time he earned his turf degree from Penn State World Campus, he received a sudden promotion to assistant superintendent. Four years after that, Handrich announced his retirement and recommended the board interview Sondergaard for the position. The club hired him. He has no plans to leave.

Stewart arrived at Brickyard Crossing fresh out of Purdue University in May 1999. He and his wife, Denise, even lived in the neighborhood, starting out

in a small home in the shadow of the Speedway. They treated it like a playground. He almost always walked to the course. Like Sondergaard, Stewart received promotions without ever moving to another course, first to assistant superintendent in 2002, then superintendent in 2017, and grounds superintendent in 2020. He and Denise, a longtime teacher, agreed they would eschew the career climb in favor of stability as they started a family. He likes to joke that he just outlasted everybody else.

"A lot of that was because I was engaged," with the property, he says. "We went through some lean times at the Speedway and I never turned negative. I like the problem-solving. That's appealing to me. I don't want to struggle — I'm not out of my mind - but it's nice to have to fight for something, chasing things down, creating roadmaps, being patient and persistent. That's appealing to me, too."

A pair of New England one-club superintendents have very different situations from McLemore, Sonder-







gaard or Stewart. Where those three had always focused on turf, neither Stearns nor Hingston did early in their careers.

Stearns is the superintendent and

co-owner of Southers Marsh, which he helped build with his father, "Big" Will Stearns. Stearns studied mechanical engineering at Harvard with the goal of designing specialty





The NEXT STEP

The average retirement age in the United States is still, according to some surveys, 62 years old. That's up five years from 1991 and still climbing. No matter your age, it's never too early to start thinking about retirement and succession planning.

After nearly 40 years at The Country Club of Birmingham, director of golf course operations Lee McLemore is talking with club leaders and key members of his team about those exactly that.

"We have so many people — (West Course superintendent) Tim (Kocks) and I are the exact same age, (East Course superintendent Bobby (Knight) is not too far behind, (landscape superintendent) Jeff (Rainwater) kind of falls in there — and I would never want it to be where any of us retire at the same time."

McLemore asks key questions during annual reviews: What's your plan for this year? What about next year? When does your wife say you need to call it guits? McLemore noticed a similar situation at his church, where the pastor and many of the senior staff were all around the same age. "When you lose that much institutional knowledge at once, it hurts," he says. "I don't want that to happen here."

The club is encouraging him to work as long as he wants. "If I wanted to keep going for another 10 years, keep going. ... But also, be realistic. It comes an end for all of us. I do think about it quite a bit. Am I prepared, financially and whatnot, to do that? When I have a day off, all I'm thinking about is getting back to work. It would be very difficult for me if I don't have something to transition into,

some other kind of responsibility."

Southers Marsh Golf Club superintendent and co-owner Will Stearns is about a decade behind McLemore in age but has at least started to consider what retirement might look like.

"I would like to retire at some point, but it wouldn't be the end of the world if I was more of a higher-level superintendent," he says, joking that he would prefer to not be sitting on fairway mowers and digging up sprinkler heads when he's 70. "On the flip side, we've spent so much time working on this. We have 450 sprinkler heads. I can walk to 425 of them within a foot, just because I put 'em in and maintained 'em over the years.

"As much as I spent time thinking about getting out of this business for so long, I think if I just drove by and somebody else was taking care of my golf course, I would feel pretty bummed out."

After returning as interim superintendent at John P. Larkin Country Club in Windsor, Vermont, for the end of the 2023 season, **Bob Hingston** was adamant during an offseason board meeting that — actually in his 70s, not just thinking ahead, like Stearns — he would prefer to not handle another season of the top job.

"'Look, guys," he told them, "'I'm not doing this again. My wife is going to shoot me!"

While that statement seems pretty hyperbolic — Candy Hingston doesn't seem the firing type — it might just be the best reason to develop a solid retirement plan.

equipment for cranberry farming and, after three years in New York on the

Mercantile Exchange, returned to Plymouth to work in his family's cranberry bogs. Golf just sort of developed over time, first four holes, then 18, all braided through 30 acres of bogs. Not only has Stearns worked at one course, he's the lone superintendent in the history of Southers Marsh.

"I'm in a pretty unique situation," Stearns

says with a laugh. "My first job in golf was head superintendent. Well, I guess my first job, really, was course construction, mostly putting in irrigation systems. After that, it was turf school and straight into being head superintendent, which is not a normal path, by any means."

Hingston didn't take a "normal path," either. After long stretches at a hardware store and in sporting goods, he worked 16 years as athletic director at Windsor High School - where, yes, he was often tasked with maintaining various fields and courts. After retiring in 2015, he wound up joining superintendent Steve Ashworth's team at IPL.

"I worked some inside initially and (Steve) kept coming in in the morning and saying, 'Bob, you worked on fields at the school. A couple of my guys are going off to school. Would you help me a couple days a week?' And I liked it. It's immediate satisfaction. You mow fairways and you're driving home, you're going up that windy road by the course and you're looking down,



They treat you like family and that's a big part of the longevity. And there's still a sense of appreciation, giving me that chance, even though it was long

— Lee McLemore

ago. It's still there."

you go, 'Darn, that looks good, and you did that.' I didn't always have that

with my other iobs."

Ashworth retired from the golf course in 2017 and returned to his family farm in New Hampshire - he died suddenly in 2021 - and Hingston took over. He has handled superintendent duties over multiple seasons since then and is now, at 73, the day-today bookkeeper and a member of the maintenance

team, part of the glue of a great local

"You feel proud to be part of it," he says. "I always want to be part of a winning team and we're a winning team right now."

JOB TURNOVER STARTED to increase during the Great Resignation of 2021 and '22: According to Pew Research Center data, 2.5 percent of the U.S. workforce changed jobs each month during the first quarter of 2022. That same survey indicated that more than one of every five U.S. workers was exploring the prospect of a new job.

And according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average U.S. employee has worked for their current employer for 4.6 years. No surprise, workers 65 or older are at an average of 10.3 years. Among the turf pros interviewed for this story, only Hingston fits that demographic and, almost spot on, this will be his 11th season at JPL. Younger workers from 25 to 34 have a median tenure of about 3.2 years. Though

he has worked in four different positions during his 12 years at Racine Country Club, Sondergaard, 31 this month, easily tops that.

Younger workers are not the most likely to change jobs, though. According to the BLS, folks will change jobs an average of 2.4 times from 25 to 34. During the next decade of work and life, from 35 to 44, that average jumps to 2.9. And from 45 to 52? The average dips back down to 1.9.

In an industry — and a nation -where moving around is encouraged, what can you learn from folks who never have?

Don't overreact. "There are a lot of things day to day that get us frustrated as superintendents," Sondergaard says. "Looking back on them, as frustrating as they were in the moment, it's like, 'OK, I'm glad I made it through that.' If I would have left because of a stressful situation or something that got under my skin, I would have started all over and learned a new club, a new staff, a new golf course. And chances are a similar situation would have happened."

You don't always need to move up. Stewart has received three pro-

motions during his decades at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, but he has had more opportunities than that to advance. "I don't think you can be a parent,"

he says. "I realized I would have to stop coaching, stop being there for my family, and there's just not enough time in the day. There's not enough energy. Cognitively, there's no way."

You feel proud to be part of it. I always want to be part of a winning team and we're a winning team right now."

Bob Hingston



Grow and create value. "The person I report to, if I can make their job easi-

er and they can

go home earlier,

I've created a lot

If I would have left because of a stressful situation or something that got under my skin, I would have started all over and learned a new club, a new staff, a new golf course. And chances are a similar situation would have happened."

> — Craig Sondergaard

of value," Stewart says. "They'll fight for me." Professional growth helps, too. "Communication skills, listening skills, your ability to adapt to build relationships, your attitude, your effort - all those things that you can just keep growing and getting better help you put yourself in a position to take the next step."

They have doubts, too. "There were times I was like, 'What am I doing?" Stearns

says. "It was such a grind. We went 10 years without making any money. This is a lot of work to do for free. But there weren't a lot of exit strategies, given that the whole family lives on the property and my father would never hear of it." The Stearnses briefly entertained the idea of converting the course and bogs into a solar farm. "But if you do that, it loses a lot of that magic."

Stay humble. "In this kind of business, you never get too proud," McLemore says. "You never stick your chest out too far because it can be very humbling. Mother Nature will just throw a curveball in a heartbeat. When there have been challenges, I tell some of our

young guys who have gone on to superintendent jobs, never get too big for your britches, because you'll be humbled, so you might as well be humble to begin with."

WHAT KEEPS A turf pro in one spot for so long? Read enough studies and common responses pop up again and again: Burnout. More flexibility. More recognition. A new challenge. Career advancement - and, on the flip side, less stress. And, of course, more money. But everyone interviewed for this story mentioned one thing that has kept them at their course or club for so long.

"It's the people," Hingston says. "It's the relationships."

Hingston mentions some of his JPL friends by nickname — because everyone has a nickname at JPL and their extra effort: Smitty will jump in his truck at 4:30 in the morning to pick up sod in Maine. Grizzy contributes to every mechanical need. Jocko, at 83, still climbs high to lead tree projects.

"I'm a people person. Relationships are a huge part of my life," Hingston says. "It's all the people who keep me a part of it."

Sondergaard is quick to credit the staff and their experience, "starting with my foreman, Ruben Almaraz, at almost 30 years. And then his brother, Sammy Almaraz, he's been here almost 25 years. There's a culture here that, obviously these guys are going to retire at some point, but that would be awful tough to leave voluntarily."

Stearns just wants people to come to the course "with the mindset of, 'I'm going to have fun today and not be tortured."

Stewart values his team so much that, shortly before he was promoted to Brickyard Crossing superintendent, he tendered his resignation because management appeared firm in not providing him with enough people and

resources for an LPGA event. "I went in and told the guys I was sorry," he says, "that I fought for them." Management responded quickly with more people and more equipment.

After nearly 40 years in Birmingham and a lifetime in Alabama, McLemore uses the word family. "They treat you like family and that's a big part of the longevity. And there's still a sense of appreciation, giving me that chance, even though it was long ago. It's still there."

