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# TAKE TURFHEADS

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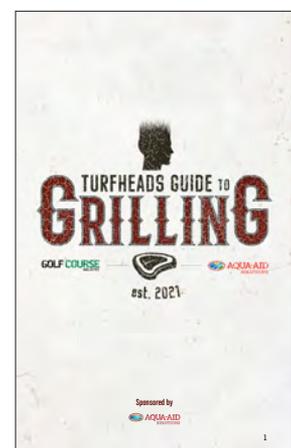
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## WHERE WILL LEADERS EMERGE?

**J**ohn Carlone epitomizes what makes the golf industry special. A golf enthusiast, Carlone parlayed his passion for the game into a rewarding four-decade career, which concluded with his recent retirement from Long Island's Meadow Brook Club. As Carlone collaborated with us on his Turfheads Take Over submission (pages 19-27), he routinely joked about the irony of how somebody whose livelihood depends on the weather endured wicked conditions in his final year.

Somebody doesn't last four decades in this business without a sense of humor.

Through the wet-to-dry, comfortable-to-humid swings of 2025, Carlone found time to write one of the longest articles published in this magazine's 18-year history. We strongly urge turf pros to share Carlone's article with anybody considering a golf maintenance career. In fact, share this entire issue, our 10th annual Turfheads Take Over, with everybody you know. It's cheaper and filled with more practical lessons than an academic textbook. The 30,000-plus words in this issue describe what you do, why it matters and the tussles you face.

The lessons offered by Carlone and his wife, **Leslie**, demonstrate the plausibility of going wire-to-wire as a superintendent while raising a family. The job provided safety and security for a fabulous family, and Meadow Brook Club remained one of Long Island's most revered clubs throughout Carlone's tenure. More clubs and superintendents should strive for similar symbiosis. Haphazard change can cause significant harm to all parties.

For the good of the game and industry, Carlone's golf zest rarely wavered despite the pressures of working at a demanding private club. He will now try to play as many gems in the Northeast and elsewhere as possible in retirement.

Carlone will have plenty of potential playing partners, because he never abandoned helping his peers. He wasn't hunkered down, concerned solely with the conditions and politics of Meadow Brook Club. He always gave abundant time to others. The head-down, focus-on-your property mentality sounds like a solid strategy — until one realizes nobody can flourish without the help of others.

Before a spring 2019 trip to Long Island, I reached out to Carlone about touring Meadow Brook Club. He enthusiastically accommodated the request. I landed at LaGuardia Airport, grabbed the rental car and headed directly to the course, where Carlone greeted me in his driveway. Carlone and his family lived on club grounds. We meandered the **Dick Wilson** layout on a dreary afternoon. The visit occurred on a Sunday. I'm confident Carlone had better things to do that Sunday with the people he loves. I'm confident there was no spot I'd rather have spent my first work afternoon on Long Island.

A bevy of recent retirements, some by personal choice, others by the circumstances surrounding the demands of the post-COVID market, leave gigantic leadership voids in the industry. The calming presence in many regions is experiencing the serenity of fishing, hunting, walking or playing golf without fretting over irrigation leaks, disease pressure or green speeds. People who made extraordinary sacrifices to guide golf through surges and slumps deserve to play as much guilt-free golf as they desire.

When and where will the next generation of industry leaders arise? No artificial intelligence model can accurately answer these questions. Leadership isn't about hunkering down and doing what's best for a singular place or group. Lives and careers become more fulfilling when showing interest in the well-being of others. Sure, there are moments when the focus must be singular. But leaders find time, even in the middle of wicked stretches, renovations and club turmoil, to put the needs of others before their own interests. Nobody is too busy to respond to a call, text, email or DM. Listening is the most impactful form of leadership.

The modern golf market features abundant complexities, many of them stemming from gigantic money flowing into the game, which expands the pressure to always be better today than yesterday. Carlone's words reiterate the job has never been — and will never be — for the meek.

Study his more than 6,000 words closely. They will make you a better father, husband, superintendent and leader. 🍷



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## Beauty in the bunkers

New York's Crag Burn Golf Club is heading into the 2026 season with bigger greens, better bunkers and a fresh start.

When the 1974 Robert Trent Jones Sr. aerial images of Crag Burn Golf Club were discovered in the clubhouse's attic, director of grounds **Terrence DiLoreto** knew a renovation was in the New York club's future.

"The bunkers were seriously out of this world," DiLoreto says.

Historical relevance bleeds on the East Aurora property. Crag Burn opened in 1972, but in years prior, the Buffalo-area facility was filled with stables and polo fields. The horse stables still stand, and the original water tower once used is still visible by the golfers. Minor renovations on the course have been made over the years, some even led by **Rees Jones**.

The front nine encompasses a parkland setting. The back nine is more open, with

By  
**Kelsie  
Horner**

little woods in sight.

After finding the images and doing some testing, DiLoreto discovered the green sizes had shrunk by nearly 20 percent of their original sizes and become "egg-shaped." Bunkers had lost their unique shapes and, after two prior bunker renovations, had gotten bigger.

When DiLoreto proposed a renovation project to expand the greens and bring the bunkers back to the Joneses' intent, he was met with skepticism. "They were like, 'Yeah, right, you're out of your mind,'" DiLoreto laughs. But because of recent surges in golf, membership is overflowing at the private club and views evolved on the potential renovation.

After three years of detailed planning alongside architect **Tyler Rae**, the project commenced on Aug. 4 and concluded at

the end of October. "We had every detail dialed in," DiLoreto says.

Choosing Rae to lead the restoration was a no-brainer for the club. "I was blown away with Tyler's knowledge on Robert Trent Jones stuff," DiLoreto says. "He's one of the smartest, knowledge-filled guys I've ever met when it comes to golf course architecture."

The project focused on restoring and moving all bunkers back to their original 1974 shapes, sizes and locations, expanding greens and installing irrigation around greens, fairways and approaches.

Bunkers once described by DiLoreto as "round saucers," lacking shape, are now eye-catching, aesthetic additions to the course. With lacy edges and dramatic contours, the bunker restoration enhanced the course visually and strategically. Bunkers were lined

with Better Billy Bunker, topped by fresh white. The contrasting white sand with healthy, green turf captures the eye. In a video produced by Golf Course Creative, Rae describes the restoration as bringing back a “Great Gatsby era vibe,” making the course unique from others in the Buffalo area.

On the front nine, a new fairway bunker was added to second hole, a sharp dogleg par 5, and two additional bunkers were added to the layup area. On the third hole, the front of the green was expanded, opening it up for playability, and a runoff was added to the back of the green.

Bunkers on the fifth hole, a long par 3 over, were rebuilt, and the front and back left sides of the green were expanded and recontoured.

On the back nine, among other changes, the 13th green’s back right and left corners have been expanded. The 15th fairway is now expanded on the left side, and its left greenside bunker has been



restored. No. 17 is now fully surrounded by striking sand traps.

Golf Preservations Inc. installed new drainage in every green, and NMP Golf Construction led construction on the course. Siphon drains were installed, and the drain lines on the greens were placed in 6-foot spacings. Expansions were filled

with a custom mix matching the existing soil profile. Matching the mixes took two and a half years to perfect. Thirty-three tees were also rebuilt.

Every detail was planned precisely. When Crag Burn aerified greens in 2023, they took the plugs from aerification and grew in a nursery. That bent-*Poa annua*

© COURTESY OF CRAG BURN GOLF CLUB (LEFT), KELSEY HORNER (RIGHT)

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sod was then used to expand the greens during the project. With expanded greens, the amount of hole locations increased, averaging three new locations per hole. “It’s an all-around win for everybody involved,” DiLoreto says.

From a golfer’s standpoint, the renovation enhanced playability and aesthetics.

After nearly three months of renovation work, Crag Burn’s bunkers now evoke a “Great Gatsby era vibe.”

Carefully curated bunkers line the greens and fairways, proving a challenge to most. From a maintenance standpoint, the renovation will result in more hand and rotary work for the team. “The bunkers are closer to the greens now,” DiLoreto says. “Before, we had a guy that was on a riding mower.”

With the renovations completed, DiLoreto and his team are preparing for golfers to play the course for the first time when the club opens for the 2026 season. “There’s a lot of excitement built around this,” DiLoreto says, “and I think members and guests, when they come out here, it’s going to be an even more special treat than what it is now.”

*Kelsie Horner is Golf Course Industry’s digital editor.*

## PEOPLE NEWS

**Kevin Komer**, CGCS, director of agronomy at The Mountain Course at Spruce Peak and Stowe Country Club, received the GCSAA’s 2026 Excellence in Government Affairs Award for his distinguished legacy of state advocacy work in Vermont. ... **Mark Mungeam** was elected president of the ASGCA at the organization’s recent 79th annual meeting on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. ... And **Mark Kann**, the director of Florida operations for Sod Solutions, was elected Florida Turfgrass Association president during the FTGA’s annual conference. ... Land use attorney **Benjamin Tate** is now coordinating all legal efforts for Green Lake Golf’s redevelopment projects. ... Bernhard and Company appointed **Emily Casey** as the company’s new Western United States technical sales manager. ... **Kevin Goss** of Sugar Creek Golf Course (Illinois), **Jim Pavonetti**, CGCS, of Fairview (Connecticut) Country Club, **Robin**

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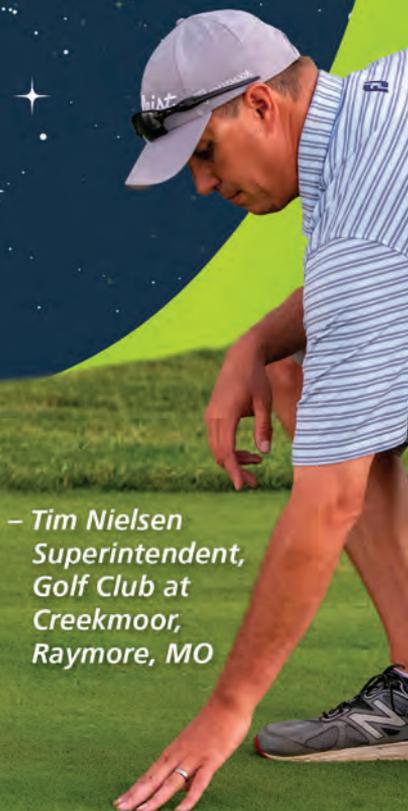
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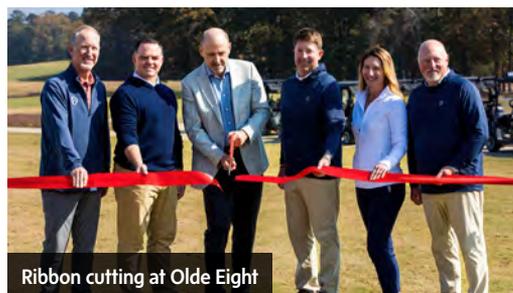
**Sadler**, MS, AGS, of Mickelson National (Canada) Golf Club and **Justin Brimley** of Crystal Springs (California) Golf Course received the GCSAA's 2025 Environmental Leaders in Golf Awards. ... **George Clifton**, ASGCA Fellow, died at age 72. In 1984, Clifton helped his father, **Lloyd Clifton**, design the first course at The Villages in Florida. Clifton Ezell and Clifton Golf Design Group has now designed more than 800 holes at the three-county community. ... Munro, which manufactures pumps, pump controls and pump stations for the turf irrigation market, named **Jack Dever** as its new Central U.S. regional account manager. ... The Super-Scratch Foundation appointed **Brian Laurent** as its new director. ... The USGA announced that **Kevin Hammer** of Florida was nominated to serve as the association's 68th president.

## SUPPLIER NEWS

The EPA granted federal registration under Section 3 of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) to Syngenta for its Trefinti nematocide/fungicide. ... Toro announced the availability of Spatial Adjust, a software tool developed through an exclusive partnership with TerraRad that integrates exclusively with the Toro Lynx Central Control platform. ... Sipcam Agro USA is launching Linchpin, an herbicide engineered to control difficult weeds such as kyllinga, sedges and crabgrass in golf, sports and lawn turf, and sod production management. ... Foley Company donated \$5,000 to the GCSAA Foundation, the GCSAA's philanthropic organization, to support the new Col. John Morley Centennial Campaign. ... Performance Nutrition introduced Vergence Ca, a liquid calcium acetate solution designed to deliver calcium uptake for greens, tees, fairways and sports fields.

## COURSE NEWS

Quintero Golf Club in Peoria, Arizona, reopened for public play following a multi-million-dollar golf course and facility renovation project. The five-



Ribbon cutting at Olde Eight



Quintero Golf Club

month effort began on June 2 and was overseen by **Rees Jones**, Quintero's original course architect. ... Harbour Town Golf Links in South Carolina reopened following a restoration involving **Davis Love III**, MacCurrach Golf Construction, superintendent **Jon Wright** and director of sports operations **John Farrell**. Originally intended as an updating of the course's infrastructure, it also presented an opportunity to restore many features from **Pete Dye**'s original design. Greens, bunkers and bulkheads were rebuilt as part of the project. ... Nearly a year after breaking ground, Olde Eight opened in Greenwood, South Carolina. Developed by Greenwood Land Holdings, LLC and managed by Front Light Building Company Development, the project introduces a reimaged golf course designed by **Drew Rogers**. ... Bobby Weed Golf Design finished the Phase II modernization of Palma Ceia Golf & Country Club in Tampa, Florida, 14 years after the firm's initial phase I restoration of the **Tom Bendel** and **Donald Ross** original design. ... Zinkand Golf Design completed construction of a short course and practice facility at Chicago's Saddle & Cycle Club. ... Troon was selected to manage historic Reading Country Club, a daily-fee facility in Reading, Pennsylvania. ... The Hoffmann Family of Companies partnered with golf course architect **Kyle Phillips** to design and build Pandion Club, a new golf course located on the site of the former Old Corkscrew Golf Club in Southwest Florida. ... Kohler, Wisconsin, the luxury hospitality offering from the Kohler Co., is adding Purebred Farm, a new 14-hole golf course just west of Blackwolf Run. King Collins Dormer Golf Course Design will lay out the course, which is scheduled to begin construction in fall 2025 and open in fall 2027.

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# Tartan Talks 113

**Joe Jemsek** doesn't inundate golfers at the game's most heavily played courses with myriad thoughts.

"We have to appreciate that the majority of players are thinking one thought when they reach the tee," Jemsek says on a *Tartan Talks* podcast appearance. "You're then trying to add in those little increments to keep the next level of player engaged, but we're really focusing on that first one. It's thinking, 'Let's figure out a way to make a player make one decision each shot.'"



▲ Jemsek

Practicality is a staple of Jemsek's work, with the bulk of his design and renovation efforts occurring in the public sector. On the podcast, he offers insight into how savvy architectural decisions mitigate the impact of abundant play. He also shares his thoughts on the present and future of public golf.

"What we're seeing — and I see it in my personal life — is that time is going away. Time is becoming harder to come by," he says. "I think hybrid golf courses are going to be a thing. We're going to see 12-hole golf courses become really successful. But it needs to have those par 4s and par 5s. It just can't be all par 3s. And it doesn't have to be an extreme golf course. I think if it's got some interest and character, people are going to be really happy to play 12 holes and move on."

The full conversation with Jemsek can be found on the Superintendent Radio Network page of popular podcast distribution platforms.

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**GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY**

# Amanda Fontaine

LEDGES GOLF CLUB



Ice is a big enemy. It really limits the amount of oxygen the plant can get. We keep a good timeline of when we get ice and when to take it off. Hopefully, Mother Nature takes care of that for us."



**W**intertime in western Massachusetts means a lot of golf courses are closed — including Ledges Golf Club in South Hadley where **Amanda Fontaine** is the head superintendent. The course closes around Thanksgiving.

Appearing on the *Wonderful Women of Golf* podcast with host **Rick Woelfel**, Fontaine describes the steps she and her team take to ensure their bentgrass is healthy enough to withstand a New England winter.

"We'll start out with verticutting our greens," she says, "getting a good aeration on them afterwards, and then topdress on top of that. And then after that, we'll pretty much go into winter with a winterkill spread and some regulation, get through the winter with that and protect the turf with fungicide.

"After that, we'll go with a nice, heavy top-dressing to really protect the plant as much as possible. We try to keep the aeration holes open as much as possible for drainage. Because we don't get that huge, heavy snow cover every winter, that's always a big problem."

Fontaine's ideal winter — as it would be for her peers — would feature a consistent snow cover. Her biggest concern during the winter months is ice. "Ice is a big enemy," she says. "It really limits the amount of oxygen the plant can get. We keep a good timeline of when we get ice and when to take it off. Hopefully, Mother Nature takes care of that for us. But if it gets to that scary point where it's getting close to that 45-day mark of ice cover, then we have to go out and take preventative measures."

The Ledges is 20 minutes from the University of Massachusetts campus in Amherst. UMass, along with the University of Minnesota, is involved in an ongoing winterkill study.

When Fontaine assumed her post five years ago, she found herself immediately confronting winterkill issues.

"[My first season] was a huge winterkill season," she says, and the next season as well. I saw the benefits [of the study] right away."

The program involves Fontaine and her team installing solar-powered, GPS-driven nodes at various depths on putting surfaces to

measure such things as oxygen, moisture and CO2 levels.

"We can determine these factors at three different depths," Fontaine says. "I believe it's 2, 3 and 6 inches. So, we can really tell what's going on at all different depths of the soil profile."

Modern technology allows Fontaine to continuously monitor soil conditions through the worst of the winter weather.

"I can log on and tell exactly what's going on in the soil," she says. "I know what the temperature is in the soil, I know how much oxygen it's getting, how much CO2 the plant is giving off. So, I pretty much know when respiration happens and at what levels it's going on."

Fontaine says having this kind of information at her disposal is an asset when dealing with customers.

"It's been super helpful, especially when communicating with the golfers and the public as to why we're closing when we close, why frost delays are important, and why staying off the turf when the ground is frozen. It helps to be able to have specifics to present the information to the membership and especially presenting it to the town because we are a municipal golf course."

Fontaine has the ability to connect with other golf facilities and learn how they are coping with winter.

"I can log on and if anyone in the country or in other countries has a node, I can look at their data and see where we are in comparison to different climates," she says. "There's a bunch in my neck of the woods up here that gave nodes around their golf courses so I can compare within 10 miles of my own golf course, or around the country as well." 



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# Honest *and* ethical

**Greg Turner** climbed to global sales director during his 35 years with Foley Company. But his impact goes far beyond selling and training.

By **Matt LaWell**

**B**efore GPS guided us through every turn, before cell phones rendered moot the rote memorization of numerical chains, before the simplest search engines showed off every business within 10 or 20 or 100 miles of our exact location, we flipped through the Yellow Pages.

**Greg Turner** flipped through them more than most folks. He thumbed the alphabetized tabs and ripped out listings to build his route, one lawnmower shop and logging industry dealer at a time.

This was 1987. Turner was still in his 20s and just starting his sales career. **Don Clark** had hired him to drive around South Carolina for Townsend Saw Chain, a Homelite OEM, peddling saw chain and other chain saw-related accessories.

“I built this truck program up, just cold calling and going in the door, giving them a business card,” Turner remembers. *If you think you have a need for a high-quality, lesser expensive chain, he would pitch, I would love to help you.* “My first few days out I bet I didn’t sell \$20 worth of stuff,” he says. Within a few months, he was selling \$8,000 some days.

Turner could have been happy in South Carolina, but he followed Clark to Power Lawnmower Parts, working out of Rochester and driving seemingly everywhere — down to Virginia, up to Maine, over to Ohio and even Michigan.

Foley United purchased PLP a couple years later and Turner stayed on.

He has never left.

Turner has worked for Foley, now known as The Foley Company, through four moves, the births of two children and three grandchildren, a handful of promotions and new titles — ultimately to global sales director starting in 2017 — and, last June, a bicycle accident that left him unable to walk. He is retiring after 35 years with the company — after 35 years of sales trips, of training around the world, of developing friendships that have kept him grounded and grateful.

One of his first industry friends was **Jim Nedin**, a Toro service manager then at EH Griffith in Pittsburgh who became a trusted consultant and received the Edwin Budding Award in 2019. “I did not know what a grinder was,” Turner says with a laugh. “He spent three days working with me, and what a guy to learn from.”

Toro senior marketing manager **Barry Beckett** and Jacobsen managing director **Alan Prickett** both became friends and professional lights who helped him connect with distribution bases and their customers in the field. So were Reinders commercial equipment division manager **John Jensen**, Smith Turf sales manager **Brent Miller**, Turf Equipment & Irrigation CEO **Tyler Sorenson**, and Troon Golf SVPs **Jeff Spangler** and **Charlene Gallob**. “You can learn a lot just watching people interact with people and I feel like I’ve been blessed being able to apply what I observed and learned over the years,” Turner says.

Turner counts the 1993 introduction of the AccuMaster, the first fully enclosed and fully automated tabletop spin/relief reel grinder as one of the early highlights of his career — “Foley has always been the innovator in our business,” he says — but far from the last. In 1998, he moved up to international sales manager and traveled outside the country for the first time, heading down under to Australia to

train new customers at five Toro Australia locations for **Cameron Russell**. He later logged nearly two decades of work trips to China, Vietnam, Thailand, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Myanmar, Malaysia, Japan and India. “Just about every country in Asia,” he says. “Cambodia might have been an exception.” He traveled throughout Europe and South Africa, too, teaching people about grinders as Nedin once taught him.

“Foley took me places I would have never, ever dreamed of going,” he says. “It was just a great experience. There are good people all around the world and our turf industry is full of them. It’s amazing.”

Turner’s professional career ended suddenly after his bicycle accident. Early retirement, he calls it. He was in the hospital for a month and a rehab center for three months after that. He and his wife, **Debbie**, purchased a van fitted for his wheelchair. He returned home in October 2024 and, incredibly, started driving again, now with hand controls, in April. He and Debbie now share their home with their son, **Christian**, daughter-in-law, **Amy**, and grandson, **Caleb**. “To hear his voice in the mornings,” Turner says, “it’s a joy.” Their daughter, **Brittany**, son-in-law, **Kevin**, and granddaughters, **Eliana** and **Madison**, live nearby.

At the invitation of Foley president and CEO **Paul Rauker**, Turner will attend one more GCSAA Conference and Trade Show early next year in Orlando to “share a proper farewell to an industry I’ve loved” and catch up with old customers who became friends. He will probably pass along the lesson his first industry mentor, Clark, passed along to him before his first day selling saw chain to lawnmower shops: *You be honest and ethical in everything you do and you’ll go far in this business.*

“That just stuck with me,” Turner says. “It’s been the way I’ve tried to live my life, and I hope the people I’ve touched over the years remember me this way.” 🍷

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# THANK YOU GREG

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FOR 35 YEARS, GREG TURNER HAS REPRESENTED THE VERY BEST OF FOLEY COMPANY. FROM HIS EARLY DAYS ON THE ROAD TO HIS LEADERSHIP AS OUR GLOBAL SALES DIRECTOR, GREG BUILT LASTING RELATIONSHIPS, OPENED NEW MARKETS, AND INSPIRED COLLEAGUES AROUND THE WORLD — **ALWAYS WITH HONESTY, INTEGRITY, AND HEART.**

GREG, THANK YOU FOR YOUR DEDICATION, YOUR LEADERSHIP,  
AND THE LEGACY YOU LEAVE WITH ALL OF US.  
CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR RETIREMENT  
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members collaborated with The Villages' woodshop workers on designing and building six houses.

Three were placed on Hill Top, with the other three placed at Silver Lake Executive Golf Course, another course in The Villages.

"The plan going forward is that this is a trial run to see if we do gain some traction with this, and if we do, then we want to continue to start adding these on more courses going forward," Jones says. "Not only are we giving a good habitat for the bats to go in, but they also provide so much other stuff for the environment."

Bats are a primary predator of mosquitoes and in Florida, as Jones says, "the less mosquitos we have, the better." Bats can eat their entire body weight in insects — up to 1,200 mosquitoes in just an hour.

In the long run, bats can encourage less insecticide usage.

The Villages, the largest retirement community in the United States, is home to 42 executive courses. Jones oversees their maintenance with the help of superintendents and assistants. Outside of the bat houses, conservation is a high priority for The Villages and their courses. "The Villages is all about that, and anywhere that we can incorporate it, we will definitely do it," Jones says.

Environmentally protected areas are found throughout the courses with posted signs describing the area and why it's protected. Pollinator gardens designed to attract monarchs are continuing to be incorporated as courses are renovated.

Regarding sustainability, Jones says it's a high factor in decision making: "In order

for us to continue doing what we do and provide the products that we have, we have to really keep that in mind. We are surrounded by a lot of water here in Florida. We do everything that we can to protect waterways from chemicals and things like that. We try to be as safe as possible." 🌱

## Bat's-eye view

How an executive course at The Villages found a solution to a flying critter infestation.

**H**ill Top Executive Golf Course recently found itself in a batty situation.

The 18-hole course, a part of The Villages community about 45 miles northwest of Orlando, Florida, discovered a bat infestation in the starter's building. Anywhere from 100 to 300 bats found themselves a home, proving a danger to customers and employees. Bats can carry and spread diseases such as rabies and can carry viruses deadly to humans. Their immune systems allow them to carry harmful diseases without affecting the bat themselves. If contact with a human occurs, it can be deadly.

Some fun facts about bats: bats are the only flying mammal, they can travel as fast as 100 mph depending on the species, and more than half of bat species are considered endangered.

Removing the species isn't as easy as hiring an exterminator. Bats are heavily protected in Florida, and their removal is banned between April 15 and Aug. 15, during their mating season. When Aug. 15 finally arrived, director of executive golf maintenance **Donald Jones** started trying to remove the nocturnal animals.

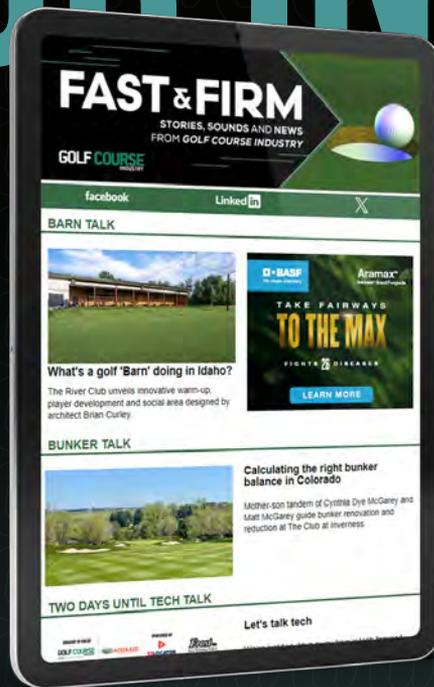
"We had to put up nets around the building to where the bats could get out, but they couldn't get back in," Jones says. "Once you put the nets up, then you couldn't disturb them again for another seven days. So, we would have to check in seven-day intervals. After doing that quite a few times, we finally got to the end of it and they were out."

Although a potential danger to humans, bats are a great benefit to the golf course itself. **Bill Williamson**, a board member of the Amenity Authority Committee, recommended implementing bat boxes throughout the course to give the bats a home they won't need to be removed. Williamson, Jones and other team



**Kelsie Horner** is Golf Course Industry's digital editor. To submit ideas about conservation-focused programs or actions at your course, email her at [khomer@gie.net](mailto:khomer@gie.net).

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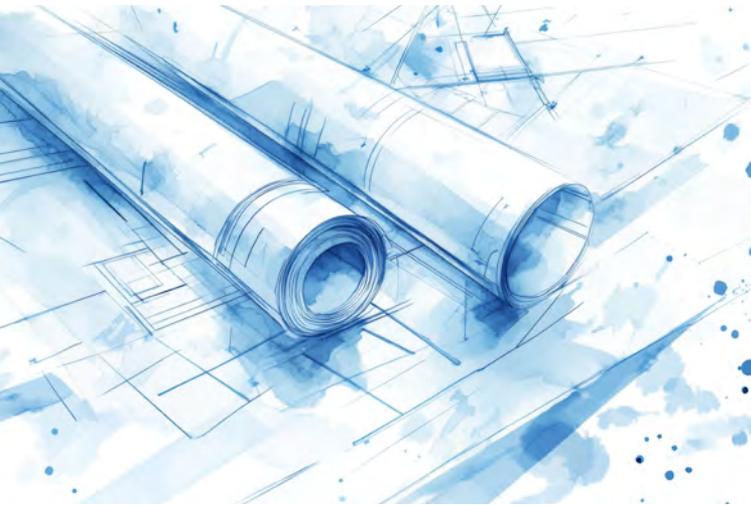


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INDUSTRY



## PLOTTING AN AGRONOMIC PLAN: WHY? HOW? WHAT?

**O**n the doorstep of 2026, golf course superintendents face renewed challenges, demands and higher expectations from their golfers. Among the numerous tools that top-performing superintendents will use to navigate the coming year, a thorough and proactive agronomic plan will be one they keep at their fingertips.

Three questions arise when considering the necessity and time commitment for creating an effective plan: *Why? How? What?*

*Why is an agronomic plan needed?*

Rising expectations, strongly held differences of opinion and escalating costs require clarity in mission and process for golf course leaders. Your agronomic plan will set the stage for multiple mission-critical requirements:

**Standards of care:** The golf course plan addresses cultural practices, shows images of cutting heights, and describes the fit and finish golfers can expect on a consistent basis.

**Scope of operations:** In setting the standards, the superintendent describes what will be done ... and not done. The plan articulates the scale of operations and extends literally to the metes and bounds of the property and figuratively to the extent of care dictated by the plan. Will the course be kept to the highest standards of major events? Or kept more modestly?

**Costs required:** Rising costs for labor, benefits, fertility and water dictate that projected expenses be thoughtfully and comprehensively identified, described and justified. The agronomic plan is where superintendents make their argument for the standards being set.

**Organization of management:** Rising labor costs are the largest

component of every budget, and they require explanation and justification. These costs must be described precisely and simply to ensure understanding by all stakeholders, especially those whose support you need to execute your plan.

*How to develop an agronomic plan?*

A basic table of contents looks something like this:

**Executive summary:** Written last, this section of the plan succinctly states your goals and objectives and covers one or two key points of the overall plan. It does not introduce content not covered in the plan. Keep it to one page.

**Purpose and values:** What do you consider the reason you come to work every day? This could be both internally and externally focused. What are the benefits you and your team provide golfers who play your course, and what satisfaction does the job provide you personally? In stating your purpose, you will also highlight the values for which you stand.

**Scale of operations:** Projecting your intended accomplishments and the costs to deliver those results require a plan that describes the scale and scope of operations, including number of acres, crew headcount and the projected number of hours they will work, use of contractors, and time and seasonality impacts. Maps and visuals bring additional clarity to these considerations.

**Cultural practices:** Here you describe how you will approach best standards, based on available budget and resources.

**Fertility plan:** State which fertility issues are relevant to your course and how these were incorporated into the plan. Sum-

marize your intended fertilization schedule and how it contributes to the conditions you have established as your goal.

**Water-taking and use plan:** Your plan should convey an understanding of current and potentially changing local guidelines and ordinances that affect water availability and use.

**Arboreal plan:** Show that you recognize the significance of the trees on your golf course while helping your stakeholders understand that some of those same trees — and the shade they produce — are often at odds with excellent turf conditions.

**Pesticide plan:** Keeping your facility safe and prosperous requires proactive pest management practices. State them and show your intended schedule, noting that while preemptive pesticide use is part of the plan, changing weather and turf conditions often call for reactive measures as well.

**Labor scale, scope and costs:** In addition to stating how you will manage, train and encourage your crew, this is where you show how your team is organized and will be deployed. If your team is fortunate enough to have longstanding members with extensive experience and expertise, make note of their value. If you enter the year at risk of not meeting your goals because of labor shortages, that caveat should also be stipulated.

*What results should you expect from your plan?*

This part of the document represents your promise to your stakeholders. As precisely as possible, and in quantifiable terms where appropriate, state the results that can be expected. Don't hedge your bet. State your ambitions boldly and clearly. **E**



**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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# Rethinking Turf Management

Joel Simmons, President, EarthWorks

**W**hat's the best way to manage turf? It's a question we've all asked since the first day we began maintaining sports turf and golf courses for the enjoyment of others.

For years, most conversations centered on the plant: nutrition, appearance, and recovery, while the soil beneath it often received less attention. Traditionally, "soil management" meant adjusting pH or nutrient levels.

But the industry is changing. Today, superintendents and turf managers are asking better questions:

- What's happening in my soil biologically?
- How do I encourage beneficial microbes?
- Can I manage stress more effectively by improving soil health?

Across the industry, we're seeing more use of carbon-based materials like humic acids, kelp meal, and sugars. The reason is simple: we're recognizing that healthy turf starts with a living soil.

## What Is Biological Soil Management?

Biological Soil Management (BSM) is a "Soil First" approach to turf management. It is the process of managing the soil to promote the proliferation of the native population of beneficial micro-organisms. It forms the foundation of healthy, balanced systems that perform under stress.

## Here's how it works:

1. Start with chemistry.  
Soil testing and correction open the soil physically, improving structure.
2. Manage physics.  
Better air and water movement throughout the profile supports stronger root systems.
3. Feed the biology.

Adding available carbon, or microbial food, allows microbes to thrive and transform organic matter into humus.

## The results are measurable:

- Improved water efficiency
- Stronger nutrient flow
- Flocculated, less compacted soils
- Deeper rooting
- Reduced overall plant stress

## The Three-Legged Stool of Soil Health

We often describe soil health as a three-legged stool:

Chemistry → Physics → Biology

Each leg supports the next, but biology is often the most overlooked even though it provides the greatest long-term benefit.

There's an adage that says, "*Microbes eat at the table first.*" Every fertilizer molecule must be processed by microbes before the plant can use it.

For example, nitrogen goes through nitrification, transforming from ammonium ( $\text{NH}_4^+$ ) to nitrite ( $\text{NO}_2^-$ ) to nitrate ( $\text{NO}_3^-$ ). This process is performed by soil microbes, and they need energy, and that energy comes from carbon.

## Why Synthetic Nitrogen Alone Isn't Enough

When turf programs rely solely on synthetic nitrogen, microbes are forced to deplete the soil's available carbon. This weakens microbial populations and slows nutrient cycling.

Over time, the soil "burns out," and the same fertilizer produces diminishing returns.

Biological Soil Management doesn't reject synthetics; it simply focuses on balance, particularly maintaining a healthy carbon-to-nitrogen ratio (C:N).