Sometimes, down deep, he says, he still thinks he does owe the club something for taking a chance on him so many years ago, for sticking with him, season after season. And for supporting him and his family during the most difficult of times.

"Our oldest daughter, Franny, passed away suddenly in 2012. She was a junior at Auburn. She was kind of our golden child, had just got accepted to pharmacy school as a fourth-generation pharmacist, carrying on the family tradition. It was from a pulmonary embolism. The club just wrapped their arms around us. We're just forever grateful."

The Alabama GCSA has since named its legacy scholarship in Franny's honor. And the club, McLemore says, has been a big contributor.

"This past year, I was on the board that started a foundation for that," he says. "One of our former club presidents and golf chairman — and a good friend — he is on that board and helped us get started as a 501(c)(3) so we can start growing that even more for the association. The scholarship is just part of it.

"It has been a special relationship that I am so blessed with."

Matt LaWell is Golf Course Industry's managing editor.

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Lane Tredway, Ph.D., technical services manager for Syngenta

What are the key nematode species in the U.S. and the best time of year to control each?

Nematode species vary in the time of year when they feed and actively cause damage. Sting, lance and *Anguina* nematodes are most active in the spring and fall when soil temperatures are moderate. Root-knot nematodes are active year-round when turf roots are growing. For best results, apply Divanem® nematicide when the target species is actively feeding.

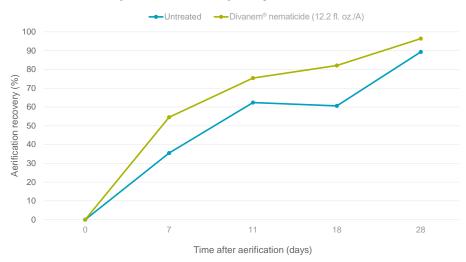
2. Nematicide resistance is a new issue that currently appears to be limited to specific nematodes (e.g., sting and root-knot), chemistries (SDHIs such as *fluopyram*) and locations (e.g., Florida). To help prevent widespread resistance, these management strategies are crucial:

- Rotate and/or tank mix different modes of action
- · Apply only enough product to keep nematode populations below damage thresholds

What makes Divanem a unique solution for nematode control, and how can superintendents get the most out of each application?

Divanem offers broad-spectrum control of nematode species like sting, root-knot, lance, spiral and *Anguina*. Its formulation targets nematodes where they are most active to enhance turf quality, improve drought tolerance and enable turf to recover quickly from stress.

Divanem helps turf recover quickly from aerification stress



Treatments applied four times on 14-day intervals beginning Aug. 4, 2016. Divanem tank mixed with a soil surfactant and watered in immediately with 0.25 in. of irrigation. Aerification performed on Sept. 20, 2016 with 5/8-in. hollow tines on 2x2-in. centers. Young. 2016.

Divanem recommendations:

Spot treatments are recommended for areas with nematode damage or damaging levels of *Anguina*, sting or lance nematodes Spot treatment: 12.2 fl. oz./10,000 ft.² (max.: 10,000 ft.²/A of treatable turf)

- Broadcast to control root-knot nematodes and bermudagrass mites:
 - 3.125-6.25 fl. oz./A applied on a 14-21 day interval
- Rates >6.25 fl. oz./A: reapply on a 21-28 day interval
- Annual limit: 50 fl. oz./A at any rate

For best results:

- Apply to wet turf early in early morning
- Tank mix with soil surfactant and water in immediately to move into the thatch and root
- When possible, apply after aerification for maximum movement into the root zone
- Tank mix with a fungicide like Heritage® Action™ to speed recovery from aerification and improve overall turf quality
 - Divanem and Heritage Action can be purchased together as part of a convenient Multipak for 10% savings

Why is it important to tank mix Divanem with a fungicide when nematode counts are high?

Nematode feeding causes wounds on turfgrass roots, making them more prone to fungal infections. Where nematode populations are high, we often see more problems with root diseases like Pythium root rot, summer patch, mini ring and take-all root rot. In field trials, we see improved root growth and turf quality when Divanem is tank mixed with a broad-spectrum fungicide like Heritage Action, Briskway® or Velista® fungicides.

5. We heard about TYMIRIUM technology at the 2025 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show. What can you tell us about it?

Upon registration, this new nematicide/fungicide featuring novel TYMIRIUM® technology will be the only product labeled to control both nematodes and fungal diseases with a single active ingredient. It targets key turf-feeding nematodes such as sting, lance, root-knot and *Anguina* and fungal diseases including spring dead spot, miniring, take-all root rot and fairy ring.

Application timing varies by turf species, nematodes and/or diseases. Fall applications control sting/lance nematodes, spring

dead spot and take-all root rot. Spring-to-summer applications control root-knot nematodes and help prevent fairy ring in a program approach. Upon registration approval, TYMIRIUM technology will be marketed as Trefinti® nematicide/fungicide.

Be the first to know when registration is approved in your state by visiting GreenCastOnline.com/TurfInnovation



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A central Ohio city nearly lost a beloved layout to satisfy a growing region's housing demands. Civic-minded investors saved the course and then relied on a pair of multigenerational turf managers to propel Lancaster Golf Club into its public life.

elling a golf course can mean unloading all useful pieces of steel and plastic. Mowers. Carts. Spare parts. Handheld tools. Set prices, find buyers and maximize every dollar before fleeing. And why not leave useless crap behind for the next person to handle? Removing busted equipment and decrepit parts costs money. The accountants often urge the departing to pass costs and hassles onto the arriving.

Seth Rainier is a golf-lifer in the front nine of his career. His great grandfather, Bud Rainier, designed and built a central Ohio golf course, Homestead Springs Golf Course remains in the family. Seth learned the game and business from his father, Bruce Rainier, at Homestead Springs. He enrolled at nearby Ohio State University and deliberated between a career as a superintendent or golf profession-

By **Guy Cipriano**

al. Turf enthralled Seth, and he spent a decade working for one of Ohio's best: Scioto Country Club director of grounds **Bob Becker**.

Seth possessed the competence, confidence and experience to become a superintendent anywhere. But golfers can't break par without clubs, anglers don't catch trophy walleye without a rod and superintendents won't produce tidy surfaces without operable equipment.

The business of golf acquisitions left Seth with a two-unit fleet consisting of a functioning sidewinder and a feeble fairway mower capable of reaching 3 miles per hour when he reported to Lancaster Golf Club on Jan. 9, 2022. Neither training nor instincts fully prime anybody for this type of superintendent job.

Family and terrain subsided the initial stress of Seth's first day as a head superintendent. "My dad ensured me I was making the right decision," he says. "And once I walked the course that day, I knew I was going to make something great out of this place."

Lancaster Golf Club is a lovely spot for a winter ... and spring ... and summer ... and fall walk. Located 34 miles southeast of Columbus, the course melds holes unveiled in different eras — the current back nine, designed by **Donald Ross**, opened in 1926; the holes comprising the current front nine, designed by Ohioan **Jack Kidwell**, debuted in 1961 — to provide a heterogeneous golf experience.

A white picket fence lines the entrance on the property's north and west sides, site of the Ross holes. The fence represents a subtle separator between the real estate development occurring in Fairfield County and the solitude sought in a place director of golf and Lancaster native Allie White describes as "where Appalachian Ohio meets Columbus sprawl." A farm and dense tree clusters border the Kidwell holes on the south and east stretches of the property.

Ross and Kidwell force golfers to play left, right, blind and at-you shots.

Two par-3s personify the land's diversity. The third is 223 yards from the back tees but plays downhill. It begins between a chute of trees. The 14th is 130 yards from the back tees but plays uphill. It borders the white picket fence.

The setting provides a fabulous spot to decompress, as Rainier discovered on that early January 2022 day. Since then, Rainier has learned something deeper about golf, turf and equipment.

The viability of a beloved asset hinges on people motivated by passion. Rainier had a job at a course with just two running pieces of equipment because 27 people understood how a quality golf course boosts a community.

THE CYCLES OF a small city — Lancaster, population: 41,422, fits into this category despite the Columbus sprawl — resemble a golf course. Prosperity follows reinvention and

adaptation overcomes struggle.

On an early 2025 morning, David Smith discusses two of his favorite topics while driving from central Ohio to Florida to reunite with a group of high school classmates: Lancaster and its eponymous golf club. Smith is a Lancaster native who served three terms as the city's mayor. His local history lesson begins with a common Midwest theme. First came the farms. Then came the factories.

The agricultural to manufacturing shift intensified in 1905 when glassmaker Anchor Hocking opened a facility in Lancaster. Four years later, a group of business leaders formed Lancaster Country Club. More manufacturing entered Lancaster as a central Ohio location, hands-on people and a sizable aquifer filled with what Smith calls "high-quality water" turned Lancaster into an attractive place to make things.

The club existed as Lancaster Country Club for more than 110 years, before formally changing its





name and operating model. For purposes of this story, we'll refer to it as Lancaster Golf Club.

Lancaster, according to Smith, endured the Great Depression better than most cities because Anchor Hocking never significantly slowed production. The community and club prospered following World Word II, attracting enough manufacturing executives, doctors, lawyers and local business leaders to generate demand for a second nine.

"I guess our country club was typical of other places," says Smith, a third-generation club member. "You had to be a successful businessperson of some sort to afford to be there."

The club's roster swelled to more than 400 members, most of whom had full-golf privileges, but numbers started dipping in the 1980s and 1990s, when Smith says it became tougher to claim a private club membership as a business expense. The slow membership decline continued into the 2000s.

The Great Recession hindered Lancaster more than the Great Depression. Around the same time, the club borrowed money for an irrigation system. Members sought new owners to keep the club solvent. Three members who enjoyed and appreciated golf purchased the course. "It was a continuation of good times," Smith says.

The dynamic changed following the death of two owners. Shortly before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, ownership invested fewer resources into golf and actively explored selling land parcels for housing to satisfy the growing demand around Columbus.