By feeding the soil with carbon-based inputs, we:

- Support microbial activity
- Reduce thatch caused by nitrogen imbalance
- Decrease total fertilizer inputs
- Build healthier, more resilient turf

## A Simple but Powerful Concept

At its core, Biological Soil Management is about:

- Balancing the soil chemically
- Feeding it biologically
- Letting natural systems do the work

When the soil functions properly, it builds structure, cycles nutrients, and supports turf that performs under stress.

## EarthWorks: 37 Years of Biological Soil Management

For 37 years, EarthWorks has been a pioneer and advocate for Biological Soil Management. We've helped turf professionals across golf, sports, and landscape management industries build programs that work with nature instead of against it.

Skeptics once claimed that "organics don't work until the soil warms up," but experience has proven otherwise. Thousands of superintendents nationwide have shared their success stories, many on the EarthWorks Podcast, showing that a balanced soil system delivers real, repeatable results.

## The Bottom Line

When you build your program on soil health, everything above it thrives.

That's the promise, and the proven reality, of Biological Soil Management. 🌱



▲ Surrounded by family, John Carlone bids farewell to his longtime professional home.

# From turf school to retirement

**John Carlone** reflects on a successful and rewarding four-decade career as a golf course superintendent in one of the most demanding regions in the industry.

**M**y name is **John Carlone**, CGCS. Yes, when you include those initials after your name for 35 years, it becomes your identity.

Forty-two years ago, when I graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a bachelor's degree in natural resource development and a

concentration in turf management, my only thoughts were learn, take seminars, network with peers, work crazy hours, play golf, attend the GCSAA golf tournament and conference, participate in local chapter events, and serve on chapter boards. All of this was being done with the goal of advancing my career.

Not until around nine years ago,

at age 55, did I begin to realize I can't—nor do I want to—be a golf course superintendent till the day I die. I needed to have an exit plan and a “post-superintendent plan.” Before I go there, let's go back to the beginning.

Why did I choose a career as a golf course superintendent? I started playing golf at age 11 at Green Valley

Country Club in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. I quickly became proficient at the game, breaking 80 by the time I turned 13. In 1977, as a 15-year-old, I won my age group at the Rhode Island State Insurance Youth Classic by shooting 45-35 for an 80.

I played four years on a high school golf team that went 44-0 in division matches. We advanced to four state finals, losing each time to Barrington, whose No. 1 player was future PGA Tour winner **Brad Faxon**. That explains that! Faxon was shooting 70 or 71 when we were shooting 78 or 79.

Following high school, I played Division I golf at the University of Rhode Island. I'll never forget how proud **Dr. Dick Skogley** was that a turf major was on the golf team! That made him beam with pride. **Dr. Noel Jackson** felt the same. I'll never be able to get Dr. Jackson's common retort to a bad result, in his English accent, out of my head. "How can you shoot 85, you bloody Nig-Nog?!"

Let me just say this right now, and I know every URI Turf graduate from that era—**Frank Rossi, Scott Niven, Scott Ramsay, Scott Ebdon, Randy Van Yahres** and **Dennis Petruzzelli**, among others—would agree: Dr. Skogley and Dr. Jackson were not only influential individuals in all of our lives, they were simply two of the best men to ever walk the planet. When I was serving on the MetGCSA board in the 1990s, Dr. Skogley and Dr. Jackson both received our John Reid Lifetime Achievement Award. I was beyond honored to play a small part in recognizing these two giants in our industry.

While playing on the URI golf team, I started to notice a trend. And golf is all about trends. I had many rounds where I was 2 under after 13 holes but shot 6 over, and when I was 1 under after 15 and shot 4 over. I never learned how to "go low." When I was 1 under after 15, my self-talk was, "don't mess up this good round" and "play conservative." I would then

proceed to finish double, double, triple. It should have been, "Let's try to birdie in and shoot 4 under." I was never taught or learned how to do that. Any visions of being a PGA Tour player evaporated very quickly.

When I realized I wasn't PGA Tour material, my next decision was, "How do I get to be on a golf course every day and play mostly free golf?" That's when I discovered the world of turf management.

That occurred in 1981.

My first turf management class was PLS 101 with **Dr. D. Thomas Duff**. I vividly remember how he made it clear to all the aspiring turf managers: "Dead grass is like a dead kitty: It does not come back to life." He was right!

I played rugby my freshman year at URI. After two broken noses and a concussion, I decided to try out for the golf team. Much safer. From my sophomore to senior year, I played on the golf team and worked on the "experimental turf plots." URI's first turfgrass trial plots were planted in 1890, marking the beginning of its turfgrass research program. I worked directly for Dr. Skogley. I was exposed to mowing, aerification, spraying, grass ID and many other aspects of turf management for the first time. I also spent many an hour sitting in his office, mostly listening, to "Doc" tell stories from his career.

Although an internship was not officially required in the program, I knew they were available almost anywhere in the country. I have to give credit to my classmate **Dennis Petruzzelli**. Dennis was from Westchester County, New York. He talked about the high-end private clubs in Westchester County and suggested that I look to intern in that area.

In the summer of 1982, between my junior and senior years at URI, I accepted an internship at Westchester Country Club in Rye, New York, working for **Ted Horton**, CGCS. Westchester Country Club had been the site of an annual PGA

Tour event since 1963. In 1982, they were scheduled to host the Manufacturers Hanover Westchester Classic. As a kid from Rhode Island, going to New York for a summer was a big step. I remember being excited, not scared. I was a sponge ready to absorb all I could.

What a great experience! The highlight of the summer was having my dad come to New York for the PGA Tour event. We were behind the 18th green when eventual winner **Bob Gilder** knocked a 3 wood in the hole for a double eagle 2 on the par-5 18th hole. There's a plaque in the fairway on that hole marking the spot where Gilder hit the shot. Many years later, when hosting a PGA Tour Champions event at Meadow Brook, I met Bob and told him my father and I saw his shot go in the hole.

I couldn't have picked a better example of a professional golf course superintendent than Ted to work under for my first real full-time summer on a golf course. His career was legendary. He worked at Winged Foot, Westchester and Pebble Beach! He remains a friend and mentor to this day.

Following the summer at Westchester, my senior year at URI began in September 1982. In January 1983, while in my final semester, I was at the turf plots. Dr. Skogley said, "I received a phone call from a past graduate who just accepted a new position and is looking for an assistant. I think you would be a perfect fit." That is the way things worked in those days with Dr. Skogley. Graduating students in the turf program usually did not have to send out résumés seeking positions. Doc pretty much placed you.

The past graduate Doc was speaking of was **Scott Niven**. Scott accepted the superintendent position at The Stanwich Club in Greenwich, Connecticut, in January 1983 and was looking for an assistant. I traveled to Greenwich to interview during my last semester. I accepted

the position and began working right after finishing finals in May.

Scott was another example of a professional superintendent. I was very fortunate to work for him at Stanwich. I was still a little green to accept an assistant position at such a high-end private club. But I learned from Scott and his experienced staff.

My first year at Stanwich coincided with the beginning of lightweight mowing and clipping removal on fairways. At the time, Toro had the Turf Pro 84. I had experience using the Turf Pro 84 as an intern at Westchester. Scott acquired a Turf Pro 84 and I was the only one with experience using the machine. Scott leaned on me to show the other staff members how mowing and striping were done. That was really the first time I experienced showing someone how to do something on a golf course. To that point, I had been the student, never the teacher. I relished the feeling!

Scott's Stanwich career is legendary. He's still there—43 years and going strong. Scott loves research and experimenting with new products. He has always been committed to eradicating *Poa* and doing everything possible to promote bentgrass. He's been very successful at achieving this feat.

Forty years after working for Scott, I still do some things in the fashion I learned while at Stanwich. Scott remains a good friend, mentor and occasional golfing buddy. A big portion of any success I achieved as a superintendent stemmed from working for Ted and Scott.

#### **ONTO LONG ISLAND**

While working at Stanwich, I applied for several superintendent jobs in the Met Area. In October 1985, there was a message on the whiteboard at the Stanwich shop with a New York City phone number: "John, call **Sherman Boxer**." I called him and learned he was the green chair at Middle Bay Country Club in



◀ There was a time when Leslie and John Carlone could fit in a golf car with all three of their children — from left, Daniel, Emily and David — a favorite family activity.

Oceanside on Long Island. How did Mr. Boxer get my name? He called a former golf pro at Middle Bay who went to work for the PGA Tour. Mr. Boxer told him Middle Bay was looking for a new superintendent. That golf pro knew **Ted Horton** from Westchester. He asked for the name of some young assistants in the area. Ted gave him my name. I went through the interview process and was offered the job. I started my career as a golf course superintendent on Nov. 13, 1985.

Two months earlier, in September 1985, Hurricane Gloria battered Long Island and the entire New York metropolitan area. I remember riding out Gloria in the clubhouse at Stanwich! Job No. 1 involved recovering from Hurricane Gloria.

I have great memories of Middle Bay. The course was right on the water, with four holes supported by marine bulkhead. It was a nice place to start a career as a head superintendent. It was relatively easy to grow grass because it rarely hit 90 degrees. There was always a good afternoon breeze. We did have to deal with saltwater intrusion a few times per year. We regularly applied gypsum, with 40 to 60 pallets per year being normal.

Middle Bay rendered some great success stories. In 1987, we embarked on a \$400,000 renovation project. Adjusted for inflation, what we accomplished would cost \$4 million today! We worked with a gentleman who was an operator for **Pete Dye** when he built TPC Sawgrass. He started his own design and construction firm. **Dave Postlethwait** brought in all the equipment and some of the staff needed to complete the project. Our staff at Middle Bay assisted as well. We created fill by digging a new pond and enlarging several other ponds. We realized quickly the fill we dug from the ponds was kind of mucky. We pushed all the sand around the greens into piles, dumped the mucky fill around the greens and shaped it into mounds. We then capped this mucky fill with the sand we had pushed into piles. Not only did we build mounds around greens, we rebuilt every bunker on the course and built several new tees.

The most important success story of any in my life occurred during my second year at Middle Bay. I met my wife, **Leslie**.

We met in January 1987 and had our first date in March 1987. We got married Nov. 15, 1987. True story: I



## Financial advice for superintendents from a retiring superintendent

The biggest mistake most individuals make, superintendent or not, is waiting too long to begin saving for retirement — or even saving at all! My mother taught me early in my teen years to “pay yourself first.” In other words, the first thing you should do with your weekly paycheck is pay yourself. No matter how old you are or how much you make, or how many bills you must pay, pay yourself first. I started with \$25 per week in a simple savings account. Regardless of what type of retirement program an employer provides, starting early and continuing to save each week will grow your nest egg.

### Hire a trusted financial advisor

You can get recommendations from friends and family members — or you can interview several on your own. Certainly, there are ways to invest using AI recommendations. I am a little old school, so I prefer the advisor route. Talk with your advisor at least once every 30 to 60 days. I don’t recommend blindly giving an advisor your money and not checking in with them.

### The basics for planning for retirement

Term life insurance, basic life insurance, year to year, you can adjust the amount of your term insurance as your life circumstances change. I’m not trying to sound morbid here, but the average cost of a funeral is \$13,000. If you are single, start with a \$15,000 policy. If you get married and have kids, increase the amount of term insurance. If something happens to you, you will want to have an insurance amount to provide for your family without your income.

Many employers have 401(k) programs; some do not have retirement programs. Either way, depending on your income, you can have a Roth IRA or a simple IRA. Your income will determine which of these you can have. Fund them fully each year. And start early. The growth of money is time dependent. If you begin to fund an IRA at 25 instead of 35, at 65 you will have about \$1 million more.

### No credit card debt

Credit card debt is the biggest inhibitor to creating wealth. This takes discipline. Believe me, I know! I was always told, if you can’t pay off your credit card in full each month, you are living above your means.

### Emergency fund

In addition to your long-term savings in an IRA or mutual fund, you should have an emergency fund. This is another opportunity to save weekly. “Pay yourself” first again. Maybe it’s \$25 to \$50 per week in a simple savings account or another mutual fund. The purpose of this fund is for it to be liquid. What type of emergency, you ask? Car repairs, home repairs, family emergencies. If you are young, this will take some time to establish, but you should try to do so.

### Own a home

This may not happen right away. Paying rent is unavoidable when young. However, if possible, own a home. If your employer provides housing, pay yourself a mortgage each month. This is another thing I was told early on. If your employer provides your housing and you are not paying yourself a mortgage, you are living above your means.

Another great idea: if your employer provides housing, buy a house and rent it. This can be tricky if you live in an expensive area, or you are not the handy type where you can do your own repairs. Buying a house and renting it works best when it is somewhat close to where you live. Trust me on this one! Getting a call at 3 a.m. on a cold January day telling you the pilot light is out on the gas burner and your tenants have no heat is a bummer!

asked her to marry me one week after our first date. Best decision I ever made. After nearly 38 years together, we are still best friends.

I’m not sure she knew what she was getting into when she became a superintendent’s wife. But she has always been there to take care of things when I was at work. (Read Leslie’s story on page 25. She has some thoughts!)

We have three children:

- **Emily**, 35, and her husband **Lucas** live in Rhode Island. They have three children, **Savannah**, **Cassidy** and **Tyler**.
- **David**, 33, graduated from Hofstra University on Long Island and served as an officer in the U.S. Army for four years. “Lieutenant Dave” is currently attending Northeastern University in Boston, seeking his MBA.
- **Daniel**, 30, and his wife **Sydney** live in Lisle, Illinois. Dan graduated from West Point in 2018 and served five years active duty reaching the rank of Captain.

Often, when our kids were young, I would go to the GCSAA golf tournament and conference. After being home alone with the kids for a week, Leslie would fly with the three of them to meet me for a week of vacation. Orlando was always the best location for those family trips.

Middle Bay was generous with its golf course. I hosted several chapter meetings for both the MetGCSA and the Long Island GCSA while there. They also hosted several qualifying rounds for local events for the LIGA and the MGA. After five years at Middle Bay, I got my game back in shape and actually qualified for two Met Opens, (1992 and ’93) and two Met Amateurs (1991 and ’95). I played in several Long Island Opens at Bethpage Red and qualified for match play in several Long Island Amateurs.

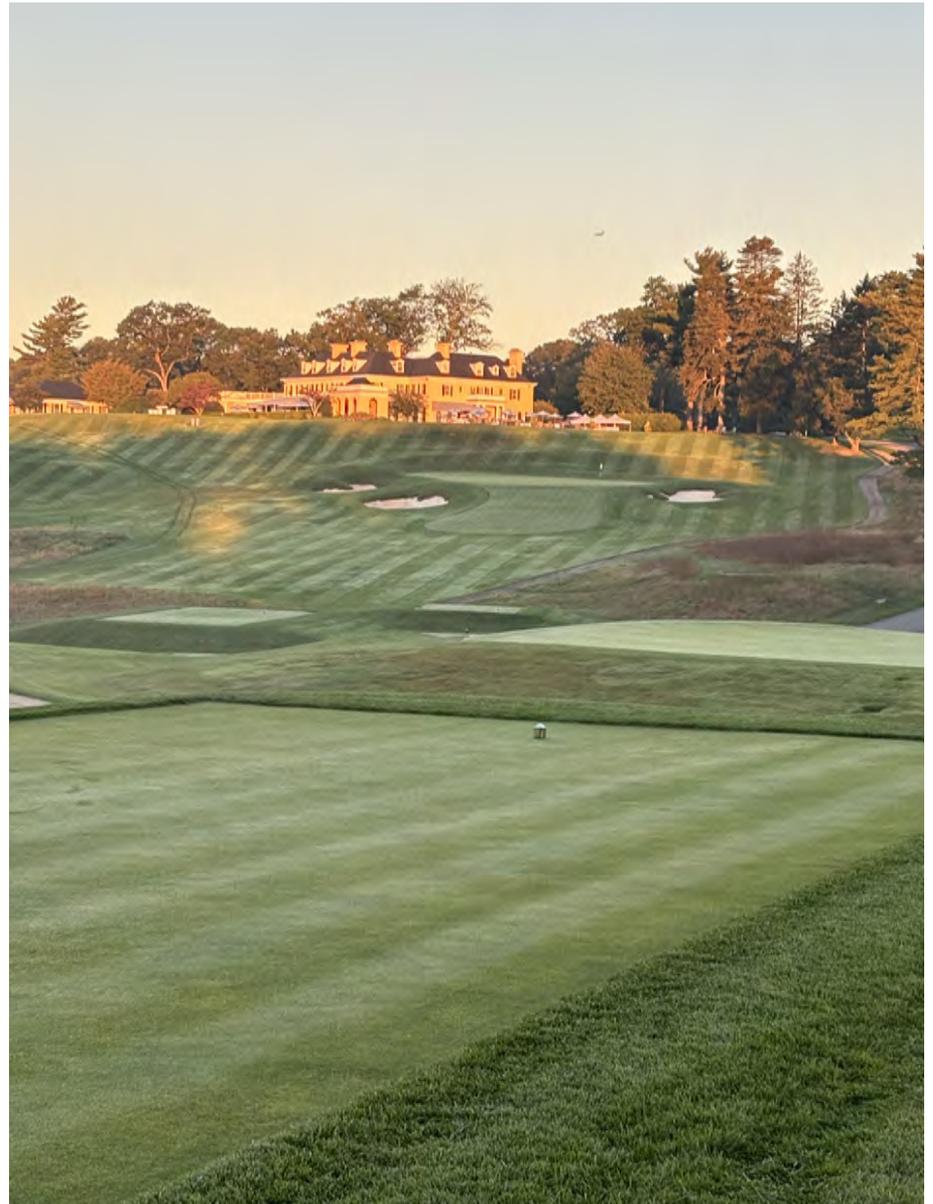
There are many clubs in the metropolitan area with a long history of hosting invitational tournaments.