I started meeting

all the people here

and learned how

much they love this

Five community leaders — Leonard Gorsuch, Norman "Pip" Ogilvie, Kent Swinehart, Chris Smith and David Smith - mobilized to save the course. The quintet of managing members sought a select group of like-minded investors to save the course. "As it turns out," David Smith

> says, "27 brave souls won the battle to get the golf course."

> The conglomerate officially purchased the club for \$1.7 million in late November 2021. The group formed Lancaster Golf Club, LLC. Their business plan included transitioning the course to a public facility.

> The previous owners shuttered and stopped maintaining the course in September 2021. The property and local golf morale suffered amid the uncertainty and rumors of desirable golf land becoming housing.

"It was just kind of sad," says White, a Lancaster native who was playing professionally on the Epson Tour. "We all heard it was sold (for housing) and it was a done deal. I remember playing it with my buddy. I got a bogey on 18, and it was like, 'Well, that sucks. This is the last time I'm ever going to play that golf course. That's going to be my memory of it after all these years.'

"Everything then happened so fast. It went from developers signing papers one week, the next week that fell apart, and then a couple of weeks later it was, 'Boom,' they had I remember playing it with my buddy. I got a bogey on 18, and it was like, 'Well, that sucks. This is the last time I'm ever going to play that golf course. That's going to be my memory of it after all these years."

— Allie White

27 people to keep it going."

The new owners aimed to reopen the course in April 2022. Resuming regular play required calculated work, unyielding support, golf industry cooperation - and operating equipment.

AS LANCASTER'S FORMER private club experienced its post-World War II heyday, families started converting farmland into public golf courses catering to central Ohio's growing middle class. A pair of nearby family-owned courses supplied the turf lineage to position Lancaster Golf Club for its 2022 reopening.

Ron Kilbarger opened Pleasant Valley Golf Course in 1970 on Lancaster's north side less than 10 miles from Lancaster Golf Club. Pleasant Valley remained in the Kilbarger family for 51 years until it was sold in late 2021 for the purpose of being developed into high-end housing. Coincidentally, the developer who purchased Pleasant Valley was also interested in the Lancaster Golf Club land. The sale altered the career trajectory of Kyle Kilbarger, who had followed his father, Mike Kilbarger, into the hands-on, small-town golf business.

Two years after Ron unveiled Pleasant Valley, Bud Rainier opened Homestead Springs in Groveport, a small Franklin County community 13 miles southeast of downtown Columbus and 23 miles northwest of downtown Lancaster. Homestead Springs remains an affordable golf course, and Seth hasn't drifted too far from the property. He built a home across the street from the family business last year.

club. That sold it for me. It's a group of people who love golf and love their

— Seth Rainier

community."

In addition to equipment, Seth needed qualified people to help him handle the rigors of rejuvenating a shuttered course. Kyle needed a steady job after his family sold Pleasant Valley.

Slim degrees of separation exist in Fairfield County, where Lancaster doubles as the largest city and county seat. Gorsuch was friends with the Kilbargers and connected Kyle with Seth. Kyle also held a relationship with David Smith stemming from a youth side hustle at the Fairfield County Fair. "Kyle would have a couple of steer and his sister would have a couple steer," Smith says. "I would buy their steer because they are good people."

Kyle's talents extended beyond raising livestock. He's a professional welder, understood every aspect of the family golf business and played high school golf. He also brought local knowledge as a lifelong Fairfield County resident whose Fisher Catholic high school team used Lancaster Golf Club as its home course.

He lacked a relationship with Seth, but the pair quickly meshed upon meeting in mid-January 2022. They drove around the property and started discussing a plan for making greens that Kyle describes as being "pretty hairy and pretty soft" playable by April. Seth was looking for an assistant superintendent and equipment manager. Kyle was capable of filling both roles. "He's meant the world to me," Seth says.

The number of multigenerational turf managers on the Lancaster Golf Club staff in early 2022 matched the number of operating pieces of equipment. Fortunately, the tiny crew-a former Lancaster Golf Club turf employee rejoined the staff following the sale — had connections.

Even before Seth accepted the job, Lancaster Golf Club received fall 2021 assistance from Homestead Springs, as Bruce offered his equipment and time to mow short-cut areas. His efforts sup-



PUBLIC STATE OF MIND

Shifting sectors can add to the pile of adjustments facing a new superintendent.

Seth Rainier experienced a mild form of culture adaptation when Lancaster Golf Club opened to the public in 2022. Before arriving at Lancaster in late 2021, Seth spent a decade at Scioto Country Club. Scioto is one of Ohio's revered private clubs and, despite his family owning a public golf course, Rainier had spent his entire post-college career serving dues-paying members. Three seasons at a public course have partially altered some of Rainier's thoughts about the game.

"We get golfers who probably don't know about etiquette," he says. "They don't know they are supposed to rake the bunkers or they are supposed to fix ball marks, even though we have signs. It frustrates me, but you even see those things at a high-end club, just maybe not at the same level. You have to be liberal with that and realize the golf course will be here tomorrow."

Lancaster Golf Club operated for more than 110 years as a private club until a late-2021 ownership change. The course features a membership component and conducts annual guest events such as an invitational and a club championship, but daily-fee golfers comprise the bulk of the play. Guidance gleaned from Scioto director of grounds **Bob Becker** helps Rainier better understand Lancaster Golf Club's customers.

"Bob taught me at Scioto that the pro is the face of the club, but you're the face of the property," Rainier says. "I make it a point on Saturdays and Sundays, at 8 o'clock, I'm up at the putting green. Our members have money games, but I always try to stop and interact with the public whenever I can. And it's not just a wave, I try to talk to them and introduce myself if they don't know me.

"If you do that, they are going to respect you more. They might even strike up a conversation with you and ask, 'Why do you do this? Why do you do that?' And you can teach them. That's growing the game, right? Some people don't know anything about golf and they are just out there to have fun. The more we can teach them, the better the game and the better the golf industry will be."

Rainier has a solid relationship with Lancaster Golf Club director of golf Allie White. Both are excellent players — White played collegiately at the University of North Carolina and made the cut at the 2024 KPMG Women's PGA Championship — and their zests for golf enhance what customers experience.

White worked at Lancaster Golf Club in 2020 when it operated as a private club before rejoining the Epson Tour. She returned to Lancaster Golf Club last season. One of her focuses includes using social media and other marketing tactics to position Lancaster Golf Club as a public facility. "When something has been private for more than 100 years," White says, "that takes a little minute to register."

"We get a nice assortment of people," she adds. "We get people used to high-end golf in Columbus who think this course is awesome and we get people who play the country courses around here and they're like, 'Wow, this place had always been private and I had never gotten to check it out. How cool? This is awesome."



▲ Despite being open for public play, Lancaster Golf Club still conducts a robust schedule of member events. plemented mowing executed by a local lawn-care company. Seth believes regular mowing didn't resume until November, meaning a blanket of leaves covered scratchy turf throughout October.

"Imagine no cleanup on trees," he says. "We lost a lot of turf because of that when I got here. We had areas with leaves on top of them and it killed the grass underneath."

Seth accepted the job in late November, a few weeks after losing out on a desirable superintendent position at a respected Columbus-area private club. He was initially apprehensive about pursuing the Lancaster Golf Club opportunity, but the passion and commitment exuded by the new owners alleviated trepidation surrounding the job.

"I started meeting all the people here and learned how much they love this club," he says. "That sold it for me. It's a group of people who love golf and love their community."

Seth officially started on Jan.

9, 2022. Unofficially, he was already preparing the course for its reopening. On a December weekend. he collaborated with Bruce on a slow-release granular greens fertilization application. Seth also used the final month of 2021 to submit his first budget, a process he concedes was a "little nerve-wracking," despite the financial acumen he acquired at Scioto. He kept the

2022 agronomic program simple, ordering plant protectants from one distributor for a greens-focused approach. Lancaster Golf Club's greens are a *Poa annua*/bentgrass; fairways are a Kentucky bluegrass/ryegrass blend. The fairways resemble those at Homestead Springs, and Seth figured he could begin managing the surfaces with fewer inputs while allocating resources

Without his own equipment, Seth relied on Bruce's sprayer to make a

elsewhere in 2022.

mid-winter snow
mold application
on fairways. Lancaster Golf Club
didn't receive its
sprayer — a local
distributor made
a GPS-guided
unit available
following a snafu and Seth convinced ownership to invest in

the technology — until late spring.

Seth estimates that during the first half of 2022, he made around two dozen trips from Homestead Springs to Lancaster Golf Club transporting a sprayer. The hassle of loading, transporting and unloading heavy equipment limited the number of topdressing applications Seth executed. He continued using his father's topdresser until Lancaster Golf Club purchased one last year.

Seth, Kyle and their small crew hit the targeted April reopening. Members and the public putted on greens mowed at .225 inches, a height Seth says mirrors the current approach and collar heights of cut. By the 2022 member-guest tournament, which was contested in July, mowing heights dropped to .140 and Stimpmeter readings reached 10.

The crew next directed its attention to bunkers. They edged faces, removed plant material covering bottoms and filled every bunker with new sand under the premise that drainage, placement and design could be addressed down the road.

"I know as well as you know the most complaints on any golf course are about bunkers," Seth says. "I didn't want to give them any excuses that they made the wrong decision. I just wanted to get them playable."

THE 16TH HOLE is a short, Ross-designed par 5. The back tees extend to the white picket fence on Country Club Drive. The

hole plays slightly downhill and bends gently right. Tee shots must navigate a bunker on each side of the fairway and bunkers also hug where lay-up shots land. More bunkers guard both sides of the green. An-

It's pretty remarkable that multigeneration local golf course guys met in the middle at this former country club in Lancaster."

— Kyle Kilbarger



other bunker lurks behind the putting surface.

Seth waits to the right of the green on a sweltering afternoon last August, as a husband and wife play a trendy Shaboozey song while driving down the fairway. He's standing among a quintet of hummocks, Ross-inspired features his team constructed using topsoil from one of Lancaster Golf Club's practice ranges. Inspiration for reintroducing Golden Age intricacies stems from Seth's time at Scioto, where he played a key part in architect Andrew Green's restoration of a heralded Ross design. "We can't make everything like he drew it," Seth says of Ross, "but you can bring his character back."

Three years after operating with-

out equipment, Seth and Kyle have a full fleet, a reliable crew that swells to double digits in the summer, supportive owners and new job titles. Seth is now director of greens and grounds; Kyle is his superintendent. "It's pretty remarkable that local golf course guys met in the middle at this former country club in Lancaster," Kyle says.

Lancaster Golf Club presents a 150-acre palette to demonstrate their immense ingenuity. And the par 5 between fewer trees — yes, a methodical arbor reduction is part of their work — demonstrates the potential waiting to be revealed. The hole can be played in multiple ways, and greenside shot options abound, because Seth and Kyle introduced a wider approach flow-

ing into a squared green front. The hummocks must be fly-mowed biweekly, but they yield pleasing aesthetics and interesting pitch shots. The back nine is beginning to feel like it did in 1926 when a local construction crew brought Ross's vision to Lancaster.

"About three days after I took the job, my grandma said, 'Oh by the way, your great-great-grandfather helped rebuild and redesign that course with Ross in 1926," Kyle says.

Grit displayed by Henry Kilbarger and Lancaster denizens created nine Ross-designed holes for loyal

members such as Frank E. Smith, who joined the club shortly after moving to Lancaster in 1916. Love for the course persuaded two of his grandsons, David and Chris, to leverage decades of Lancaster connections and memories into saving the club. The Smiths and 25 other community-minded individuals prove how generational ties matter in golf.

"I check the tee sheet for our daily play," Seth says. "When I see such and such is playing, I make it a point to make my face seen. What they did for this community by saving this place is just amazing. Twenty-seven people. I can't imagine how they did that."

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



WHILE THE CHEMISTRY ISN'T UNIQUE, THE ATTICUS EXPERIENCE IS

ith summer around the corner, we sat down with Dr. Rob Golembiewski, aka "G11", Director of Technical Services, to gain insight into Atticus and their approach to supporting the golf course

Q: What inspired the founding of Atticus 10 years ago?

G11: Atticus was founded by our owner, Randy Canady, with a vision to provide high-quality, battle-tested chemistry solutions for the Agricultural and EcoCore (non-agricultural) markets. Atticus is an American-owned and independently operated company based in Cary, North Carolina. Randy recognized the need for reliable and effective post-patent pesticide products to drive our purpose of enhancing daily life. Our journey began with an unwavering commitment to operational excellence, and over the past decade, we have stayed true to that mission.

Q: Can you elaborate on Atticus' value proposition?

G11: Atticus' value proposition is to be "Relevant, Simple, and Reliable." Our goal is to deliver a best-in-class customer experience by providing straight forward products and technical expertise to meet customer priorities and challenges. For me personally, I love helping people do their jobs better

and this is what led me to Atticus. The culture and value proposition are built around a customer-first approach.

Q: Can you explain what "battletested chemistry" means?

G11: "Battle-Tested Chemistry" at Atticus refers to the robust and proven portfolio of branded- generic herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, plant growth regulators, and insect growth regulators. Atticus, through its EcoCore division, provides a comprehensive offering of over 60 active ingredients and 120 end-use registrations. This extensive portfolio allows us to address a wide variety of pest control and maintenance needs faced by golf course superintendents.

Q: Why is Atticus a unique partner in the golf industry?

G11: Atticus has a broad portfolio specifically designed for golf course use. The products help maintain healthy, playable turf by effectively managing diseases, insects, and weeds and regulating turf growth. Atticus is committed to providing high-quality plant protection solutions at an affordable cost, making us a trusted partner to golf course superintendents. Additionally, our golf-centered portfolio and pipeline through 2032 highlight our dedication to providing timely solutions for the turf and ornamental markets.

Q: What should golf course superintendents know about the "Atticus Experience"?

G11: Going beyond the portfolio, Atticus takes immense pride in assisting golf course superintendents through: Customer Support: Atticus emphasizes in-person technical support and product education, along with providing customers access to an amazing userfriendly website (AtticusLLC.com) that includes agronomic programs, pest management fact sheets called Insider Intel, and product labels and SDS in both English and Spanish.

Leadership and Expertise: Atticus has recruited industry veterans like Cam Copley, Paul Fox, Ross Huneycutt, and Michael Sorensen to help lead its EcoCore division and address customer needs. Their extensive turf industry knowledge and leadership experience bring an elevated level of expertise to the company and, more importantly, to the golf course industry.

Innovation and Development: Atticus is committed to nonstop product development and optimization. We continuously pursue products coming off-patent to expand our portfolio and ensure we deliver the most robust portfolio to the golf course market.

For more information about Atticus and the entire portfolio of products, visit AtticusLLC.com.



PROTECT YOUR BATTLEFIELD

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VIEWING PATTERNS

othing against Major Season, but admit it, deep down inside superintendents have an aversion to springtime. Why? Because it's tournament time, which means the majors are on television.

While it's educational and a career benefit to volunteer or even spectate at these events, most of us are likelier to watch majors on television. What can we learn from what we see on TV?

Putting Greens. As you watch the action, look for surface moisture stress, and where it is located. Even at the highest levels of conditioning, stress can be visible at a green's entry and exit points, on surfaces facing the sun and in the wind pattern zones. Same for your greens.

You rarely see the scalping of old holes or frayed edges during a broadcast. The precision of placing a hole location will make a huge impression, especially for shorter putts from shaky hands. Avoid placing a new hole near an old plug.

Hole locations are an area where big tournaments should not be the standard for your clubs. Most members aren't good enough to deal with putts to the toughest locations, so all you're doing is frustrating them and slowing play.

That said, altering hole locations is an easy way to throw a changeup at your regulars. Don't fall into the habit of constantly going to the same three or four locations round after round.

Note how courses are set up to complement the weather. When wet, no holes in bowls; when dry, no holes on top of hills. On windy days, no front hole locations, as they are the most difficult to attack and the hardest to approach.

Don't place hole locations near bunkers on par 3s as players don't

like to see excessive sand on surfaces or too close to the hole. Avoid most hole locations and any other spot where a player must hit over a bunker to get onto the green. And on busy days, especially weekends, go easy on where the holes are cut. Keep golfers happy and keep them moving.

Finally, the same basic idea applies to green speeds: Keep heights-of-cut and green speeds under control. Once the correct green speed or cutting heights are lost, you cannot get them back.

Teeing Grounds. Watch whenever a professional is on the tee and the camera angle is right behind them. Notice how tee markers are angled in the right direction and toward the intended target. These players are good enough not to let outof-whack tee alignment bother them; your players aren't. Don't point them to trouble.

Keep teeing areas firm with a height-of-cut at least 0.300. If too short, they're going to slip and blame you for a bad tee shot.

Do you give any thought to the mowing pattern on the tee? Tournaments do. Those tees are cut either from 6 o'clock to 12, a shadow cut (light and dark), or in one direction. I prefer the left-toright method to throw the tournament player a curve. Don't play visual tricks on your players. Let the teeing area help them.

Notice how far apart the tee markers are. Seven solid paces are the preferred width as long as there's enough width on the tee.

Fairways. Here's a lesson all superintendents at televised courses have learned: The lower you cut, the more flaws and

blemishes become visible. Be careful when cutting around irrigation heads and drains; mistakes there not only look bad but can also ding mowers and knock equipment out of alignment.

Personally, I hate to see too much bounce and roll on TV, the result of low heights of cut. The pros certainly don't need any extra length. I don't think your golfers do, either—hey, it's a game that's played outdoors but this is one condition you can have some control over. Your golfers will want some roll, but don't make it too easy on them.

And over-striping fairways is strictly for TV cameras. It's rarely necessary at your course.

Bunkers. If you are using mechanical bunker rakes one for the front and one for the back — make sure the teeth are the same length to ensure consistent conditions.

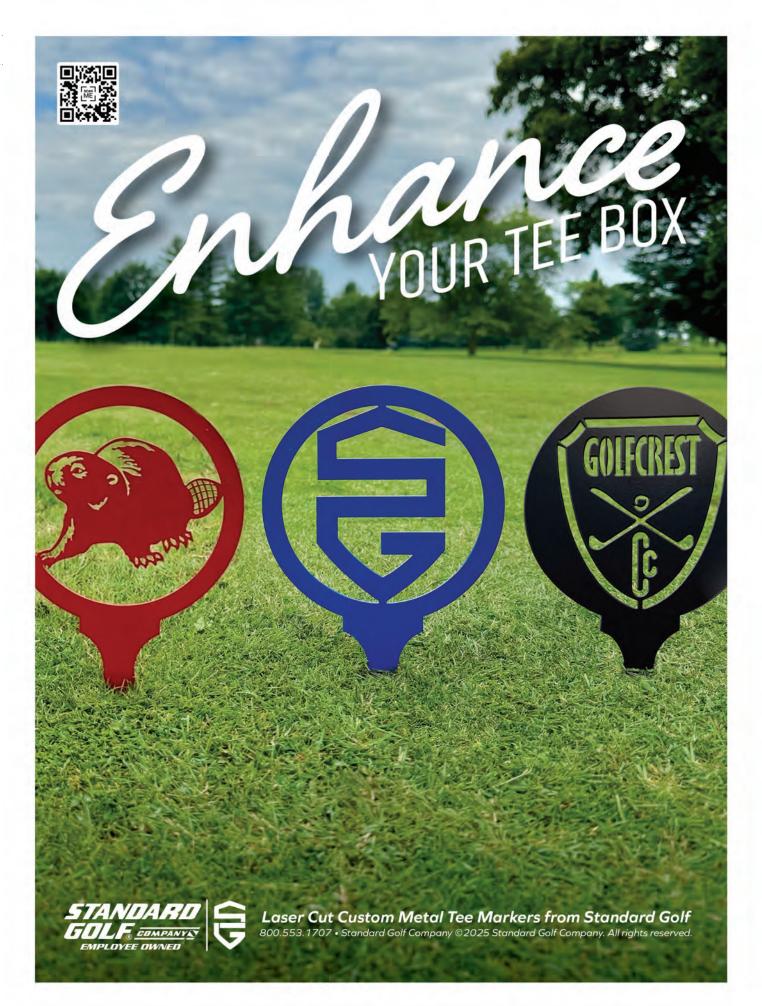
Resist tight turns and excessive speed to reduce tire tracking and sand ridges where a club can touch the sand in a backswing.