I was fortunate, due to my playing ability, meeting influential members at these clubs and being a superintendent, to be invited to participate. Most of them had a similar format: 18 holes of qualifying for 16 spots in a match-play field. Most of them had a senior flight for over-55 competitors. I always felt honored and thankful to be invited to these events. I relished the competition and the camaraderie, and I qualified numerous times for match play. I never won a title. I did make it to the finals of one event, losing 5 and 4 to an individual who turned pro the next day!

Speaking of pros, I have always got along with golf pros. I wanted to be one at one time! I quickly learned two things regarding golf pros. First, they were often the first person a member came in contact with after a round of golf. I wanted the pro and his staff to be allies to me and my staff. I also learned that I earned the respect of the head pro and his staff because of my playing ability. I found that to be the same with members as well. Once I understood this, I used it as an opportunity to help my ability to do my job.

**Doug Steffen** was Middle Bay's PGA professional upon my arrival. He had been an assistant at Baltusrol before coming to Middle Bay. Doug and I became fast friends, as we played a lot of golf while also fishing together. Doug was in our wedding party. Doug worked as "my pro" for nine of my 11 years at Middle Bay.

When he left in 1994, **Tim Shifflett**, a young assistant pro from nearby Inwood Country Club, became the club's new head pro. Tim was from Florida and was a good player. I was 33 and had been at Middle Bay nine years. I felt sort of like a big brother to Tim. I enjoyed that role and spent a lot of time at the "back of the driving range" away from members, talking with Tim. I think he just needed a breather from the pro shop—and I was there to listen. Tim is still the head pro at



the very prestigious Glen Oaks Club on Long Island.

Another passion I developed while at Stanwich Club was serving on boards of superintendent chapters, turf associations and GCSAA committees. Beginning in 1985, when I was the "assistant rep" on the Met board while at Stanwich, I was always on a board of directors for the next 40 years as a superintendent. This service led to being president of two GCSAA chapters and two turf associations: the MetGCSA 2000-01,

Long Island GCSA 2005-08, Tri State Turf Research Association 2010-11 and the New York State Turfgrass Association 2020-21. I also served on 14 different GCSAA committees. I thoroughly enjoyed everything about this service.

By serving on boards and committees, I met superintendents from across the country. Many are still close friends to this day. Without a doubt, I am a better superintendent from meeting the many individuals I served and shared ideas with.

▲ Carlone worked at Meadow Brook Club on Long Island for nearly 30 years.



▲ Carlone still holds a single-digit handicap — and fully intends to play more golf in retirement.

During my tenure at Middle Bay from 1985 to '96, turfgrass management was going through big advancements. Lightweight mowing and collecting clippings on fairways were becoming the norm. The old Jacobsen Blitzter gang units for cutting rough were large, heavy and difficult to maneuver and maintain. We began cutting rough with the Toro 72-inch rotary mower.

When large-area rotary mowers started getting produced, cutting heights were not where they are now. In fact, the Accu-Gauge wasn't around yet. We were still setting heights in fractions. I remember lowering our greens heights from 5/32nds to 9/64ths was a big step. That is .156 to .140! Our fairway heights were lowered to ½ inch, or .500.

New fungicides, insecticides

and herbicides were coming to the market regularly. Older chemistries were starting to be replaced with safer, lower-use rate chemistries. Student enrollment was rising in turf management programs at traditional turf schools. Many other universities added turf programs, and golf course construction was booming. For a period in the mid-1990s, around 300 new courses per year were opening in the United States.

An opportunity for a new challenge professionally and a really good situation for our family opened in September 1996. Meadow Brook Golf Club in Jericho, New York, about 18 miles north of Middle Bay, was seeking a superintendent. Meadow Brook was the site of a Senior PGA Tour event and it was a former *Golf Digest* Top 100 course in America. It was known for its large property, 270 acres, and big greens, with an average size of 7,600 square feet.

With our family growing — our third child, Daniel, was born in 1995 — we had outgrown where we were living, and Meadow Brook had a house on property for the superintendent. Plus, Jericho was the No. 1 school district in New York State and top 25 in the country. I viewed it as a career job.

I applied, went through the interview process and was offered the job

in late October. I started at Meadow Brook on Dec. 1.

When I began my tenure at Meadow Brook, the club hosted 10 senior events involving former PGA Tour stalwarts. The first Senior event, won by **Gary Player** in 1987, was not an official Senior PGA Tour event. The tournament was an invitational and Player's check represented the largest of his career to that point. This annual event was another of the attractions to the superintendents' position at Meadow Brook.

The tournament became an official Senior PGA Tour event in 1988. It was known as the Northville Long Island Classic and occupied a part of the schedule that included a Northeast swing, with tournaments also conducted in New Jersey and Boston. The event was at the absolute worst possible time of year: late July or early August.

Meadow Brook Hunt Club, or MBH, was incorporated in 1881 in Westbury, Long Island. Fox hunting and polo were the early activities at the club. **Theodore Roosevelt** was once a member. The club added a 9-hole golf course in 1894. Meadow Brook became the 37th member of the USGA and a charter member of the Metropolitan Golf Association. The club hosted the first Women's National Championship.

**Devereux Emmet** expanded the course to 18 holes in 1916. The original Meadow Brook course was short by today's standards at about 6,400 yards. The club began its history of hosting professional events in the 1940s. **Cary Middlecoff** and **Sam Snead** were winners of early events.

Long Island developer **Robert Moses** informed the club in 1953 that a new parkway was going to be built through the current golf course. He informed the club that they would not start construction until they secured another site and built another golf course. Also, in honor of the club, the new parkway would be named the Meadow Brook Parkway.

The club selected a new location in Jericho, New York, and commissioned golf course architect **Dick Wilson** to design and construct the new course. The story of the original Meadow Brook can be found in the book, "Missing Links." When the new Meadow Brook opened in 1955, **Herbert Warren Wind**, writing in *Sports Illustrated*, called the course a "born classic."

In the 70 years since its relocation, the club has hosted several prominent events, including the LPGA Western Union International Classic from 1979 to '82; and the Northville Classic, later called the Lightpath Long Island Classic, which was a nationally televised Senior PGA Tour event from 1987 to 2002. The club also has hosted numerous Metropolitan Golf Association, Metropolitan PGA and Long Island Golf Association events.

### LESSONS FROM LONG ISLAND

No one is more shocked than me at how fast my 29 years at Meadow Brook flew by. There are a lot of memories and highlights, including:

#### The green chairmen and presidents I worked under.

In my 29 years at Meadow Brook, I worked for four green chairs and six presidents. That type of club governance allows consistency, which was critical to the success of all departments.

#### The other members of the management staff I worked with.

General manager **Dennis Harrington**, CCM, is also retiring at the end of 2025 after 40 years at Meadow Brook. That is a legendary career in the golf industry in any management position. I congratulate Dennis and wish him well in retirement!!

For 22 of my 29 years, **Rick Meskell**, PGA, was the head pro. Rick had been at Meadow Brook for seven years when I arrived. He was an assistant at Century Country Club in Westchester before arriving at Meadow Brook. He turned pro

## Reflections from a superintendent's wife

My name is **Leslie Carlone**. I have been married to my husband, **John**, a golf course superintendent, for 38 years. As John approaches retirement at the end of 2025, after 40 years as a superintendent, I would like to share some helpful advice for other wives of golf course superintendents. My hope is that this advice will help lead to a long, happy marriage like the one John and I have shared.

The first thing you must accept is that you may be the No. 1 most important thing in your husband's life, but his golf course is 1A! In his mind, he is judged every day by golfers on course conditions. He also knows the golf course puts food on the table and pays the bills.

The second most important thing you must have is patience. I lost count long ago the number of times John said he would be home in 20 to 30 minutes — and finally walked in three hours later! I always knew his job was seasonal. In his busy season, he had enough pressure on him. I never wanted to put more pressure on him by calling and asking when he would be home.

I have always been an independent person. I think that is an important trait for a superintendent's wife. Have your own friends who you can do things with. If you have children, figure out how to do things with them. It was really great when those friends were also wives of superintendents — especially if they had children too. There were many events, barbecues, beach days, holiday parties, etc., that I would go to with our children. John would sometimes join us later. Sometimes, if I knew he was hot and tired, I would not pressure him to join us at an event. I knew he always *wanted* to join up with us, but if he was exhausted, I knew that getting rest was more important for him.

When it was 80 and sunny, and someone would say "what a beautiful day," John would always say, "My idea of a nice day is 55 degrees and raining!" During the busy season, taking advantage of rainy days was important for us. It gave us a chance to go to a movie, or go to the mall. Anything to be together away from the golf course.

Going to church on Sundays was very important to us, especially when our children were young. John tried his best to go with us. Many times, he drove separately and joined us there. I prayed a lot for rainy Sundays!

We were fortunate to live on the golf course property in a house provided by the club. I always felt this was a great benefit during the season, as it allowed John to stop home occasionally during the day. Living on the property provided us with great family memories as well. Taking family golf cart rides during the evening hours was our favorite thing to do.

The final and maybe most important piece of advice I can share is that you absolutely make sure to take advantage of the off-season. John and I believed making memories with our children was more important than buying things. From December to March, during his slow season, we always spent as much time as we could away from the golf course, whether on vacation or visiting John's parents in Rhode Island. The most common question John was asked, as I'm sure most Northeast golf course superintendents were asked, was, "What do you do in the winter?" John's favorite response was "I get even." He would go on to explain that during the busy season, he would work the equivalent to two full-time jobs, so in the winter months he tried to "get even" by working less hours!

To recap:

- Be patient and understanding
- Be independent
- Understand that some summer events might be attended without your husband
- Take advantage of rainy days during the season
- Take time away from the golf course in the winter months



▲ Leslie and John Carlone are still best friends after more than 38 years of marriage.

*Leslie Carlone is the wife of John Carlone, the longtime superintendent who recently retired at Meadow Brook Golf Club in Jericho, New York. This is her first Turfheads Take Over contribution.*

► Carlone enjoys his retirement dinner with, from left, Leslie, John Genovesi, a former Meadow Brook assistant who is now the superintendent at Maidstone Club, and John's wife, Liz Genovesi.

in the mid-1970s and won several events on the old Space Coast Tour in Florida. He also won several local events while at Meadow Brook. He retired at the end of 2018.

For the last seven years, our pro has been **Matt Dobyms**, PGA. Matt is from Texas. The golf professional at Meadow Brook from 1964 to '89 was **Gil Cavanaugh**, who was Matt's great-uncle. Talk about coincidence! Before coming to Meadow Brook, Matt was the head pro at Fresh Meadow Country Club and an assistant at Deepdale Country Club. Matt is a very talented player. He is a two-time National Club Pro champion. He has played in several PGA Championships, U.S. Opens and PGA Tour events, and he has won just about every important local event in the Met area.

**The individuals who have worked on our golf course maintenance staff**

Our equipment manager, **Steve Hawxhurst**, came to Meadow Brook with me from Middle Bay. He worked for me for 36 of my 40 years as a superintendent. As all superintendents know, the hardest position to fill on our staff is that of the equipment manager. Steve is without a doubt a big reason for any success I achieved in my career. He retired with me at the end of 2025.

I'm proud to have had 10 former assistants become head superintendents. I won't name them all, but each of them, while they were here at Meadow Brook, were, like Steve, a big part of any success I achieved. In addition to serving on chapter and turf association boards, I thoroughly enjoyed mentoring.

We have many long-tenured members on the maintenance staff at Meadow Brook. Two have been with me since Day 1 in 1996. Others have been here 15, 20 and even 25 years. I think that type of longevity is a two-way street. They were good employees, and I tried to treat them properly.



There were many events I will remember. Certainly, all the tournaments we hosted. Hosting an important event always puts a charge in my step. I wanted to put the club's best foot forward, make the golf course shine and challenge the players.

And then there were hurricanes. I endured three at Meadow Brook: Irene in 2011, Sandy in 2012 and Isaias in 2020. As if COVID wasn't enough that year!

Small in-house construction projects and major renovations were assignments I always relished. The most interesting and successful was the \$2.9 million renovation we accomplished from August to October 2016. We worked with architect **Brian Silva** and MacCurrach Golf Construction. That project included four new greens constructed to USGA specs, nine holes of new tees, 85 bunkers reconstructed with Better Billy Bunker technology, irrigation changes and additions, fairway contouring and tree removal. With all teams working together, the project was completed on time and on budget. We closed on Aug. 8, 2016. We promised a reopening date of April 1, 2017. We opened on April 1, 2017!

Tree removal was a yearly event at Meadow Brook during my tenure. And the three hurricanes helped! I don't know the exact number of trees removed, but I would estimate the

number was approximately 2,000 to 2,500.

When we were closed in 2016, we constructed an 1,800-square-foot Environmental Center. The building provides storage for sprayers, turf protectants, our Carbtrol equipment wash water recycling equipment, and our PlantStar chemical mix and load equipment. Constructing this facility elevated our operation.

That was a long description of my career journey. As I reflect on these past 40 years, I think of what advice I would share with other superintendents, of any age, to have a long career and plan for retirement.

Golf course superintendents wear many hats—agronomist, engineer, plumber, electrician, personal manager, psychiatrist, counselor, among others—to be successful at their job. I believe success for many years as a golf course superintendent takes a similar approach. There is not "one and only" thing you must do to ensure a long career. Here is what I would offer as a road map for a long career.

**At work**

**Be like a duck.** Let stuff go, like water off the back of a duck. Never argue or speak harshly with a member. We all know members sometimes blame their poor golf game on the superintendent, but they know not what they speak of!

Just smile, wave, acknowledge them and somehow move on. It is never worth it. I have lost count of the stories where a superintendent argued or spoke harshly with a member. At the time, the member had no position of power. Then, three, five or seven years down the road, that member became a board member or even club president. His or her first move was to fire the superintendent who argued with him. My old friend **Armand LeSage** gave a talk many years ago at the GCSAA conference titled “Hold Your Tongue, Hold Your Job.” Great title! Will always be true.

**Always be a team player.** I took a lot of pride in helping the other departments at our club. If the GM, pro, starter or accounting office personnel had a request, I tried to accommodate them as quickly as possible. I believed this was an investment in relationships with co-workers and in the future. If I ever needed a favor from a co-worker, I felt comfortable asking.

**Treat your staff like family.** Superintendents spend as much time — if not more — with their staff at work as they do with family at home. I had rules and policies for my staff that were enforced. Sure, I had to fire individuals over the years, but I also tried to be as understanding as possible. If an employee request could be accommodated, I tried to do it. We had barbecues. We bought them breakfast and lunch often. We had a tradition of Christmas lunch at On the Border every year to hand out holiday bonus checks. I have heard many ideas and stories of how superintendents give their staff special treats over the years. We cannot do this job alone. We need our staff. Treat them right

and they will be better employees.

**In your chapter or community**

**This is called “giving back.”** It is a proven fact that you get more from giving than you do from receiving. I enjoyed serving on chapter and turf association boards. I was definitely a better superintendent from the relationships I made serving on these boards. The culmination of my board service was serving as president of four different associations.

**Playing golf.** Playing the game was the entire reason I became a superintendent. I don’t want to believe this, but there are some superintendents out there who don’t play golf. I will never be able to wrap my head around that one. I was and still am able to play to a single-digit handicap. That is not a requirement by any means. But as a superintendent, you should aspire to be somewhat proficient. High 80s to low 90s golf is acceptable.

**Investing in relationships.** For me, this is the single most important thing we can do. Not only as superintendents, but in life. As husbands, fathers, brothers, sisters and friends. I would not have made it 40 years as a superintendent without my industry peers, which included su-

perintendents, vendors, employees, family and friends who I spoke with almost daily. That would be my message to anyone reading this article. Invest in relationships. It will lead to happiness.

What am I going to do in retirement?

Well, I’m not sure yet. But I’m excited to have summer weekends off for the first time in 43 years. I will play more golf and try to get competitive again. Look out, senior club championship!

I will spend as much time as possible with my grandkids — and any more that arrive! I will help my son-in-law with his company, Coastline Electric, in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. I’m also looking forward to things as simple as having a morning cup of coffee with my wife and then going for a walk.

During one meeting, my financial advisor, who happens to work with several golf course superintendents, said, “You guys between April and October work the equivalent of two full-time jobs.” I had never looked at my job like that before. From that point on, when I was asked the most popular question golf course superintendents in the Northeast

are asked, “What do you do in the winter?” I began answering, “I get even. I work two full-time jobs from April to November, so I take time off to get even.”

Retirement will be more of the same. Getting even! 🍓

*John Carlone was the longtime superintendent at Meadow Brook Golf Club in Jericho, New York. This is his first Turfheads Take Over contribution.*

◀ Daniel Carlone, left, graduated from West Point and served five years in the Army, reaching Captain. “Lieutenant Dave” Carlone, served four years as an officer in the Army.