You already know which bunkers on your course get the most play. Avoid placing a hole location close to those culprits, especially on busy days.

Rough. Like bunkers, the disparity between pro play and amateur play out of long grass is huge. It's unlikely you need to hand rake or backpack blow rough or incorporate wild mowing patterns, so it stands up, unless you're prepping for a big event. For rough preparation, the diameter of a golf ball — 1.68 inches — is adequate and don't let it grow any more than 2.25 inches, depending on your equipment and time of year.



TIM MORAGHAN, principal, ASPIRE Golf (tmoraghan@aspire-golf.com). Follow Tim online at Golf Course Confidential at www.aspire-golf.com/, or on X at @TimMoraghan





Steve Loveday Vice president of technology

CONDITIONING YOUR TURF FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE

Q: Everyone talks about plant health, so then what is Plant Fitness®?

Everyone in the turfgrass management space has been focused on plant health for years: Proper fertility, adequate irrigation, turf protection and cultural practices are the main pathways to plant health. But what if health isn't the ceiling—it's just the foundation? A healthy plant is still vulnerable to stress. Peak performance requires more than just sustenance—it requires training. That's where Plant Fitness comes in. Instead of reacting to stress, your turf is trained to thrive under pressure. Our products, CrossTrainer $^{\text{\tiny TM}}$ and Strength™, improve natural defense pathways and optimize energy production, improving stress tolerance, photosynthetic efficiency, and nutrient utilization. Every application builds upon the last, conditioning turf like an athlete preparing for peak performance. The result? Turf that doesn't just survive—it thrives under pressure. Would you rather manage a healthy plant... or a high-performing one?

Q: What makes Plant Fitness different from traditional turf inputs?

Traditional plant health products—fertilizers, biostimulants, and soil amendmentsare common tools. You use them every day to correct deficiencies and support plant growth. But what if we could take this a step further? What if we conditioned turf to be more efficient and resilient, rather than just supplementing what it lacks? Turf can be fed... but it can also be trained. Unlike traditional fertilizers that provide a temporary boost, Plant Fitness strengthens turf's internal systems over time. Every application builds on the last, increasing stress tolerance, photosynthetic efficiency, and root density. Just like an athlete's body adapts to training, turf treated with Plant Fitness learns to optimize water, nutrients, and energy production. The result? Less reliance on reactive treatments and stronger, fitter plants season after season. Think about it, a wellconditioned athlete outperforms someone who is simply 'healthy.' Shouldn't your turf do the same?

Q: Can Plant Fitness be integrated into existing turf programs?

Yes, most people have a turf program they are satisfied with. You've carefully selected fertilizers, PGRs, and fungicides to get the best results. So, what if there was a way to make your turf's performance even better? Plant Fitness products aren't replacements they're performance enhancers. They work within your existing program to condition your turf to operate at the highest level. CrossTrainer™ and Strength™ are fully compatible with fertilizers, PGRs, and fungicides. They amplify nutrient utilization, protect critical operations like photosynthesis, and improve soil-microbial interactions. This means your turf becomes more effective, especially during intense stress. You're already investing in plant health. Why not get the most out of it?

Q: What kind of results can superintendents expect when they turn healthy plants into fit plants?

You know what healthy turf looks like nice color, consistent growth, and decent roots. But what if your turf could recover faster, withstand more stress, and require fewer reactive treatments? Health ensures survival. Fitness ensures performance. When turf is conditioned to perform at its peak, it tolerates heat and drought better, recovers from stress faster, and maintains consistent playability—even under extreme conditions. Superintendents using Plant Fitness have seen a more fibrous root system, improved drought tolerance, and a reduced need for fungicides and water. The longer the training system is in place, the stronger the plant and the more resilient the turf becomes. Imagine a playing surface that isn't just healthy—but trained to deliver peak performance every day.

Q: What's the science behind Plant Fitness, and why does it outperform traditional plant health strategies?

You've spent years mastering plant health how nutrients fuel growth, how soil biology impacts turf, and how stress weakens plants. With Plant Fitness you go beyond sustaining plants and actually optimize how they function. Traditional plant health is about providing what turf needs. Plant Fitness is about training turf to function more efficiently and perform at the highest level. Our research-backed formulas activate natural defense pathways, enhance enzyme activity, and improve soil-plant interaction. PowerSaccharides™, BioFunctional acids™, and polymeric stabilizers increase photosynthetic efficiency, optimize water use and reinforce the plant's framework. The result? Turf that is stronger, more stress-resistant, and primed for peak performance. You already know how to keep turf healthy. Now, let's make it FIT!

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Big city, big commun

Superintendents of urban golf facilities discuss the challenges and benefits of maintaining a course in densely populated areas.

By Kelsie Horner



ith the Chicago skyline in view, among the crowded city streets and buildings, sits Harborside International Golf Center. Maintaining a golf course in a highly populated area atop reclaimed land isn't ideal for a superintendent. But caring for courses in urban areas isn't new for superintendent Jake Ronchi.

Ronchi has spent most of his life in a city. He went to school in Philadelphia, worked in New York and Chicago in college, and found his way to Harborside in 2021. Harborside is a public 36-hole facility residing in southeast Chicago, home to the Port Course and the Starboard Course. The **Dick Nugent**-designed courses opened in 1999.

Maintaining and staffing a course in the city can make it difficult to hire staff with turf backgrounds and experience. But Ronchi finds that to be the most fulfilling aspect. Harborside's staff is comprised of employees who are experts in their own areas, and the staff is homegrown from the southeast side of the city. Southeast Chicago is a predominately industrial area, and was the railroad capital of the country in the 1800s.

SPOTLIGHT

▶ The Chicago skyline sits behind a green on a cloudy day at Harborside International Golf Center.

"None of them came from a turf school or a formal education, necessarily," Ronchi says. "They came from really good shops in the area, like engine shops, auto mechanics, machine shops. And they all are very, very good at small individual skills that come together really nicely in our shop and on our golf course."

When it comes to needing repair work done, machinery isn't sent back to manufacturers but instead to local shops. The relationships they have built with the community are important to them. As Ronchi says, "We want to go South Side first on just about everything."

Ronchi's team members each carry passions that they go all-in for outside of their work. The mechanics enjoy street racing, and the assistant superintendents and irrigation techs spend a lot of time fishing locally.

The people in the community have also proved to be a big passion for superintendent and general manager Steven Shavel at Washington Golf Course in Newburgh Heights, Ohio. Found just south of downtown Cleveland and part of the Cleveland Metroparks, Washington is a public 9-hole, par-29 facility.

Shavel's passion and job includes introducing golf and turf maintenance to children. Washington partners with First Tee-Cleveland, running programs for kids to learn the game of golf and in 2024, the Woodworth Activity Center opened on the property.

New to Washington this year is First Green, a program intro-

ducing the career of course maintenance to kids.

"Their whole mission is also to go out and teach life skills through the game of golf, and go into the community, local schools and kids to show what not only Washington is about, but the game of golf," Shavel says. "I would say it's a very big portion of my job, to actually grow the game and get kids interested in golf, whether it's on the player side or the actual maintenance side."

As a part of First Tee, Washington frequently partners with Cleveland STEP, a program for Cleveland Water Department employees' children in sixth through ninth grade. For their

science section, students visit Washington to learn about golf course maintenance and turf.

Shavel hires seasonal workers each April, and local teens often apply. One seasonal employee, Drew Zubin, has been working at Washington for more than five summers. "It's just great to have folks that not only like to golf, but understand what Washington is all about," Shavel says.

Working in an urban area can also bring soil and turf challenges, as most sit on reclaimed land. At Washington, the land that is now predominantly flat used to be more of a valley. The grounds were previ-



Short-term work for a big reward

n 2024, Washington Golf Course began working with United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Cleveland, a nonprofit organization for those living with varying degrees of cerebral palsy. Participants can intern with superintendent and general weeks, performing tasks inside and outside on the golf course.

earn money through the UCP. Last year, one member lived right next door to the course.

"Knew nothing about the golf course,"
Shavel says. "(She) never had walked by it before. Didn't know anything about the Metroparks, but because of myself working with this organization, she was able to be

like, 'Oh, this actually is an opportunity here to be close to for a job placement."

picking up tees and cleaning tee stakes and filling divots. On Thursdays, they would head to the driving range to hand pick balls

that the cart couldn't reach. Some participants enjoyed their time with Shavel so much they inquired about working at the course.

"It was extremely rewarding," Shavel says.
"There were a couple instances that I had interns throughout the year where they would finish up the job and they would ask, 'So, how



much would I make an hour if I actually got a

Although participants were working for a short time, the rewards for Shavel and his team would last long term. "It's so fulfilling," he says, "to see somebody who can grow just in the weeks' time or two weeks."

◆ Dave Donner,

director of golf operations for

the Cleveland

Metroparks,

works with

a group of

students at the

Cleveland Water Department

STEP event at

Washington

Golf Course.



ously a dumping site for local steel mills, and a location to dump unusable and destroyed bricks.

The biggest challenge for the turf at the Cleveland course is the soil construction — or lack thereof, Shavel says. Parts of the course still scale the steel mills, and the soil found there is mostly made of brick, rock and slag. "Not the most optimal conditions to grow turf on," he adds.

At Harborside, location affects course conditions on the irrigation side. Harborside is the only golf course that draws water directly from Lake Michigan through Lake Calumet. The water is full of bicarbonates, making it potentially dangerous

for the turf. Chemical inputs and overwatering must be monitored to prevent damage. Lake Michigan also poses the enemy of zebra

mussels. When pulling the water, their eggs and larvae can get into the pipes. If the irrigation system isn't being used as frequently, and the eggs are present, pipes can clog and lead to serious issues for the system.