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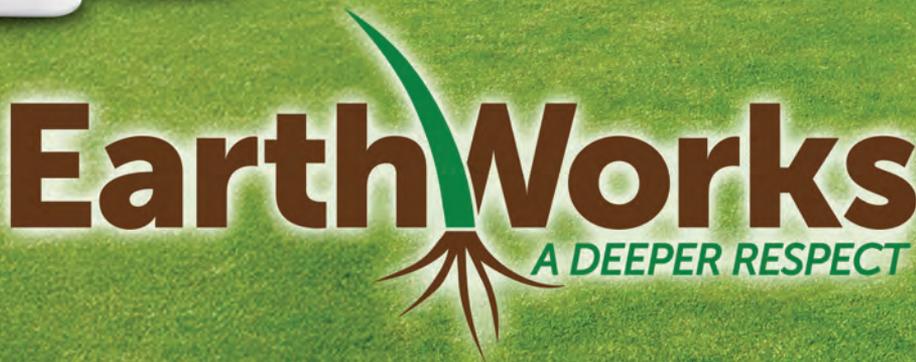
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**TURFHEADS TAKE OVER X**

# How will I leave it?

As **Ron Furlong** (sort of) nears retirement, he ponders a few big professional questions.

**H**ave you ever noticed how the calendar never seems to slow down? And not just the random calendar here or there. No, ALL friggin' calendars. They just keep chugging along relentlessly, seemingly oblivious to any and all outside factors.

Unfortunately, these darn calendars are actually one of the few reliable things these days. Time, death and taxes, right?

That always-moving calendar brings to the forefront, for me at least, that I am keenly aware the majority of my career as a golf course superintendent is behind me, not

ahead. As I close in on the big 6-0, I am suddenly very conscious of the end up there ahead of me.

Not that I'm looking forward to the end of my working life. I most definitely am not. I know many people can't wait to retire. My older sister, for example, has been counting down her days to retirement for the last 15 or so years. She has literally mentioned her countdown to me almost every single time I have talked to her on the phone (she lives in Minnesota while I am in Washington state). "Eleven years," she'd tell me. "Nine years." "Six years." And now her countdown is in months. Soon it will be weeks

and then days as she finally reaches her much-anticipated retirement this winter.

For me, the countdown is sort of opposite. I love working. Even after all these years of getting up at an ungodly dark hour and driving to the course, I don't want it to end. And, ironically enough, I still don't consider myself a morning person.

However, that end is indeed inevitable, and it's hard for me now not to think about it looming out there ahead of me. Although none of us know the future (probably for the best), I do have somewhat of a rudimentary plan for myself. I hope to continue on as super here

another seven or eight years, maybe even nine years (70 is the new 65, right?), and then transition to the crew. Maybe sit on a fairway or rough mower and dole out my wisdom to the future superintendent. *You sure you want to lower the greens to that height?* Maybe that will happen, maybe not. But it's a plan, and I'm pretty sure it's better than not having one. (Remember, I have vast wisdom.)

This looming retirement thing, though, has also got me thinking: How will I leave it? Meaning, how do I plan on leaving not only the golf course where I've been superintendent for nearly the last quarter of a century (24 years, but who's counting?), but also the industry as a whole? How do I want to leave it? And, perhaps more important, how much say do I have in such matters?

### THE GOLF COURSE

Let's start with the golf course itself. Construction on Avalon Golf Links began in 1989, and the **Robert Muir Graves**-designed 27-hole course opened less than two years later. In those first dozen years of Avalon (the first couple of years of grow-in through 2001) there were three superintendents: the first lasted six years, the second and third three years each. Then, in 2002, along came me. If you doubled the time those three supers were at Avalon, it would equal my stint (thus far) at Avalon. I make reference to this not to put a spotlight on myself but to indicate there is a significant, undeniable footprint that I have inevitably left on this golf course and, perhaps more important, this property. Just the sheer amount of days I've spent here has made my impact somewhat inevitable. For better or worse—and I'm sure there are many examples of both—I've had a significant impact on the direction the golf course and the environment of the property itself have taken.

And, adding to my story, consid-

er Avalon is privately owned by a single owner, meaning, other than my many discussions with him, there is and never has been a general manager, a board of directors, a green chair or committee. Often, if something has felt right to me, like taking down trees, building new forward tees or eliminating bunkers, I've been able to get it done with very little politics involved.

Avalon sits on a little more than 230 acres of secluded land in the Skagit Valley of western Washington. The property is perched on a hill, not a single neighbor on any border, surrounded only by wooded areas and pastures with plenty of awe-inspiring mountain views in the backdrop. One pasture, just to the west of a short par 4, has horses on the other side of an electric fence. Another part of the course features a rather stunning view of the Skagit Valley that is hard *not* to take in, even if you've seen it a few thousand times. Truthfully, as many times as I've looked down at the valley, I feel I've never really seen it quite the same. The subtle change in morning light each day—the clouds hovering over the foothills, the marine layer that moves in some mornings, or even geese flying above—it all always equates to, if not a new experience, certainly a fresh angle of an old one.

As I consider what exactly I can do for the course in the last seven or eight years here, the No. 1 thing, no doubt, is that the golf course will need a new irrigation system. The pipe in the ground is the original PVC from the grow-in more than 35 years ago. Many of the sprinkler heads on the course have been changed out by us over the years (especially in the last couple of years), but just as many are original. Also, a majority of the gate valves on the



course are original. Safe to say there is an upgrade needed in the future for pipe, heads and valves. In addition, all the controllers on the course are at least 20 years old if not original.

My plan is to have a local irrigation designer get us a design for

a new system next year, always the first step in the process. One of the benefits of having a 27-hole course is the ability to close one nine for an extended period to do a project like this and still be able to offer an 18-hole golf course. I admit it has been possible, with a lot of elbow grease, to extend an irrigation system beyond its shelf life. But at some point, you just have to wave the white towel and say enough is enough.

Not only is the consideration the 35-plus-year-old pipe in the ground, as well as the old valves and heads, but it simply must be recognized that newer systems are going to be far more efficient in watering, using and *losing* less water, considering all the leaks with the old pipes and fittings. This will not be an easy sale to the owner, nor should it be. Irrigation systems are not cheap. We are looking at most likely upward of \$1 million for each nine-hole layout. And we have three nines. But prices are never going to go down, so getting something done sooner that must get done is most likely prudent.

Another thing I am working on, as I think about leaving someday in the future, is the culture I have created within the maintenance staff and making sure that culture is not only in place but will continue on well past me. I've always been a believer that the most important part of golf course maintenance is the staff. This starts with hiring not only hard-working people but also folks you think will fit in well

with the people you have already hired.

When it comes to the hiring process, I'm also a strong believer in giving people a second chance in life, or maybe even a third or fourth chance. Almost every one of our long-time staffers probably fits into this "second chance" niche. I've hired literally hundreds of people over the years, and while I've made a few judgment mistakes here and there, for the most part I have trusted my instincts over someone's perhaps "clouded" past. Nine times out of 10, that has worked out to the benefit of Avalon. Many of the



One thing that's probably a bit hard to admit is that life will go on without us. I can make all the plans in the world but whoever trudges on in this role in the future will carve their own path with their own ideas, just as I have done here."

long-timers hired over the years found a home here—a place they could be proud to come to work every day and feel like they made a significant contribution to this golf course.

The last thing I want to mention about what I can do to hopefully set up the future of this golf course is realize there is probably not really all that much I can do, if that makes sense. One thing that's probably a bit hard to admit is that life will go on without us. I can make all the plans in the world but whoever trudges on in this role in the future will carve their own path with their own ideas, just as I have done here. Sometimes all you

can do is all you can do, and that will just have to suffice.

### THE INDUSTRY

My other consideration, as I contemplate the end of my days in this profession, is how can I leave the industry as a whole? Or, more to the point, what can I do to feel good about walking away from something to which I've given so much of my working life?

I began working on my first golf course in 1988, and I have done nothing else during the ensuing 37 years. Safe to say, the golf course maintenance industry has changed significantly since then. Any of us who were working on a golf course in the late '80s or even into the '90s can agree that everything was bigger back then. So many new courses opening, and bigger designs. More use of less-planet-friendly plant protectants—and more water use. It was all about the golf course and, though there were some exceptions, it wasn't really about Mother Earth at all. I hate to use the word glutinous, but ...

I think I noticed the start of a less



selfish shift in the industry about 20 years ago — a slow shift, but a shift nonetheless. Golf course managers started to become aware of our gluttony, that’s for sure. This must continue. Despite recent concerns for our environmental preservation in this country — suddenly taking steps back instead of forward — people in positions of power and able to protect the environment must be sure to do all they can do. Even if that means push back. The ground we have gained in environmental stewardship cannot be lost even if it might become easier to return to the old ways of doing things.

Another thing I want to promote over my last decade of work ahead is trying to help find a way to increase wages in our industry. I’ve definitely seen a trend over the last decade of this industry failing to keep up with the Joneses. This is not simply superintendent or assistant superintendent wages I’m talking about here, but wages across the board for everyone who chooses golf course maintenance as a profession, or even just a summer job — from equipment and

irrigation techs to the seasonal two-month high schoolers. This industry has not kept up. We have all felt this when trying to hire in recent years. I see a slow trend to the positive here, and I will try and do my best to make sure it continues upward.

**A FINAL THOUGHT**

If I may, I’ll leave you with this: I’ve started to dabble a bit in meditation. My mind has always been so unbelievably loud. As much as I am introverted, my mind is extroverted. I can’t shut it up. I also have a very strong desire to be less internally reactive to people and to situations. I want to calm this incredibly loud mind of mine and be a bit more internally compassionate, if you will.

A friend put me on to the writings of **Pema Chödrön**, and I’ve gobbled up several of her books rather quickly. In the book “The Places That Scare You”, she writes about what exactly we are doing when we try and enter a meditation state. I thought her words were profound not only for calming my mind but also for how I can enter this last stage of my working life as

productively, tranquilly and compassionately as possible.

“When we sit down to meditate, we train in simply being present,” she writes. “We open ourselves completely to the pain and pleasure of our life. We train in precision, gentleness, and letting go. Because we see our thoughts and emotions with compassion, we stop struggling against ourselves. We learn to recognize when we’re all caught up and to trust that we can let go. Thus, the blockages created by our habits and prejudices start falling apart. In this way, the wisdom we were blocking becomes available.”

I do think her words can translate to my situation right now. I realize that as I edge closer to someday leaving this job, I do still have a lot to offer, and there is a certain wisdom I can offer, if I can just take a step back and take a calm, introspective look at things. Try and have that “astronaut’s view” of things. 🍷

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



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER X

# Defying stigma: The Path Less

Once a banker in Zimbabwe, **Tizayi Tundu Sithole** is now an assistant golf course superintendent in the United States. And he aspires to achieve more.

In Zimbabwe, greenkeeping — more formally known as grounds facilities maintenance — carries a stigma that has long burdened those who choose it. It's a profession often dismissed as menial, reserved for the uneducated or the poor, and shunned by dreamers who aspire to more prestigious roles. I once counted myself among those dreamers. As a child, my ambitions soared toward becoming a pilot or a medical doctor. Never did I picture myself walking the dew-laden fairways before sunrise — not with a golf club in hand, but with a vision to transform the world beneath my feet.

### THE LOVE FOR GOLF

My professional life began far from the greens and fairways. For much of my early adulthood, I worked in the banking sector with Barclays Bank Zimbabwe. Later, I explored various business ventures and held roles in the community, serving as secretary for the Manicaland Motoring Club and as a committee member for the Mutare Hillside Golf Club. It was here my passion for golf flourished. I competed in major amateur tournaments, relishing the beauty and prestige of the sport and its courses. Yet I remained blissfully unaware of what it took to keep those courses so immaculate.

### A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

In 2012, my focus shifted toward agriculture, leading me to pursue a BSc Honors in Agriculture Sciences—Crop Science. After graduating in 2016, I faced a crossroads: how best to apply my new knowledge. It soon became clear there was a dire shortage of qualified turfgrass specialists in Zimbabwe and across Africa. The field was wide open, precisely because so few dared enter it.

But it was a shanked shot in 2017 at Chapman Golf Course, Harare, that changed everything. My ball landed near the course's maintenance facility, where I witnessed the harsh working conditions endured by those who

maintained these beautiful landscapes — workers bathing outdoors in thick brush, their facilities unfit for human use. The experience jarred me. Moved to act, I spoke with the staff and arranged to return — not as a golfer, but as a learner.

### FINDING PURPOSE IN TURF

A meeting with Chapman's greenkeeper introduced me to the world of golf course maintenance. This connection led me to **Fibion Chikwaya** at Royal Harare Golf Course, who was then advancing his studies through the R&A Greenkeepers Scholarship Program. Inspired, I applied and, in 2018 received my own scholarship to study turfgrass management through Scotland's Rural University College, Elmwood Campus. I began a rigorous journey of online study, interspersed with hands-on internships at Chapman and Royal Harare Golf Clubs.

The road was not easy. The deeply entrenched stigma caught up with my personal life — my wife at the time, unable to accept my new direction, ultimately left. The heartbreak was real, but it did not stop me.

### ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

In 2019, I volunteered at the Ned-Bank Golf Challenge in South Africa and attended the South Africa Turf Academy Annual Conference. Here, fate intervened again: I met **Mike O'Keefe** from Ohio State University, organizer of the Ohio International Internship Program. Seizing the moment, I shared my aspirations to revolutionize the turf industry in Africa. My passion paid off: I was awarded a one-year internship in the United States for the 2020–21 year.

At that time, I realized how few people of color were represented in the turf industry. Rather than deter me, this imbalance fueled my resolve. I worked at Hyde Park Golf & Country Club in Ohio and Lake Nona Golf Estate in Orlando, gaining invaluable skills and exposure at world-class tournaments such as The Players and

the ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican in 2021, and the Valero Texas Open earlier this year.

### LEADING AND INSPIRING

Following my U.S. internship, I served as project manager and greenkeeper in Botswana, overseeing sports fields at Debswana Mine Company for golf, softball, bowling, soccer, rugby and cricket. When I received my visa to return to the U.S., I chose to cut my contract short, determined to further my career on a global stage.

Today, I am an assistant superintendent in the United States, always striving for greater heights. My dream is to become academically a professor in turfgrass management and professionally a director of agronomy at a top golf course. I am currently enrolled in the PSU Masters in Turfgrass Science program, though financial constraints have placed my studies on hold — a temporary setback, not a defeat.

### MENTORING THE FUTURE

Through social media and personal outreach, I have mentored many young people to pursue careers in turfgrass maintenance. Watching their success and gratitude is one of my greatest rewards. The industry, once seen as a dead end, is now an exciting frontier for those I have inspired.

### THE ROAD AHEAD

I recently attended the 2025 Green Start Academy for assistant superintendents and will present at the GCSAA Conference in Florida in February. The journey continues and I am excited for what lies ahead. I am a go-getter — never afraid to ask, to knock on doors, or to shatter expectations. I intend to leave no room for regrets, determined to seize every opportunity the industry has to offer. 🏌️

*Tizayi Tundu Sithole is an assistant superintendent at The Country Club of New Canaan in New Canaan, Connecticut. This is his first Turfheads Take Over contribution.*



# The good old days

The job is demanding, of course. Northeast Ohio turf leader **Ian Gallagher** tries to bring levity and perspective.

**W**hen people hear what I do for a living, the first question they ask is, “Are you good at golf?” Absolutely not.

The next question is, “What do you do daily?” I often struggle with this question, because I don’t quite know how to concisely answer. “It depends” was the response I used for a while. It depends on the season, depends on what’s happening in that season, which depends on something else, etc. A few years back I realized the best answer is that a superintendent mainly solves problems. Sometimes we solve them well and sometimes the problem lingers, and we keep picking at the solution. I’m sure this is what most jobs boil down to, but I only know what I do.

Because we’re hired to solve problems it means all we are looking for is what needs fixed. If something is good, we acknowledge it by taking it off the to-do list and moving on to the next issue, often without celebrating the success of the moment with ourselves or our crew. This approach to work makes it easy to slip into pessimism. Always being focused on problems can lead to a negative mindset. As a result, it seems like sometimes hanging out with other superintendents can be a pessimistic experience, even though most of us love our jobs.

Last month, a former superintendent at my course was back playing a round of golf with one of our members and, while we were talking (read: complaining), the member pointed out that he doesn’t think superintendents

are ever happy.

And I think he’s right.

That’s part of what makes so many of us successful — we don’t care if 98 percent of the course is perfect, there is always more driving us to improve the property. It’s something that I love about this job, the never-ending chase of improvement no matter how futile this really is. I suspect most of you feel the same way. If you didn’t, you wouldn’t be here.

I am certainly guilty of this mindset. Golfers will tell me that the course is great, they’ll compliment the crew and I’ll sheepishly thank them as I think of all the issues I saw this morning that I suspect will lead to my termination. Part of what makes us good at this job is that we see problems golfers don’t, which means we can address them

before they become bigger. What compounds the frustration are the few golfers who do complain about some trivial things. For a long time, these complaints would infuriate me. But in trying to see things in a different way, I've started writing down these complaints, then sharing them with the crew and telling them about the very scientific chart I've developed on course complaints.

Among the more absurd complaints:

- The drinking water in the coolers isn't cold enough



- My feet get wet walking from the tee to the fairway because there is no courtesy path
- There aren't enough divot boxes/tee collection boxes/ball washers/plug in other complaints about the lack of course accessories that cost too much and add labor and clutter to the course
- And, my favorite, there are sticks in the woods

To spin this as a positive, I will let the crew know during the morning meeting whenever we get a complaint like this and then tell them I couldn't be happier. If a golfer is upset because the irrigation head in the rough 350 yards out on a par 5 doesn't have the exact yardage on it, then we're doing a lot of other more important things well. Of course, if you get a legitimate complaint then you really have some work to do! But the more I want to roll my eyes at a complaint, the better we are doing. We are a private club, and I know we do a pretty good job; I can only imagine the complaints that the highest-end clubs get.

However you prioritize maintaining the course, a lot of these problems are far from where you're focusing resources. Like most of you, we focus on greens back and centerline out when ranking problems. In an ideal world all the above complaints — or whatever absurd complaints you've heard — are dealt with. I don't say all this to minimize the feedback we get; it's why we're here, it's what golfers expect and it's what they give us money to do. But there is a limit to every operation.

Despite all its frustrations, this job is great, and I couldn't imagine doing anything else. I suppose I just wanted to say out loud, if only for me, that I really love this job. It can be easy to be pessimistic and find nothing but problems and say that things aren't as good as they used to be, but I don't really believe that. Problems come with every job and we must focus intently on our problems to deliver on the expectations of membership. The irony is that the positive cycle of our improvement can lead to

more nit-picking complaints, which may create a negative feedback loop on our mood. To a certain point, the better a superintendent is at their job, the more frustrating it has the potential to be.

I'm on the board of our local association and I have good relationships with a lot of my peers. Whenever we get together, we often end up complaining about the job. We're lucky to work in this profession and while we will never stop looking for problems, don't let it blind you to the fact that this job is special. We get to work

outdoors and see the short- and long-term improvements of our hard work and yes, solve some challenging and fun problems. We are surrounded by equally driven peers who support us with our struggles and celebrate our successes and part of what makes that success so sweet is knowing just how damn hard it can be.

**Lenny Marino**, a friend and one of the great people in our industry, likes to say, "we're living the good old days right now." He's right, and I don't want to forget that, and I don't want you to forget it. The job is exactly what I want to be doing and despite my (hopefully irrational) perpetual fear of termination, I take great pride in what we've accomplished at Sand Ridge. Ideally, from time to time, we're all able to take off the superintendent glasses and put on golfer glasses, where wilt, disease, cart traffic and labor issues are nowhere to be found and the biggest concern is where the next cold beer can be sourced.

Enjoy these good old days, and the next time you're up to your shoulders in an irrigation hole or some other problem, try to remember that you'll be looking back laughing about it someday with the people who understand because they're lucky enough to be doing the same thing. ■

*Ian Gallagher is the director of golf course operations at Sand Ridge Golf Club in Chardon, Ohio. This is his first Turfheads Take Over contribution.*



# I'll never host a major...

Different turf pros have different dreams. And that's OK. **Charlie Fultz** explains.

**H**eritage Oaks is a little 18-hole municipal course in Harrisonburg, Virginia, right in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley. The Valley is the place I've called home most of my life. Golf is booming again post-COVID, and the local courses (including ours) are no exception. It's great to see the numbers and we are seeing a new influx of the twenty-something golfers who will be the future of the game.

This renewed interest in golf takes me back to the time I started, the "Tiger" effect on golf and the explosion following it. I became a superintendent at the ripe old age of 24 (and I was so not ready

for it). In my career I've had the pleasure of running a public course, a private course, a resort course, and now a municipal golf course, covering the gamut of golf, if you will, and I've spent close to 30 years in and around golf. And I learned something about me early on, but first this ...

I took a minute recently to look up the amount of golf courses in the United States and that number sits right around 16,000. Approximately 75 percent are public courses, and there are about 3,000 municipal facilities. Of those 16,000 courses, a small percentage host or will host professional events and an even smaller percentage welcome a

major PGA or LPGA event.

Those numbers lead me to this: In this industry you can do just about anything you want if you make the commitment to do so. **Jeremiah Mincey**, a Class B golf course superintendent, is someone I follow on X. Being one of the few African Americans in this industry (his words), I enjoy reading what he posts. He recently said, "One of the best parts of the turf industry? It takes you places you'd never thought you'd go. From new golf courses to tournaments, to traveling across the country, every opportunity brings a new experience and a new lesson. It's more than a job, it's a journey."

I knew early in my journey that

I had no desire to be at a high-end facility, or a facility that would host a PGA event, an LPGA event, or any type of professional golf event. Why, you ask? Did I not have dreams or aspirations of bigger and better things?

I actually didn't.

First of all, I have the utmost respect and professional admiration for the guys and gals who have hosted and continue to host big events. Close to me in Virginia, fantastic superintendents like **Scott Furlong** at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club and **Pete Wendt** at Congressional Country Club host HUGE events and put out a product second to none. I am in awe of what they do, the pressures they are under, and the final product that appears come game time. As **Dick Vitale** would say, they are the PTP'ers — the Prime Time Players.

But I never had that in me. There are folks who I started with in this business who had those aspirations,

and they followed those desires. They knew what they wanted from their career. Their goals were much different than my own. But I never wanted that. I started young and meandered through the profession, learning from some great superintendents like **Corey Haney** and **Jeff Thompson** in Virginia. I picked up experience along the way and continued to grow. My professional desire all along was to be something different: I wanted to run the whole show and be a general manager.

My bachelor's degree is in education. I wanted to be a teacher and actually was for about three years in the 2010s. But the golf bug hit me early and I made this industry home. Along the way I began to work with some fine people who showed me other parts of the golf course life: the restaurant and how it could and couldn't work, the clubhouse/pro shop/front of the house and how that worked, and finally a couple great general

managers who were willing to talk with me about how they found successes and share their failures as well. I ended up running a Moose Lodge and firsthand ran a food operation there to get that experience. I came back to golf in 2020 and was given the opportunity I have now as the general manager and golf course superintendent, the job I always wanted.

I fulfilled my dream, and I continue to enjoy it every day that I am here. Nothing touches it for me professionally. It's the pinnacle of my 25-plus-year journey in golf.

As I enter the twilight of my career, I've noticed that I have become the older guy in the room now. Several longtime industry guys have said if you hang around long enough, you'll become "that" person. But as I enter this time in my life, I also look back on the "journey" that Jeremiah talked about. I watch the PGA Tour regularly and look at those courses on TV. I'm just blown away at what those places do. Again, huge respect for them and for this industry as a whole as we continue to improve and upgrade course conditioning. However, I will never be that superintendent, that general manager or at the course that begins to prepare years in advance for that upcoming PGA Tour event or major.

And I don't think it makes me less of a professional.

I'm OK with it and always have been. I don't look at being at one of those courses as the pinnacle of what I wanted my career to be. What I am doing today is that to me. It was my path, my journey, and I reached my destination.

And what a great ride it has been and continues to be ...

*Charlie Fultz is the general manager and golf course superintendent at Heritage Oaks Golf Course in Harrisonburg, Virginia. This is his sixth Turfheads Take Over contribution.*





# Looking out my window

Some day, **Scott Laffin** might fly from one golf course project to another. Until then, his home office suits him just fine.

**B**y all valid credentials, I am a golf course architect, though I find it very difficult to adorn that title. A golf course architect is, well, a person who designs golf courses, and I do that. In most aspects.

In my mind, to have earned this title is to be traveling job site to job site, standing in the dirt, pointing at a horizon, showing a shaper a doodled contour sketch of how this bunker ties into this green, and how this green ties into this tee, and that tee needs to be oriented just so to highlight the borrowed landscape from this and that. Don't get me wrong, I've been on many a job site, ridden many a fairway mower, dug my fair share of ditches, but the majority of my "in-the-field" hasn't been on the seat of a dozer but rather from the well-worn seat of a gray office chair that looks past two monitors and a laptop out a window and onto my suburban Cincinnati backyard.

Not quite the romantic picture most folks think of when picturing an architect.

This is not meant to be a self-deprecating career piece. It is meant to shed light for maybe a high school or college kid who wants to get into golf course architecture but feels more comfortable behind a laptop.

To give you a look into what goes into the day-to-day in this office, I'll let you in on how I got here.

I didn't grow up wanting to be a golf course architect. I didn't even know they existed until I was in college. I entered my undergrad as a foreign language and international economics major at the University of Kentucky because I thought it sounded cool, and I enjoyed taking French classes in high school.

That intrigue didn't last long.

Fortunately, I had a roommate my sophomore year who was studying horticulture and told me about landscape architecture. I got into the program and was able to merge my excitement of the outdoors and golf with a line of study. I then read any book I could get my hands on that delved into our world of golf design.

I worked a summer on a maintenance crew at the Courses of Lawsonia before landing an internship with the course management company that coincidentally also built courses. I was diving deep into the industry one summer and I was hooked. I wound up working for that company for three years after college, working on some really rewarding projects but ultimately moving on to shore up my personal life (read: get married). I did the typical landscape architect route for about five years but just wasn't satisfied professionally. My low-expectation, beer-soaked college self would have been less than impressed with what I was doing.

So, I decided to take a chance.

On the last day of February 2020, I quit my very steady job as a landscape architect to consult for a golf irrigation designer and a golf course architect. Two clients. Two. And we all remember what happened in March 2020. Oh, and

my wife and I had our first daughter on the way. I'll spare you the details, but golf was one of the bright spots from COVID. We weathered the storm.

Two clients grew to three, then four, then five. Today, I've had the chance to consult with more than 15 firms, all in the golf design world. I've been able to work on some extremely high-profile, thoughtful, creative and downright fun projects with my clients. I don't work with every one of them every day, but every one of them has offered me a chance to learn what goes into a successful project, and how to run a successful company. Through the ASGCA's Tartan Program — developed for younger professionals emerging in the golf design industry — I've connected with golf course architects from every walk of life, and I listen intently to any advice they're willing to toss my way.

I've been fortunate enough to ride the wave of the booming golf industry [knocks firmly on the nearest piece of wood] while at the same time balancing my home life. I have three daughters now. The oldest turned 5 last summer. If you have small children and a working spouse, you know there is much to balance. As sexy as jet-setting from project to project is, it just wouldn't work for me at this stage in my family's life. So, the role of architect via office chair has been one of necessity and comfort for now.

My day-to-day work consists of anything from irrigation as built, grading plans, master plan renderings, book illustrations (yes), project estimates and budgets, programming irrigation software for superintendents, field collection with GPS units worth more than my car, Zoom meetings, more Zoom meetings, iPad sketching, and some lighthearted Twitter (X) banter, all while trying to market myself and keep my company's books straight. I'm sure this type of schedule generally rings true for most entrepreneurs.

When I put my first business plan together, I told myself I'd consult for other designers for the first five years. I'm a little over five years into the plan, and it has been the most rewarding path toward becoming this well-traveled, dirt-covered, napkin artist I had once dreamed of being. I think in the current state of the industry, hardly anything is conventional anymore. No more 15-person design firms. Heck, no more 10-person design firms.

I've had a chance to do some local design work in Cincinnati, which has worked well into the balance. If and when the jet-setting work comes, I'm not sure I'd ever want to give up some of these partnerships I've made. In fact, I think I'd like to collaborate with my clients and colleagues as long as they'll have me. We're all just trying to create great work, learn new things on each project and enjoy the ride along the way. 🍓

*Scott Laffin is a landscape architect who has designed golf courses, park master plans, rooftop decks, senior living facilities and LEED certified corporate headquarters among other projects. This is his first Turfheads Take Over contribution.*



**TURFHEADS TAKE OVER X**

# Renovation at the speed of light

**Brent Downs, CGCS, MG,** outlines the merger between tradition and technology as a renovation at a beloved Indiana course accelerates.

## The robots worked Sunday.

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon at Otter Creek Golf Course and we were about to mow a newly seeded rough area for the first time. Our owner, **Bob Haddad**, glanced at me and asked, “Who’s working today?” I told him not to worry — the team had it covered. He laughed. “It’s great they’re willing to walk mow renovation rough on a Sunday afternoon.” “Yes,” I said with a knowing smile. “Especially considering they’re not human.” It took a moment . . . then, like a lightbulb in a dusty basement, the warm glow flickered as it registered. “You got the robots set up?”

“Yes, they are ready to go. No complaints.”

That moment — watching our new robotic mowers glide silently across freshly seeded ground — captured what this entire renovation has been about: reimagining how we work, not just what we build.

When our owner decided to invest a significant amount of capital into reviving one of Indiana’s most historic public golf courses, the challenge was clear. We had one chance to get it

right. Otter Creek had a proud legacy, but time, weather and infrastructure had taken their toll. This was our opportunity to restore it to glory while preparing it for the next 50 years.

The question wasn’t how fast we could rebuild — it was **how smartly** we could.

## A LEGACY REIMAGINED

Otter Creek has always been a cornerstone of public golf in Indiana — a **Robert Trent Jones** design that hosted championships and cultivated generations of golfers. But like many great courses, it had aged. Infrastructure lagged. Drainage struggled. Playability had become inconsistent.

When the course ownership changed, we weren’t just tasked with restoring turf and bunkers. We were tasked with rebuilding identity — honoring the tradition of great golf while bringing in the features and the products that define the modern era.

In the early planning meetings, course superintendent **Mitchell Eickhoff** and I kept circling back to one question: *What if we could renovate at the speed of technology?*

Not speed in the literal sense, but rather speed in precision, agility and connectivity. What if we used technology not as a crutch, but as a force multiplier? What if every piece of tech, from robotics to AI software, allowed our people to do what they do best: think, lead and grow turf?

### RENOVATION AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT

The phrase “speed of light” became more than a title — it became a mindset.

We live in an industry that prizes hard work, grit and early mornings. That will never change. But I’ve learned that working smarter — with better tools and clearer data — is not about replacing people; it’s about empowering them.

For us, innovation wasn’t about chasing gadgets. It was about creating a more sustainable, efficient human operation. Our renovation used cutting-edge technology, yes — but the purpose was deeply traditional: take care of the land, protect our people and honor the craft.

Our “speeds” — data, service, robotics and trust — became the four lenses through which we made every major decision.

### RENOVATION AT THE SPEED OF DATA

Every great renovation starts with soil. But today, soil comes with data.

At Otter Creek, we’ve built what could be called a living map of the property. Beneath the surface, sensors constantly feed us real-time moisture, temperature, salinity and oxygen levels. On top, the moisture meters give us point-in-time readings that verify what our eyes already suspect. A weather station ties it all together, pushing continuous climate and evapotranspiration data into our central hub.

That hub is an AI-driven platform that consolidates all those data streams. It tracks clipping yields, maps applications and learns from

patterns to predict stress before we see it. It doesn’t replace our agronomic instincts; it validates them.

I often compare this to professional sports analytics. A great athlete still plays by feel — but the data behind the scenes refine those instincts. Turf management isn’t so different. Our eyes and experience are still the first line of defense. Technology simply gives us a second set of eyes that never blinks.

And when all that information comes together — moisture levels, temperature curves, oxygen flow, growth rates, disease conditions—we don’t have to guess. We know when, where and how to act. That’s what “speed of light” means in practice: decision-making that’s proactive, not reactive.

### RENOVATION AT THE SPEED OF SERVICE

If data is the brain of our renovation, irrigation is one of the circulatory systems.

We’ve upgraded the irrigation platform — a central control system that lets us manage every drop of water with precision. From my phone or tablet, we can design programs for a day, a week or a season. We can make instant micro-adjustments to specific zones or heads.

For a grow-in, where seed-based renovation demands constant vigilance, that flexibility is priceless. We chose to seed rather than sod most of Otter Creek — a slower path, but one that produces stronger, more site-adapted turf in the long run. The new irrigation tech gives us the control and feedback to make that possible.

This isn’t just environmental sustainability; it’s **operational sustainability**. We’re saving water, time and stress—and spending more of our day doing what truly matters: coaching our team, focusing on detail work and improving turf health.

And the future? GPS-guided sprayers, variable-rate technology and



AI-assisted mapping. It’s not about taking people out of the process. It’s about giving them the most accurate tools to do the job right the first time.

### RENOVATION AT THE SPEED OF ROBOTICS

I’ll admit it — when I first saw a robot mower crawling across the fairway, I wasn’t sure whether to laugh or take a picture. But now we can’t imagine the renovation without them.

During a grow-in, you have two major challenges: **weight and repetition**. Heavy equipment compacts delicate soil profiles and manual mowing burns labor hours when every hand is needed elsewhere. Our solution was to bring in robotic mowers — small, lightweight units that can cut around the clock.

They’re not perfect. They occasionally get stuck, lose connectivity or wander into the wrong pattern. But the trade-off is worth it. These machines minimize compaction, keep rough and tee areas consistent, and let our staff focus on cultural practices, irrigation adjustments and detail work.

That’s what technology should do — handle the repetitive tasks so people can handle the meaningful ones.

I still think of mowing as an art form, but not every brushstroke

needs to come from a human hand. Sometimes innovation is just knowing where craftsmanship ends and automation begins.

**RENOVATION AT THE SPEED OF TRUST**

If there's one thing I've learned through this project, it's that innovation only moves as fast for us as the relationships behind it.

Every piece of technology, every process improvement and every operational breakthrough at Otter Creek came down to a single principle: trust. We didn't just choose tools—we chose people. We partnered with individuals and teams who shared our vision for precision, communication and a commitment to progress grounded in integrity and innovation.