"Pulling from

such a diverse ecological system with Lake Michigan brings us some unique challenges, just to our property," Ronchi says.

Challenges for urban courses can come from the environment - and also from the surrounding community. Being located among neighborhoods and housing in the Cleveland area brings the challenge of noise ordinances for Shavel and his team. Gas and diesel-powered equipment are not permitted before 6 a.m. Because of these restrictions, Washington is slowly shifting from gas to battery-powered equipment. Going fully electric helps the course eliminate conversations with un-

happy neighbors about noise.

You just have

appreciation for

different things. We

have a smaller budget,

and you have to be the

one that's creative with

things.

— Patrick Tuttle

"If I'm out there at 6 o'clock in the morning, even though we're able to be out there mowing, people come out and say,

> 'Hey, can you go start somewhere else on the golf

Working at a

course?""

municipal course is something Baylands Golf Links superintendent Patrick Tuttle thinks every superintendent should experience.

Baylands is in Palo Alto, California, between San Francisco and San Jose. It is an 18-hole municipal golf course. Originally designed by William F. Bell and opened in 1956, the course was previously known as Palo Alto Municipal Golf Course. The course was later redesigned by Forrest Richardson, renamed Baylands Golf Links and reopened in 2018.

Before starting at Baylands, Tuttle previously worked at Palo Alto Hills Golf and Country Club, San Francisco Golf Club and Mendo Country Club. "You just have appreciation for different things," Tuttle says. "We have a smaller budget, and you have to be the one that's creative with things."

Being a public course in the city means these facilities could average thousands more rounds a year than a private course. Tuttle says the California course gets more than 60,000 rounds a year. "I would say it's more challenging to manage a course when there's more golf,"

With such high round numbers, the odds of someone who has never played the game teeing off at an urban municipal course are high. Some might assume this could make superintendents fearful of the turf being damaged or divots remaining unfixed.

But for Tuttle? "I love it," he says. "I love increasing awareness."

Shavel's excitement for new golfers comes from seeing the younger generations find their way to the course. According to the National Golf Foundation's 2025 Graffis Report, there were more youth golfers in 2024 than any year since 2006, with 3.7 million

"It's really great," Shavel says, "to see more of a younger population coming out." I

Kelsie Horner is Golf Course Industry's assistant editor.



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WHAT DO YOU REALLY NEED TO DO YOUR JOB? A TRIO OF TURF PROS PROVIDE SOME PERSPECTIVE BY REFLECTING ON HOW THEIR OWN OPERATIONS HAVE CHANGED IN RECENT YEARS.

BY LEE CARR

perations change every season due to product and equipment availability, staffing, resource allocation and goals for the organization. What do you need more of? What can you do without? In 2014, Greg McKeown wrote a book titled "Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less" and it became a New York Times bestseller. With more than 2 million copies sold, people are seeking to understand what is necessary and what is not, and

Every day, superintendents and the staff try to run operations in the best way possible. Bouncing through the "everyday" is great but it is essential to evaluate the big picture. What are the long-term ways the team can save time, money and energy?

Cody Sander, superintendent for the North Course at Wilmington Country Club in Wilmington, Delaware, put a brushstroke on what many people in the industry need — more support. "Whether that be from membership, or your management company or a single owner, support in what we do is essential," Sander says.

Critically, that support starts with the superintendent. How?

"Support comes from good communication: being able to explain your needs, your wants and how they are going to make things better," Sander adds. "Support from your team and your family is essential, too. It's long hours and tough days and it's very hard to do it by yourself."

One superintendent told Sander that everything in this industry comes down to time, money and people. "If you have the time to do it, can you afford to do it and do you have enough people to do it?" Sander says. "You need people that believe in what you are doing and who are going to help you do it."

Jake Scharmann works as assistant director of golf course maintenance at Sun City Summerlin in Las Vegas, Nevada. It's a public facility with three 18-hole courses owned by a nonprofit homeowner's association. "What we need most is mainly one simple thing—time,"

how to act on that understanding.

Tee times are prioritized over uninterrupted hours for maintenance. "We are blessed to have an ample crew and operating budget," says Scharmann, "but our first tee time is typically 20 minutes before sunrise and golfers are on the course until 20 minutes after sundown. The course is only closed on Christmas Day and for three weeks for overseeding in October. We could use more time to execute the many cultural practices that are very hard to complete when golfers are on the course."

Damon Hitti, superintendent at Weissinger Hills Golf Course in Shelbyville, Kentucky, could use more time. Specialty equipment would be helpful at the popular municipal facility, too. "We do a lot of tree-cutting. If we had a stump grinder, we don't have to hire someone and we can do it when we're ready," Hitti says. "It's more time because it gives us a more flexible maintenance schedule."

When Hitti moved away from the private sector, he was determined to maintain Weissinger Hills to the same high standard but with different resources. For example, he oversees a much smaller crew. He saves labor by rolling more and not changing cups as often. "If they are not wore out," Hitti says, "we are not going to spend the time when we could do something else."



▲ Executing projects are a key part of the job at Wilmington (Delaware) Country Club.

Weissinger Hills also had to move to electric mowers. The units, though, can't get through the tees for all 18 holes without being charged. Mowing tees became a two-day job that developed into a blessing.

Hitti has an employee with communication challenges, but she does an excellent job taking care of the tees. The surfaces are now her responsibility. This helped Hitti realize something else he could do with less of - control.

He took it further. Discussing the details of a task with an assistant, he told him, "I want to give you responsibility," Hitti says. "You don't have to ask me about making a job more efficient. I trust you to make the best decision to use whatever equipment

Evaluate to evolve

The course, technology and operations are always evolving so evaluate efficient, minimal maintenance practices. Popular wins are rolling instead of mowing and reducing the number of days on which the staff is cutting fresh cups. Bunkers might not need to be raked every day or could be raked in a different style. What happens if you mix it up? Taking soil samples more frequently may lead to changes with inputs or cultural practices. Test your irrigation system and moisture measurements: Is the system running efficiently and are your numbers where you think they are? Talk with your colleagues to gather opinions about new products and test them if you can. Consider what actions benefit the organization and what actions are executed out of habit. Maintain set standards and communicate with decision makers as you try anything new so they understand why and can be supportive.

we have to get the job done well."

Communication, trust and development are essential. Hitti communicates with the general manager and they cooperate. Trust in the training, safety lessons and the camaraderie of the staff to support each other. Find that sweet balance between influence and autonomy. "That was a step for me to let go of some control," Hitti says. "I am giving the staff more responsibility to make decisions. I am working on that. I have to quit being a control freak."

Hitti has been at Weissinger Hills for 10 seasons and knows there is an element of risk to making changes, depending on circumstances and owner expectations, even if the operation will be better in the long term. "If we know what the expectations are, we have to do that," he says. "If it is something new, something we are driving, then the risk is higher. We calculate the risks and keep our eyes on the goal."

TAKING RISKS

Scharmann took a risk that worked out when he reorganized the crew. The maintenance department fields calls to address issues that are on the course property but adjacent to backyards. "We created a separate crew that only works on landscape," Scharmann says. "This has reduced

The labor debate



When it comes to essentialism, is it better to have a larger staff and shift flexibility, or a smaller staff that is more present and highly trained? The labor market doesn't always allow for a choice, but labor administration is time-consuming. With a smaller staff, fewer people are sharing the labor budget but more hours might lead to more full-time employees that require benefits and full-time perks. If you do some things differently, do you need all the labor that you have? Can any of the staff be promoted or educated to better contribute? If labor is something you need more of, strengthen your crew through diversified sources: veterans, volunteers, retirees and other non-traditional employees can become valuable team members.

the strain on the golf course crew and lets them focus on the grass instead of shrubs."

There's a good tradeoff to caring for the property in this way. "Since the homeowners own the courses and live here, they are keenly invested," Scharmann adds. "I enjoy working for a company that thinks about more than the bottom line. For me, it's not about prestige or finding the highest-paying job. It's about working where I feel comfortable about why things are done."

Aligned values are a tremendous benefit and even more essential during difficult times. At Wilmington Country Club, a full-service, 36-hole private club - complete with a historic orchard where the members can pick fruit! - Sander and the team continually refine their work practices.

They hosted the BMW Championship in 2022 after a tornado caused damage in 2020, toppling 300 trees in a matter of minutes. That resulted in abundant renovation work to prepare for the tournament when staffing was already low due to the pandemic. In addition to the cost of labor, equipment and products currently cost more, but Wilmington Country Club has been focusing on essentialism for years.

Some of the changes are due to sustainability efforts, as the property is an Audubon Certified Cooperative Sanctuary. Specifically, they reduced push mowing by acquiring a smaller riding mower to navigate tight spots around the clubhouse and they began triplexing greens. They also stretched the life of older equipment, partially due to supply-chain ▲ Cody Sander issues.

▲ Damon Hitti

For labor, Wilmington Country Club emphasizes quality over quantity and takes good care of its employees. They invest heavily in interns and contact them when openings arise. Data drives many of the club's maintenance decisions.

"To decide what we are going to do for our aerifications, we perform different tests for organic matter," Sander says. "When levels of organic matter are pretty low, we don't need to be as aggressive as when the numbers are high. We have the evidence to support that."

Wilmington Country Club was an early adopter of the USGA's GS3 smart golf ball, collecting greens data and reviewing it to guide practices mov-

> ing forward. "We have a grounds standards document," says Sander, and they use that as a discussion point for expectations and the metrics where people are happy.

"We are not just guessing with what we think is going to be best."

The team discovered they were hitting their numbers relatively easily. "It used to be that we would mow and roll the greens every day," Sander says. "Now, we see when they are running fast so we change our rolling and mowing schedule. That's less stress on the plant and extra hands that we put somewhere else."

That's doing what is essential and maintaining standards.

"Have an open mind. You may not have enough people to do things like you did 10 years ago, but that may not necessarily be bad. You may not need as many products or the same cultural practices," Sander adds. "I don't want to say it is 100 percent adapt or die, but I don't think anything is ever going back to how it was."

Superintendents are also becoming more creative with how they fill positions, understanding that formal education is something that is not entirely essential.