Technology can connect data, automate systems and predict outcomes, but it's trust that connects people. It's the original technology — the first true network — built not with code, but with connection and consistency.

"In technology as in turf, trust is the architecture that holds everything together," says **Valentine Godin** of Maya Global, one of our technology partners. "The best code doesn't replace people; it learns, adapts, and helps

turn daily complexity into clarity and purpose. Anyone can build efficient code, the real challenge is creating technology that individuals and teams trust enough to let it shape how they work, decide and grow together. That is when lasting impact emerges."

When we made decisions about the platforms, tools and innovations used throughout this renovation, it wasn't the logos that swayed us; it was both the technology and relationships. We sought partners (our other technology partners include Bernhard and Company at the forefront, along with Soil Scout and Kress) who were as passionate about learning and collaboration as they were about performance. Whether across town or across the ocean, every partnership was rooted in dialogue—asking questions, challenging ideas and finding shared purpose.

**Trust builds speed because it removes friction.** It allows teams to focus on problem-solving rather than protectionism, on shared outcomes rather than individual interests. That's what this renovation became — a collaboration built on mutual respect, where each contributor believed not only in their own product or service, but in the collective mission of reviving a historic community golf course

for the next generation.

In the end, every successful decision we made — technological or otherwise — was powered by that simple truth. The "speed of trust" might be the slowest speed on paper, but it's the one that makes everything else possible.

No app or algorithm can replicate that.

**THE OLD SCHOOL MEETS THE FUTURE**

When I entered this industry, we measured success by how hard we worked. Long hours. Short nights. Endless grind.

But during this renovation, I've learned that true progress isn't about grinding faster — it's about thinking differently. We wanted to prove that a small, forward-thinking team could deliver championship-level results without burning out or breaking budgets.

We focused on sustainability in every sense: environmental, financial and human. We didn't want a renovation that left people exhausted and systems obsolete. We wanted one that left both stronger.

So, yes, this project is about sensors, robots and data dashboards. But it's also about curiosity, trust and respect — for the land, for the craft and for each other.

Technology isn't about racing ahead. It's about seeing more clearly. It's about merging the craftsmanship of yesterday with the precision of tomorrow — and realizing that the bridge between the two is people.

That's the real technology driving the Otter Creek renaissance. And it's moving at the speed of light. ■

*Brent Downs, CGCS, MG, is director of agronomy at Harrison Lake Country Club and Otter Creek Golf Course in Columbus, Indiana. This is his fifth Turfheads Take Over contribution.*



# Someone always wants to learn

Ohio equipment manager **Kevin Kline** is using optional offseason education to build an ever-expanding network.

**“W**hat is the benefit for me and my equipment manager/technician?”

I hear that question a lot at local chapter events. As the equipment manager liaison for the Northern Ohio Golf Course Superintendents Association, I can answer it many ways.

I started my tenure as the EM liaison in January 2024. Our chapter was reeling coming out of COVID and I thought education could be a grab for the EM and ET members. There were three of us. We could try to grow and start to gain traction within our group. We had a meeting of the membership in March, three guys, getting together with the same frame of mind: we wanted to grow our group and be able to put a team together who could help one another.

We met at a local club and thought about all the things we could possibly do. One thing came to mind for us: we discussed possibly conducting educational meetings but making them optional and we hit the ground running. We began to put blasts out to the membership, to the superintendents and to other equipment people — including our supplier partners, who go see possible new members and let them all know we will be conducting educational classes that will provide beneficial meaning to their clubs and the superintendents.

We also met a few times, impromptu, throughout the summer of 2024, trying to gain membership. We were slowly growing. Fall came and we had nine members. They were feeling like we could handle this education task.

We started in January 2025, with a meeting at Jerry Pate Century Equipment in Twinsburg, Ohio. **Al Kaserman** and **Tim Hughes** talked about the benefits of joining our group, Actual Height of Cut, After Cut Appearance and the evolutions of mowing patterns and mower setups. Our partners give us support in wanting us to grow. They don't necessarily look at the specific equipment they carry or service. We wrapped up the meeting with a shop tour and questions for the technicians in the shop.

In February, we traveled to Sharon Golf Club, where **Gary Bogdanski**, the 2023 Edwin Budding Award winner, hosted us with his superintendent, **David Wilmot**. We invited partners from Wellington Implement and Case IH, along with a Shell Oil representative to discuss oil viscosity, the benefits of using different types of oil with aging equipment, the benefits of greasing, and how much to use when working through preventative maintenance programs. Wellington Implement brought a salesman to answer questions about what services they can provide for the turf industry. In the afternoon, we had a Wellington representative discuss Power Take Off equipment safety and maintenance. We

gathered 13 technicians that day.

In March, we concluded the main educational points with help from our partner Baker Vehicle at Portage Country Club and superintendent host **Derek Trenchard**. One Baker representative discussed how they evolved from superintendent and wrenching on their own equipment. This increased awareness about how to approach shop maintenance. It also let our EMs and ETs know they are not alone. The salesmen in our industry are sometimes the best people to talk with if you have a here-and-now topic or a one-off question.

Next, we had the service manager discuss how our shops could build a strong, working relationship with the parts industry. He stressed it's important for us to know who we are calling, what the part is and the lead time it takes to receive parts. This will be advantageous in helping receive parts in a timely manner. In the afternoon, we wrapped up with technicians from Murphy Tractor, who explained the new Tremble and Topcon technology used to map out trenching for drainage or irrigation systems. This further explained the technology and products for course projects and provided a valuable lesson in the role of as-builts as work progresses.

By providing just snippets of education during the offseason, our network has grown to more than 25 — and it's still growing. Equipment people in our industry are hearing about what we are doing. They are getting excited to continue things in their chapters. Taking time to add tools to the toolbox is a definite advantage to helping people feel important and making them want to stay in our profession. Finding people who want to work on golf course equipment is tough. They seem to be a dying breed. But we think differently in Northern Ohio. We focus on our initiative of “Bring a friend.” There is always someone who wants to learn — and we want to bridge the gap from their world to ours. 🍀

*Kevin Kline is the equipment manager at Westfield Country Club in Westfield Center, Ohio, and the equipment manager liaison for the Northern Ohio Golf Course Superintendents Association. The thoughts and beliefs in this article are of the author and have nothing bearing from his employer.*





# Playing a different tune

Pennsylvania superintendent **Ronnie Leggett** dreamed about — and lived — an existence filled with music, but life pulled him to the golf course.

**T**his was a turf management year to remember in Western Pennsylvania, with heavy rainfall followed immediately by scorching hot weather. As a first-year superintendent, it tested every ability I have and my full knowledge of turf. But what I learned was that I'm more resilient than I give myself credit for. Turf management wasn't my plan when I decided which career path I was going to take after school. Music was always my passion and what I initially studied.

Running machinery was in my blood thanks to growing up with a coal miner for a father. My mother was an aspiring country songwriter. She wasn't the only musician in my family, though: my grandmother on my dad's side was a gospel singer and my grandfather on my mom's side

was a bar musician who got **Wayne Newton** his first gig. All these family musicians contributed heavily to my own musical aspirations.

Music wasn't something I fell in love with until later on, though. I learned at a very young age how to run everything from a garden tractor to a skid loader. As a kid, I loved machinery — from playing in the dirt with my Tonka toys to watching the neighbors bale hay. I grew up in the country so that was the norm for everyone my age. Most of us grew up on farms helping our families. My parents split up when I was about 5 and my mom eventually moved my sister and me to the city. Living in the city provided a completely different world because I was accustomed to not having close neighbors. Now I was landlocked, with neighbors on both sides.

Moving to the city opened my

eyes to a whole new world of music: hip-hop and eventually heavy metal. I loved discovering new music and going to the record store to get new records. When I was about 15, once she knew I would take it seriously, my mom finally bought me my first guitar. Music completely engulfed me. I practiced every day and formed various local bands playing original music. During my senior year, I decided my career path was in music, so I enrolled in a small community college to get my associate's in fine arts before transferring to Bethany College in West Virginia, where I earned my bachelor's in classical guitar performance. That's where I really started joining bands that were serious about making a career out of music.

I decided to go to Boston University to pursue my master's degree in

music and started venturing out more on the road with bands. I got my first job teaching private guitar lessons. A couple years later, I ended up losing my job teaching because the store closed. A friend ended up getting me a job working in the lawn and garden department at Kmart, where I worked until about 2017 when they closed too. I was working to help pay for grad school, which I had nearly completed. And I was in need of a job again. One of the store managers was hired as the events coordinator at a local country club and asked if I had interest in working on the grounds. I interviewed and started my first year as part of the grounds crew at Williams Golf and Country Club under superintendent **Mike Hagwood**.

Mike took me under his wing and taught me a lot about maintaining a golf course. He played the guitar and the first time I cut with the intermediate mower he said, "Ronnie, these machines are a lot like the guitar and music—you just gotta get in tune with them." He was right.

2018 brought a lot of changes. The guy I was learning from was no longer at the club and I had to work for someone new. I didn't know it at the time but working for my new superintendent **Chris Kukor** would change my life and career forever.

Grad school ended and I had just formed a new band called Casketmaker. I was torn. I wanted to tour more, but I also loved working full-time on the grounds crew. I learned a lot working under Chris. He taught me more and more because I was willing to learn. I talked with him about possibly going back to school for turf and he set me up with a GCSAA membership and paid for the Assistant Superintendent Certificate Series. Around that time, I met my wife and decided that moving in with her was something I needed to do to make our relationship work. Long-distance wouldn't cut it, and we weren't exactly young anymore either.

Moving to Pittsburgh to be with her meant I needed to find a club closer to

where we lived. I landed at St. Clair Country Club, working under **Eric Materkowski**. Chris also worked for Eric when they were both at Wildwood. I started at St. Clair in December 2019 as an AIT. Toward the end of 2020, I started looking for my first assistant superintendent position and ended up at Treedale Golf and Country Club under **Stefan Gustafson**, who was about to change my life and career. During my time there, I attended the 2020 Green Start Academy.

I worked at Treedale until early 2023, learning from Stefan and senior assistant **Bryan Morgan**. Both taught me so much about turf and business, and for that I'll be forever grateful. I could have stayed at Treedale as the second assistant, and I would have been happy because I loved it there. But I decided I needed to earn a proper turf degree, so I enrolled at Florida Gateway College for a two-year program in agribusiness with a focus in turf management. Shortly after that I got a call from Chris asking if I was interested in coming over to another nearby course owned by the same corporation that owned Treedale.

Life had come full circle.

I was working with Chris again, the guy who set me up for a turf career, now his senior assistant, and mentoring second assistant **Dan Thein**, who I consider one of my best friends. After about a year, I got an unexpected call to interview for the superintendent position at Lone Pine Country Club in Washington, Pennsylvania. And I got the job.

This year tested me in ways I didn't know I would be tested, but I overcame it with the help of all the mentors I had the privilege of working under and all the new people I met who helped me through this first year. I had to learn how to build a crew and how to run it. My dad is working with me, and so is my wife, who has been my No. 1 supporter. We've been through five clubs together, and now we get to share all the experiences of working together. I'm thankful for the crew I have because they made this year, full of some of the worst rainfall and heat imaginable, much more bearable. ■

*Ronnie Leggett is the golf course superintendent at Lone Pine Country Club in Washington, Pennsylvania. This is his first Turfheads Take Over contribution.*





# Better late than never

More new golfers are teeing off now than ever before. **Seth Rainier** outlines how he has learned to teach them basic course etiquette.

**A**s golf course superintendents, it is crucial for managers in the public realm to understand the state of the game and its trajectory. The post-COVID golf craze has increased rounds across the board and it's here to stay for the foreseeable future. The reality is that Gen Z and millennial golfers have changed how we think about golf course management.

A colleague of mine coined the term “trunk slammer” and it wasn't until I moved to a public club that I realized that the majority of our public play consists of players that fit under this unique nomenclature. A “trunk slammer” is one who shows up to the course a few minutes ahead of their tee time and rushes to the first tee. No warmups, just balls, clubs, a six-pack and, most important, a speaker!

This generational shift has transformed the game from that of etiquette, patience and structured environment to a more social experience with less emphasis on rules or score and more on camaraderie and relaxation with friends. This shift could mean that we as managers need to reevaluate our practices to accommodate for every level of golfer, allowing for faster play and minimizing frustration.

Lancaster Golf Club went from a fully private to a public course in 2021, when it was purchased by 26 members. We have around 100 members and still host marquee club events like member/guests and club championships for them each year. I still try to manage a firm and fast golf course for our membership. No matter what the public perceives, it's important to accommodate for both your loyal members and the novice public player. To accommodate for both, we started a plan to create a wider, more playable golf course by adding almost five acres of fairways as well as greenside runoffs that will collect a lot of golf shots and allow the player to have a fair chance to get up and down from a good lie.

The most controversial problem I've noticed working at a public club is the lack of golf course etiquette—repairing ball marks, replacing divots, raking traps, etc. During my first season, I would get really upset at the lack of care from our patrons and it also infuriated our membership as well. I started to realize that many of these players had never been on a golf course and were never taught how to take care of the course. It is our responsibility along with the golf staff to

educate the public about course maintenance and instill that sense of responsibility to leave the course better than you found it.

We have used a variety of strategies to educate and communicate with our patrons. By including signage on the course and carts, we are informing the public that it is their responsibility to clean up after themselves. The use of social media has also helped by giving players a digital connection to their on-course experience. Additionally, promoting social media engagement around the course has created a sense of community with the membership and the public by encouraging younger players to share their experience online.

As golf continues to grow and evolve, superintendents must adapt to changing customer expectations. Ultimately, the future of golf lies in embracing new players while maintaining the core values of the game. We can protect the integrity of the game for generations to come. Golf is not just about green grass and a scorecard. It's about creating memories and relationships that will last a lifetime. 🍷

*Seth Rainier is the director of greens and grounds at Lancaster Golf Club in Lancaster, Ohio. This is his first Turfheads Take Over contribution.*



# Pioneer for all of us

**Brian Rizzo** reflects on the enduring impact legendary Pine Valley Golf Club superintendent **Eb Steiniger** had on turf and golf communities.

**“W**ho is **Eb Steiniger**?” When retired superintendent **Frank Dobie** asked a room of superintendents if anyone recognized the name Eberhard Steiniger, only five people raised their hands. Mr. Eberhard “Eb” Rudolph Steiniger, longtime superintendent at Pine Valley Golf Club, should not become a “forgotten man.”

Former USGA president **Bill Campbell** recognized that course superintendents have been the so-called “forgotten men” and wrote in a 1983 USGA Green Section Record article:

“What is more important than a friendly understanding by the golfers of the course superintendent’s role, their recognition of his various problems, and their appreciation of his contributions to their enjoyment of the game? ... I greatly respect the superintendent’s role, and I doubt that he gets the credit that he deserves. I want to do something about it.”

Steiniger started doing something about it 50 years earlier. Penn State recognizes Steiniger, **Joe Valentine** and **Tom Mascaro** as instrumental in pushing for a

formal college curriculum, a distinct body of knowledge and a degree granting program that, through their diligence, convinced Penn State professor **H. Burton Musser** to introduce the nation’s first two-year degree granting turfgrass management program.

Steiniger had a special bond with Penn State, but he would guest lecture at other institutions. One of his appearances at the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at UMass deeply impacted eventual legendary superintendent Dick Bator. Steiniger’s traveling carousel slideshow influenced Bator’s decision to aspire to become the superintendent at Pine Valley.

Another marquee superintendent who recalls the day Steiniger visited his class is Aronimink Golf Club’s **John Gosselin**, who graduated from Penn State in 1987 and was the 2025 recipient of the Philadelphia Association of Golf Course Superintendents’ Eb Steiniger Award.

“[Eb] showed a wonderful slide show of his years at PV,” Gosselin says in a 2009 Golf Club Atlas thread. “The one thing that stands out to me still to this day (23 years later) is the number of trees and other shrub type plant material he and Mr. Brown planted. I remember him describing

► Eb showing his good friend Tom Mascaro turf at the PVGC nursery.

the isolation they created from one hole to another. They were true pioneers that may have started this trend in screening each hole.” Mr. Brown is **John Arthur Brown**, the president of Pine Valley for almost 50 years.

Steiniger followed his boss, **Norman Mattice**, from Lakeville Golf Club to Pine Valley around 1927-28.

In 1931, according to **James Finegan’s** “Pine Valley Golf Club: A Unique Haven of the Game,” Brown told Steiniger: “[I] just fired Mattice. ... If you think you can handle the job, it’s yours. If not, you’re fired too.” Steiniger’s close friend Mascaro told us in a 1983 *Golf Course Management* article that Brown made a sound decision when he said, “Eb, you are responsible for everything outside. ... Don’t bother me with details.” Steiniger described the special bond: “It’s a very profitable arrangement,” he told **Gerry Finn** for a May 1971 story in the GCSA of New England’s *The Newsletter*. “There is no bother about transition. I know I’m going to have the same boss every year. Naturally, over 40 seasons together, we understand each other.”

Steiniger attended his first Turfgrass Conference for Greenkeepers at Penn State in 1928 and the first time he was a program speaker was in 1933. In 1940, the presentation was reprinted in the GCSAA’s *The Reporter*, where we learn Steiniger made sure to visit his crew three or four times a day because the superintendent is responsible if “anything goes wrong on the golf course.” Those lucky enough to attend the 1975



Massachusetts Turf and Lawn Grass Council Conference could catch Steiniger’s 1:45 p.m. lecture on Pine Valley’s automatic watering systems.