"Most of us are natural problem-solvers, it's our personality," Sander says. "People are doing a great job, and a lot of new ideas and practices will come out of the shift this industry is going through. It takes intention, it takes commitment, but if you are willing to be supportive of these changes, you can be positive about anything."

And when you figure out what you really need, please share your thoughts - write a book! It can become a bestseller.

Lee Carr is a northeast Ohio-based writer and senior Golf Course Industry contributor.

▼ Weissinger Hills Golf Course in Shelbyville, Kentucky.





TODAY'S DESIGN CULTURE

here has been a sea change in the culture of golf architecture because of the trend toward renovation and restoration. Designers are paying much more attention to site specific land features and the inherent character of the terrain they work with. Gone is the lofty sense of self-entitled privilege by which designers could brush off concerns by everyday golfers with a dismissive retort of "how many golf courses have you designed?"

Architects are more accountable than ever to clients and golfers. In the end, everyone benefits from a more interactive approach, and the quality of golf design has improved dramatically.

Starting with the marketing efforts of Robert Trent Jones Sr. in the late 1950s, some architects started to think of themselves as creative dynamos who were above criticism. Like heroic building architect Howard Roark of Ayn Rand's 1943 novel "The Fountainhead," the modern golf designer touted himself as a master shaper of the earth. Jones sold himself as an artist with a signature design style, one that led the USGA to adopt him as "the Open Doctor."

Robert Von Hagge arrived at site visits adorned in a cape, standing atop the hood of a deep-finned Cadillac and pronouncing judgments that brooked no questioning. Designers were treated in fawning press coverage with all the deference to the filmmaking "auteur," as if the director created the film alone, without cameramen or gaffers. All too often in the popular golf press and in promotional displays, golf designers were depicted Moses-like in pose, standing on a mound, a roll of plans in one hand, the other hand pointing out across the land.

There was a lot of new design work to be had in the 1960s and

beyond, with periodic phases of economic recession momentarily slowing down the pace of construction. That's when architects started mass producing design plans. The process was akin to the suburbanization of the American landscape featuring Levittowns, shopping malls and highway interchanges, with little regard for local landforms.

Unfortunately, the same heavy-handed approach was deployed upon the game's Golden Age designs. Handcrafted works by the likes of **Donald Ross**, A.W. Tillinghast, Seth Raynor, and the incomparable Midwest team of William Langford and Theodore J. Moreau were butchered in the name of "modernization." The advent of the "player-designer" only aggravated the situation. Nor was it conducive to spending extended time on the ground looking at details, listening to people and handcrafting a finished product. When the number of site visits are stipulated in fixed contract, as if your attention were a matter of an appearance fee, there is little sensibility for the most important asset in golf design — taking time.

It has taken decades to overcome this ham-handed approach. The unraveling began in the late 1980s, when former design associates and assistants to Pete Dye began going out on their own to make their mark. As easy as it is to criticize Dye for the contrived, lunar shaping of many of his golf courses, he (re) introduced to the trade a level of hand-crafting and constant reworking, with features embedded down in the ground. Among those who came out of that tradition were Tom Doak, Jim Urbina, Bill Coore and Rod Whitman — all of whom subsequently flourished as designers who were just as interested in restoration as in new design work.

When the golf industry finally hit the skids around 2008-09, attention turned from new course work to restoration and renovation. And for the last decade or so, that has been the focus, especially as clubs that had long neglected their infrastructure have lately sought to make up for lost time by rebuilding internally, whether the irrigation, drainage, bunkering, greens or extensive tree work. And as architects have discovered, it is incredibly time consuming to undertake such work, entailing endless committee meetings, focus groups, budget sessions, board presentations, open house sessions with members, and long walks and talks with the superintendent.

While there has been a partial rebound in the new-course market, much of the focus now is on restoration and renovation work. Many architects with full portfolios might not even get to design a new course again, but they will make a good living paying attention to what the land has to offer and what course managers and everyday golfers have to say about their golf course.

What counts now is not the architect as heroic figurehead, but the golf designer as an empathetic figure, listener, partner, collaborator and teammate. It's a whole new ball game out there. The industry is better for it. Golfers are smarter. And design is better.



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 X at @BradleySKlein.

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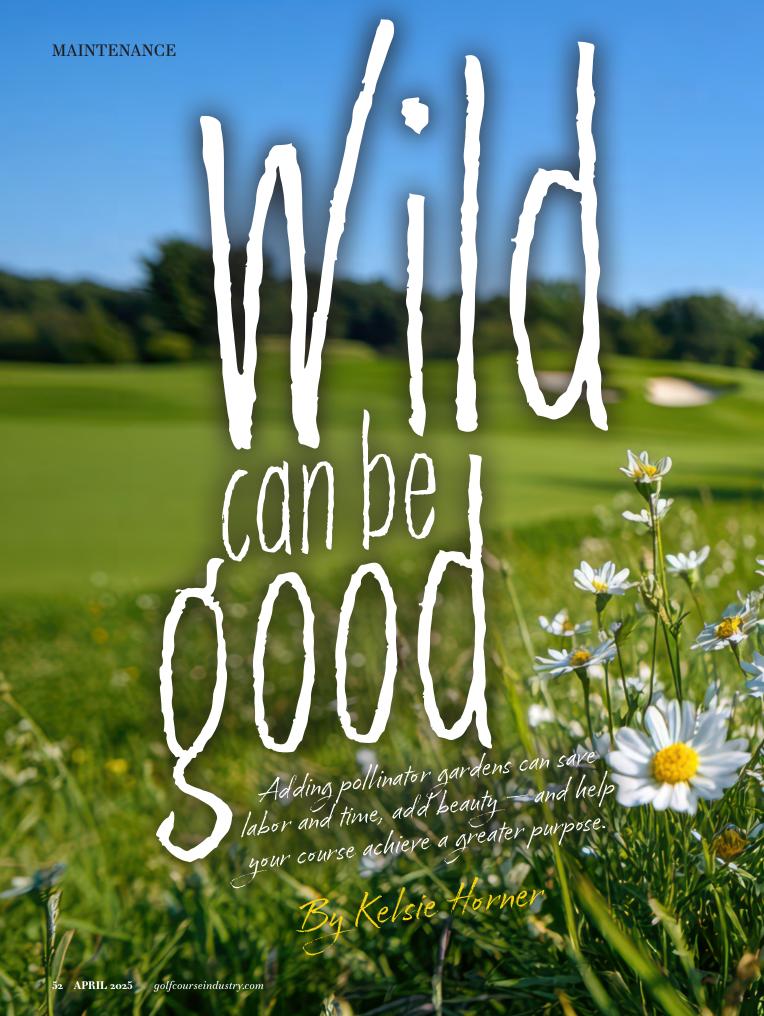


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rom June 2024 to February 2025, commercial beekeepers lost an estimated 62 percent of their bees. According to Project Apis m., a nonprofit beekeeping organization, 1.1 million colonies were lost in the last year.

Pollinators like honeybees are responsible for every third bite of food and 90 percent of flowering plants require pollination.

Superintendents can help reverse the impacts of pollinator decline and habitat loss. Being a steward for the environment and the caretaker of land and wildlife provides a space to attract pollinators while gaining aesthetics and saving money.

Dr. Gregg Munshaw has dedicated his life to the turfgrass industry. He earned his Ph.D. in turfgrass science at Virginia Tech and has taught at Mississippi State University and the University of Kentucky. He now works as director of agronomy for Pinnacle Ag Research Center, where he does private research for various companies. He is currently researching wildflowers, studying species, timing of bloom, their impact on wildflowers and more. His research can help you decide: Should you mow the roughs? Or not mow?

WHEN YOU STEP ON hole No. 3 at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison, Wisconsin, you might see a deer lounging in the tall grass, or a monarch butterfly resting on a flower. (For more on monarch's read Henry DeLozier's column, A crowning achievement, on page 15.) A prairie full of wildflowers ranging from 3 to 10 feet high fills the out-of-play area.

"It's loaded with everything you can imagine," superintendent Chad Grimm says.

Built in 1921, Blackhawk Country Club is home to an 18-hole parkland style course. The land is home to effigy mounds, which are found in the National Historic Registry for historic places.

A few years ago, Blackhawk's maintenance team decided to allow an out-of-play area to grow in. They later decided to bring in Dr. Chris Williamson of the University of Wisconsin, where a pollinator promotion program was implemented.

"What he wanted to do was put these on a few golf courses, and to dispel some of the myths of golf courses being a terrible place for bees, so we decided we put our bees with this program in our prairie and had great success with him while he was here," Grimm says.

Grimm saw success with the pollinator program, and the prairie has been thriving since.

There's some severe terrain throughout the course. "We have some very steep banks that we cannot mow with machine mowers," Grimm says. "We have to pushmow them with lawn mowers."

Due to time consumption and potential dangers for the staff, the club decided to fill the area with wildflowers. They went with the Verge mix, which features grasses and flowers that grow from 4 to 6 inches in height and include pollinators. Mowing is only required once or twice a year.

"You're getting right by the environment, helping the bees, and saving money and safety all at the same time," Grimm says. The club has seen success and is planning to put seeds down in two other large areas on the course next year.

Because of the wildflower areas on the course, bees and pollinators thrive and have a home. Providing a habitat for pollinators is one substantial benefit to seeing out-ofplay areas on courses. The habitats for the bees also provide habitats

for small mammals and birds, encouraging a wide variety of wildlife. "I think it does good things for the soul to be out there and in nature, and being on the golf course I think is great for that," Munshaw says. "But then having a huge diversity of species I think can help even more."

Colorful, blooming flower areas also provide an aesthetic beauty.

"Instead of having wall-to-wall green and having different mowing heights, you've got this area that is maybe 6 feet tall or whatever, that is just full of different colors," Munshaw says. "Most people live in the city where there's a lot of concrete and steel, and here we've got this golf course that has just a huge diversity piece."

To provide color as frequently as possible, Munshaw recommends a mix of annuals and perennials. "Your goal is to have constant color from spring till fall," he says. This ensures blooming throughout the primary golf season in cool-weather environments.

By allowing these areas to grow in, a course reduces the labor hours required to regularly manage them. For most wildflower areas, mowing down is only required once or twice a year — whereas before, mowing was required frequently, using gas and equipment.

Reducing labor hours and mowing time can also help save money for the course. According to the USGA, golf courses that maintain 50 or more acres of rough spend around \$75,000 a year caring for those areas. Bringing the acreage down can decrease spending.

"I think that's one of the things that golf course superintendents are excited about the most," Munshaw says. "All these other things are great and a benefit, but budgets are tight and if I can reduce my budget or use money in my budget for other things rather than just mowing rough, then it's a win at the end of the day."

Wildflower areas don't come without their difficulties, though. Munshaw says a common issue is grow-in speed. If not planted properly, weeds will grow faster than the flower seed and overtake the area. To help, some seed mixes recommend applying a grass herbicide before planting to kill off existing weeds.

"There are definitely some growing pains," Grimm says, adding that superintendents should expect

some upfront costs, and that learning how to best keep weeds out takes some time.

PATIENCE IS A wildflower virtue — even when your course is near some antsy and popular critters.

As part of the Columbus Zoo parks' commitment to wildlife, Safari Golf Club has planted pollinator gardens in numerous locations on their 140-acre, 18-hole course. Located across the street from the Ohio zoo's wildflower-filled entrance, the course added a pollinator garden to its entrance in 2023. The area fills half an acre with wildflowers and prairie grasses.

Environmental protection is a major part of the Columbus Zoo's values, and Safari Golf Club earned Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary certification in 2018, 2022 and 2025.

"It's part of what somebody who takes care of a property should be interested in," superintendent **Kurt Boggs** says. "You never want to go out there and negatively affect the environment."

In 2024, the club earned a grant to add a pollinator garden around an irrigation pond. The club worked with MAD Scientist Associates, LLC to plant various shrubs and plugs, and reseed the area with a native seed mix.

"In the next two to three years, it should mature and add some aesthetics and some food sources for the birds," Boggs says.

Boggs says the biggest challenge was getting the area established. Due to less rainfall and drought-like conditions, watering the area was time-consuming and one zone began to grow noxious weeds.

"We've had to mow down one in early summer because it started getting a bunch of ragweed in it," Boggs says. "We got that before it went to seed. We mowed it down, and then after that, we didn't have to apply anything. It just didn't come back

A flower guide



English daisy

Perennial Blooms: May-July Height: 3 to 6 inches Non-native



Baby blue eyes

Annual Blooms: February– November Height: 6 inches Native



Self-heal

Perennial Blooms late spring/early summer Height: 4 to 6 inches Native



Yaak yarrow

Perennial
Blooms spring and fall
Height: 4 inches
Native



Creeping thyme

Perennial Blooms in summer Height: 4 inches Non-native



the following year, which was good."

Thanks to the wildflowers, birds, bees and butterflies have found a safe habitat on the **Dr. Michael Hurdzan**-designed course.

WHEN CONSIDERING LETTING

an area grow in, superintendents should be sure the area isn't close to play. "You want these areas to be pretty well out," Munshaw says. "You may have a rough area, that if somebody misses a fairway, they can still play out of. A wildflower area would be outside of that."

Consult with your golf pro and general manager to ensure the area chosen will not interfere with play.

When deciding on a mix, Munshaw recommends using resources such as the Xerces Society, a nonYou're getting right by the environment, helping the bees, and saving money and safety all at the same time."

— Chad Grimm

profit organization that provides resources on native plant species. Superintendents need to decide on the proper height of the plant material. If the goal is to attract pollinators, success is still seen in shorter species.

Munshaw also suggests including milkweed in mixes. Milkweed can provide habitats for monarch caterpillars and butterflies, which are on the decline. Milkweed is

traditionally found on farm fields, where input usage has nearly made the species non-existent. "It's not necessarily super pretty but it's critical for monarchs — both the adults and the caterpillars," Munshaw says.

Planting wildflowers and native species in designated areas on the course can help build an entire ecosystem. It can help lower the club's budget, decrease labor hours and add a new aesthetic for players.

"It's a great thing," Munshaw says, "and increases the diversity on golf courses from, again, just this monostand of short grass to something that is a whole ecosystem that we wouldn't have otherwise."

Kelsie Horner is Golf Course Industry's assistant editor.





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.

UNIQUE GOLF CART CONTROL

The overall elevated theme of the links-style golf property at Streamsong Golf Resort in Bowling Green, Florida, is conveyed using pressure-treated poles left over from bridge construction last year for golf-cart control instead of throwing them away. They are buried about one foot deep, purposefully at different heights and angles, with different sight lines providing a more natural look. They are used in spots of high-traffic areas, instead of using ropes and stakes, to convey a proper visual presentation. There was no cost for materials using minimal labor hours installing them in straight sand for this excellent conceptual idea and implementation. Director of agronomy Brad Boyd, superintendents David Clark, Rob Crisp and Rob Sicinski, and architects Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore, Tom Doak. Gil Hanse and Jim Wagner, and David McLay Kidd are among the many talented people involved with Streamsong.



RAILROAD THEME GOLF **COURSE ACCESSORIES**

rior to becoming a world-class golf destination, Streamsong Golf Resort in Bowling Green, Florida, was a phosphate and potash mining operation with railroad tracks transporting the materials throughout the vast property. During golf course construction, many remnants were found and recycled as golf course accessories. Tee markers were cut in lengths and painted their respective colors on each end. Creosoted railroad ties installed vertically had rail plates installed holding hole number signs made of synthetic materials. The tee sign costs were approximately less than \$50 each; cutting the tee markers to length and painting the ends was under approximately \$15 each. Director of agronomy Brad Boyd, superintendents David Clark, Rob Crisp and Rob Sicinski, and fleet manager Joe Stefanick are really good at what they do. Architects Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore, Tom Doak, Gil Hanse and Jim Wagner, and David McLay Kidd designed the resort's courses.

Terry Buchen, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 56-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at 757-561-7777 or terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

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BUSINESS IS BOOMIN'

he current golf course construction industry is operating at an unimaginable pace. Although there might not be as many new golf courses being built as there were in the '90s and early 2000s, it feels as if every facility is doing renovation work. Undoubtedly, the post-COVID golf renaissance was a much-needed boost to fuel the domestic and regional golf economic landscape. This is something all of us likely have benefited from — and hopefully will continue to do so.

Despite the unparalleled positive influence created by the meteoric trajectory of the golf course construction industry, it's apparent that the corresponding rules of engagement are rapidly evolving. The mechanics of how a club and superintendent navigate the planning stages of an upcoming project have shifted significantly. Material prices are at record highs and extremely volatile. Although it's recovering, material supply and availability are at all-time lows. Contractors are scheduling projects years in advance. Labor rates seem to increase weekly.

Clubs are now pressured into making massive decisions and entering financially, or otherwise, binding agreements years in advance of project commencement. Therefore, the qualitative and quantitative risks of undertaking any project are higher than our industry has ever experienced. The intensified demands, responsibility and time commitment are far too often delegated to an already overloaded club leadership/governance structure and, most importantly, the superintendent.

How can a club and, better yet, a superintendent, best position themselves to mitigate financial and legal risk, build in appropriate checks and balances, and develop a critical path to ensure success?

"The key is not the will to win. Everybody has that. It is the will to win that is important." — late basketball coach **Bobby Knight**

Through our project-related engagements, we have experienced instances where improper preparation has led to anywhere from undesirable outcomes to litigious disputes, broken relationships and other unfavorable outcomes.

Most of the negative situations we encounter could have been avoided with the proper pre-project preparation and planning. Without clearly defined roles, responsibilities, procedures and sequential club approvals at various stages in the planning process, the likelihood of success can quickly diminish, relationships can devolve and blame can be undeservedly rendered. In the end, poor outcomes, whether related to financial overruns or issues with workmanship, can have serious career-defining consequences for the superintendent.

What steps can a superintendent take to skillfully navigate this process? Here are a few items for consideration:

- Build a cohesive team of independent experts with defined roles and responsibilities architect, irrigation consultant, regionally located engineers with golf industry experience (if needed), project managers and appropriate club leadership.
- Help clearly delegate tasks, responsibilities, timelines, deadlines, action items and deliverables through an open, direct communication pathway.
- Comprehensively vet, source, negotiate, test, test, test, (and re-test) material sources and suppliers.
- Dig into the project specifications revise as necessary, reach out to peers, engage with individuals possessing

- scope-specific expertise soil hydraulics, soil fertility, project managers, drainage consultants and turfgrass breeders. Don't be afraid to ask questions or challenge the status quo. And don't rely on anyone's advice if it is thinly rooted in generalities. Be wary of anyone who is not willing to question their own processes and specifications. Statements such as, "I've been doing it this way for 25 years," or "We always do it this way," should immediately facilitate concern.
- Conduct an open honest bid process with quality, reputable, established contractors with a track record of proven success.
 Create an environment where preferred contractors feel comfortable with business discussions regarding schedule, manpower, value-engineering, price, terms and conditions.
- Build a team to develop, review and negotiate an AIA contract that is adequate for the scope and expense of the project. These documents can be intimidating and overwhelming. But when properly explained, reviewed and negotiated, they should provide the required protection not only for the club, but also the architect and the contractor.
- Drill into the detail of staging, sequencing, timing, deliveries and operational impacts.

With a dedicated team of experienced, successful, goal-aligned parties, the planning and preparation phase of any project should be rewarding and enjoyable. When done properly, the club will proceed with confidence and credibility, all while positioning themselves and the superintendent to achieve ultimate success.

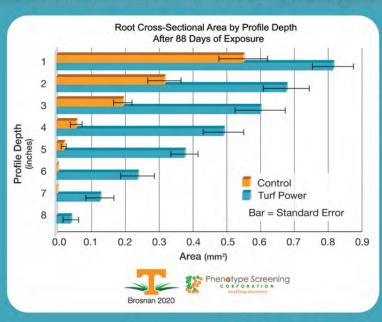




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