Steiniger is credited with discovering C-7 strain. The September 1968 USGA Green Section Record includes *The Story of Cohansey*, an article written by Steiniger. The variety was first seen in 1933, with Steiniger closely monitoring its behavior. In 1935, one square foot was planted in Pine Valley’s nursery along with select other strains. “Its fine texture and upright growth made it a fine putting green turf, and its light green color was pleasing to see,” Steiniger declared.

In 1932, Pine Valley was selected as a regional turf laboratory site by the USGA Green Section, which resulted in frequent visits by Green Section agronomists like **Dr. Fred Grau** and **Al Radko**, who officially came to evaluate the growth of different grasses. But unofficially, I suspect, they came to enjoy Steiniger’s humor and wit. They maybe even received a chance to play the course with Steiniger.

In a 2019 *Golf Magazine* contribution, golf course architect **Tom Doak** credited Steiniger, in part, for making Pine Valley one of a kind. “**Pete Dye** asked me crypti-

cally which course that I had seen had the most turf plots for testing the viability of different grasses,” Doak wrote in the article. “When I answered that it was Pine Valley, he nodded and told me to think about how much the contrast and texture of those different grasses added to the unique look of the course.”

By 1940, Steiniger was well regarded within the turfgrass community. He was part of turf history when he participated in the first Eastern Athletic Field Tour in July 1951. In addition to Steiniger, other luminaries in attendance were Rutgers’ **Ralph Engel**, Penn State’s Musser, Wisconsin’s **O.J. Noer**, the USGA’s **Bill Bengeyfield**, and **Charles Hallowell**, and Mascaro of West Point Products. Mascaro invented the aerifier (1946) and verticutter (1952), two products that revolutionized golf course management.

**Tom Watschke**, at the 1994 dedication of the Penn State Mascaro/Steiniger Turfgrass Equipment Museum, observed that Steiniger and Mascaro were “the perfect marriage of innovator and inventor. ... Tom would invent and prototype pieces of equipment at the urging of Eb, and they’d try them out at Pine Valley.” According

to Steiniger, “Tom was always hanging around our place, bringing some new equipment to try out at Pine Valley. ... We got the whole place aerified, and it didn’t cost me a thing because we didn’t buy his machine! Tom was very generous with us.”

**Sherwood Moore’s** career spanned from 1939 to 1985, Steiniger’s from 1928 to 1983. Moore is the beneficiary of Steiniger’s push for professionalization through education being a graduate of the Stockbridge School. Moore represents the bridge linking the Steiniger/Valentine Era and the modern “professional” superintendent. Moore served on the GCSAA board many years before becoming its president in 1962 and also was president of both the New Jersey GCSA (1953-54) and the Metropolitan GCSA (1965-66).

In 2000, *Golf Course News* reported that Moore was selected as the century’s top superintendent among active/retired superintendents, beating the second-place finisher Steiniger. Moore recalls a club member asking, “Mr. Moore, just when did this position of yours become a profession?” Whether Moore was insulted or not we don’t know, but he remarked in a GCSAA president’s memo: “Here was a member who probably a few years ago never even knew a golf course superintendent existed, and now he realized that our work was of a professional nature.”

Dobie, a 1960 Penn State graduate, is another superintendent who fits the modern professional. In 1965, Dobie, who counts Steiniger as one of his mentors, wrote in the *The Golf Course Reporter*, “I think the greatest reason for our work reaching professional status has been the golf course superintendent himself. ... The modern superintendent is better educated, more widely trained, more flexible and more polished.”

The Philadelphia Association Golf Course Superintendents, which celebrated its 100th anniversary earlier this year, established the Eb Steiniger

Award in 1990. **Joe Roynan**, the 2006 recipient, said: “I knew Eberhard Steiniger personally. He was just the greatest guy and such a gentleman. ... He was always willing to help no matter who you were. He was the superintendent at Pine Valley, one of the greatest courses in the country. He really did not have to talk to anyone.”

A young Steiniger once found himself in the company of GCSAA board members, including **Col. John Morley**. As Steiniger told the story in a 1995 *Golf Course Management* interview: “So, there I was, sitting with all the big shots — and I wasn’t even a member yet. Morley and I were talking about Pine Valley. I remember telling him I had a terrible problem with clover in the greens, and I asked him what he would do. Morley just cleared his throat and said, ‘If it’s too bad, we’d just sod it.’ I thought, ‘That’s an idea — if you have a nursery.’”

Morley to Steiniger to Moore to Dobie ...

Steiniger died on April 13, 2002, at age 96. In 1993, Steiniger said: “I spent over 60 years in turf management and field research, and I enjoyed every minute and every year of it.” Steiniger considered the nicest compliment he received — a testament to his lifelong devotion to maintaining the “Valley” — what one UK golfer who played all over the world and traveled every year to Pine Valley said to him after a round: “Mr. Steiniger, I’d like to pay you a compliment.’ And he said three words: “This is it.”

Steiniger and **John Mascaro**, the president of Turf-Tec at the time, visited Pine Valley in September 2000. Steiniger was 94 and almost totally blind, yet he did not need to see the landscape he painted to know instinctively his way around.

“Eb ... was able to guide me around the golf course like he had 20/20 vision,” Mascaro said in the November 2000 edition of *Turf-Tec Digest*. “In fact, on one occasion, I

thought I was totally lost and Eb kept telling me to drive straight ahead and turn at the next tree. I had to remind him that he could not see. Just then, there was the tree, and I never corrected him again.”

When I found a PAGCS interview of Steiniger online, I was excited to hear what he had to say in his thick German accent. That day Eb Steiniger was real. The thing that struck me the most was that Steiniger was a golfer. He played with other superintendents in the Philadelphia area like **Tom Dougherty** of Springhaven and **Joe Flynn** of Rolling Green Golf Club.

Brown wrote in “Short History of Pine Valley,” first published in 1963: “We believe Eb to be one of the best greenskeepers in America.” By the end of the 1960s, the GCSAA decided “greenkeeper” did not reflect the duties and responsibilities of the modern superintendent, though Steiniger preferred the term.

Finally, we get a glimpse of Steiniger’s humor and sharp wit when **Clay Loyd** once asked him for a 1995 *Golf Course Management* article how he handled member complaints. “Well, for instance, there was the time Dr. Weaver missed his putt on the fourth hole. ‘Hey, Eb,’ he said. ‘Those brown spots in the fairways out there, ... are you doing anything about them?’ ‘Doc,’ Eb replied, ‘Why don’t you look at the flowers once in a while? The laurel is in bloom right now.’”

Touché! ■

*Brian J. Rizzo, PhD, a retired NYPD sergeant and Westfield State University professor of criminal justice, is a member of the Olde Kinderhook Golf Club in Valatie, New York, where he prefers walking to riding. He collects golf memorabilia and books, and enjoys deep dives into golf history. His fascination with Steiniger began in 2024 when he came across a letter written by John Arthur Brown, then president of Pine Valley Golf Club, complimenting Eb and his crew for a job well done in preparing the course for the 1936 Walker Cup match. This is his first Turfheads Take Over contribution.*



Indiana turf pro **Brad Allen** provides a blueprint — and practical advice — for expanding your role beyond the golf course.

**I** came to Hickory Stick Golf Club as the golf course superintendent after the club changed hands. The new ownership had a powerful desire to renovate and modernize the facilities but lacked a dedicated manager for those efforts. They asked me to take on the role — and I now serve as the director of agronomy and facilities, wearing two hats every day.

Many of us superintendents are already juggling multiple responsibilities. Managing hundreds of acres, coordinating teams, overseeing budgets and dealing with unexpected challenges. It all comes with the territory. Multitasking is second nature.

So why take on something as involved as facilities management when the golf course alone keeps

us so busy? Simple: to make yourself better.

In this dual role, I have gained valuable experience, working with contracts, managing bids for services, learning about other trades and, most important, making a meaningful impact on the club's bottom line through cost-saving initiatives that had previously gone unnoticed.

Taking on a second position is not for the faint of heart. Your phone and email will get busier. You will need to stay organized and be prompt in your communication. Personally, I rely on my phone's calendar and a large whiteboard to keep track of everything. Whether it is for agronomy or facilities, all vendor visits must be scheduled. If someone shows up unannounced, do not be

afraid to turn them away and ask them to make an appointment.

Set boundaries early. You are not the custodian. Your time is limited. If you do not have a cleaning crew, create a set of clear expectations for clubhouse staff to follow. Delegation and accountability are key.

Be sure to document all the time you spend on facilities-related tasks. This becomes crucial when it is time to talk about compensation. You should be prepared to explain your expanded responsibilities to ownership or a board. If you are wearing two hats, your compensation should reflect the added value you're bringing to the club.

Use the tools and the people around you. Your golfing membership is often a diverse and talented group. There is a good chance someone can help you find a new trade contact or even lend a hand with a project. Just be mindful of your workload. Do not take on something that is clearly beyond your capacity or comfort zone. For example, aerification season is not the time to launch a major remodeling project.

It is easy to look at a facilities project and wonder, "Why are we doing that?" I have found that many of these projects simply have not been properly vetted. Superintendents are naturally logistical thinkers. If you are helping with facilities as well, your instincts can help prioritize work and uncover unexpected efficiencies.

If the opportunity to wear two hats ever comes your way, I say go for it. The learning curve is low thanks to the skills you already have. As superintendents, we are used to solving problems, staying flexible, and adapting on the fly. Facilities management is just another iron in the fire — and one more way to contribute to your club's success. 🏌️

*Brad Allen, CGCS, is the director of agronomy and facilities at Hickory Stick Golf Club in Greenwood, Indiana.*



## THE 2025 GRAINYNS

In 2025, everything was looking calm and predictable, a relative snoozefest (except, maybe, for **Rory McIlroy's** Grand Slam), until the fall, when things took a nasty, downward turn. Have no fear, perfect fodder for The Grainyns was found and the results are stunning.

Drumroll please.....

### Best Screenplay

**Tiger** is dating the former daughter-in-law of the current president. If he and **Lara** tie the knot, that would make him stepfather to golf's hottest new celebrity influencer, incoming University of Miami freshman **Kai Trump**. Should **Charlie** be worried about his spot in the PNC parent/child tourney?

### Best Action Movie

Step aside, **Jason Statham**. **Wyndham Clark** used a simple 9-iron to break two wooden lockers in the 100-year-old **Oakmont** clubhouse after missing the cut by one at the U.S. Open. Besides being banned from the club and paying for the damage, Clark must make a "meaningful contribution" to charity, go for anger management counseling, and perform community service ... or have a villain role

in Statham's next movie.

### Best Special Effects

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's an agronomic mowing Roomba. Set it, start it, see you later. Now, if it could only make good coffee for the maintenance team.

### Best Remake of a Motion Picture

Without hitting a shot, **Jack Nicklaus** may have had his best year ever. After years of court cases, the greatest golfer of all time emerged victorious with his name, reputation and legacy intact, plus a \$50 million award for defamation. Lesson learned: never poke the bear.

### Best Sound Production

Give the drunken, obnoxious spectators at the Ryder Cup credit for creativity. Who knew there were so many ways to use the F-word? Only **Tony Soprano**.

### Best Actor

Too much exercise may damage the brain! **Gary Player** declared himself the third-best golfer of all time, after Jack and Tiger. I wonder what **Ben Hogan**,

**Byron Nelson** and **Bobby Jones** would say from their heavenly clubhouse locker room? One category Player wins hands down: Ego.

### Best Supporting Actor

I don't remember hearing anything from **Phil Mickelson** about playing golf, but I sure heard a lot about the perfect coffee, insider trading and grooming his goatee. And he still won \$4.3 million from LIV.



### Best (actually Worst) Make-Up and Cosmetology

No wonder they took the sign down at the first tee. **Bethpage Black** was set up so poorly — like a bad facelift on an over-the-hill actor — that we didn't recognize it. **Bethpage Pink**?

### Best Live Action Short

**J.J. Spaun's** caddie, **Mark Carens**, messed up the winning-



© TOP: ADOBE  
BOTTOM: GUY CIPRIANO



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



putt photos as his man won the U.S. Open. According to one media outlet, Carens danced around the green as if he “was rehearsing for a 21st-century revival of ‘Singin’ in the Rain.’”

**Special Technology Award**

Add a new line item to your budget: miscellaneous technology. From TruFirm to penetrometers, GS3 to moisture meters, the USGA is rolling out all kinds of high-tech tools to support the superintendent. And charging a pretty penny for them, too.

**The Most Predictable Award**

Superintendents at USGA championships receive the E.J. Marshall Platter for their dedication, expertise and seamless teamwork with the organization. Far be it from me to take anything away from any of the recipients, but maybe the USGA could

dig a little deeper and figure out which one of the year’s candidates faced the greatest adversity and overcame the most vexing challenges.

**Best Drama**

Finally, a story with a happy ending. It was wonderful to watch McIlroy hit the shot of his life and hold it together on a single playoff hole to claim his first Masters and the Grand Slam.

**Best Foreign Language Film**

For those of you who find the Rules of Golf is written in a foreign language, you might be right. The Rules official walking with Sam Burns’ group during the final round of the U.S. Open declared “temporary water” but did not grant Burns relief. Yet his ball was in a flooded section at the bottom of a slope in a drainage swale on the fairway. Under

the Rules of Golf, “temporary” can include any accumulation of water on the ground (such as a puddle after rain or irrigation). Acting like a true professional, Burns accepted his fate and moved on.

**Lifetimes of Achievement Award**

They will be missed. Among those we lost this year: **Bob Zoller**, a decades-long superintendent in Northern

California; **Dr. Bruce Martin** of Clemson University, one of the nation’s foremost turfgrass pathologists; and my friends: **Teri Yamada**, who for 40 years contributed to Golf Canada, and **Judy Bell**, a fine amateur player, long-time volunteer, and the first woman president of the USGA.

And the 2025 Grainy Award for the biggest miss and most colossal cinematic flop is awarded to the PGA of America.

**Just What Did They Think Was Going to Happen?**

The behavior of the crowds at Bethpage during the Ryder Cup was disgusting at best. No matter who you blame — and there’s plenty of it to go around, from the PGA of America to alcohol sales to limited visibility for fans to the U.S. team’s poor showing from Day 1 — golf, which has been on a healthy trajectory the last few years, gave itself a great big black eye.

If this is where the game is going in this age of relaxed social rules, eased etiquette and a more welcoming attitude to newcomers, then I’m going to find myself a more refined sport — like hockey! 🏒



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BOTTOM: GUY CIRRANO

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## PART 3: IMPLEMENTATION

A revered Heartland club begins its autonomous mowing journey as a continuation of an unyielding quest for excellence.

By **Guy Cipriano**

**A** club doesn't last 125 years without gazing ahead. At Wichita Country Club, the oldest private club in central Kansas, morning fairway maintenance routines will look different in 2026.

A revered Heartland golf stalwart, Wichita Country Club recently received the most sophisticated golf course maintenance tools in its history: two Greensmaster eTriFlex 3360 with GeoLink Mow units. The arrival of the Toro autonomous fairway mowers at facilities like Wichita Country Club coin-

cides with a perplexing yet prosperous moment in the golf market. Everybody seems to be playing more golf and expecting better golf despite a dwindling pool of job candidates seeking to spend days, weeks, months and years maintaining golf courses.

Forward thinking is part of the Wichita Country Club ethos. The club grew

large enough to move twice in the first half of the 20th century. The membership unveiled a Bill Diddel-designed course on Wichita's east side in 1950. The layout matured nicely, and the club continues to prosper on the gently rolling site.

Observe. Study. Shift proactively. Implement.

“Wichita Country Club has a commitment to excellence and innovation that has put us at the top of the field for over a century now,” superintendent Curtis Schriever says.

Courses in the Heartland and beyond will undoubtedly follow Wichita Country Club into autonomous fairway mowing. But before adoption comes thorough exploration.

Schriever, a native of Partridge, Kansas, a small south central Kansas agrarian community, landed one of the Midwest’s most desirable turf jobs when Wichita Country Club hired him in 2022. The club was ahead of industry times, investing in major course renovations guided by architect Tripp Davis and efficiency-boosting maintenance tools such as GPS-guided sprayers by the time Schriever arrived.

A renovated course, with Meyer zoysiagrass fairways expanded from 25 to 35 acres, heightened expectations as golfers used the club more due to remote work and other lifestyle changes. Plus, finding quality labor in Wichita, a city with a brawny manufacturing sector, was becoming trickier. “The demands of golf have changed, especially post-renovation,” Schriever says. “It’s kind of unspoken that maintenance levels need to increase.”

The labor crunch was one of four converging factors that sparked Schriever’s interest in autonomous mowing. “We can’t create people outside of these walls to come fill these positions,” he says. Equipment approaching the end of its peak life cycle, Toro’s willingness to work with the club on a future maintenance model and the presence of talented equipment manager Trevor Campbell further nudged the club toward an autonomous future.

A Kansas State University graduate who developed his turfgrass skills at multiple East Coast private clubs before returning to his Midwest origins, Schriever contacted venerable and emerging equipment manufacturers to arrange autonomous mower

demos at Wichita Country Club. Big or small units, rough or fairway height, wide or narrow stripes, rotary or reel, it didn’t matter. Schriever wanted to examine how nearly every available and looming autonomous solution performed on the parkland-style layout. “We’ve made as many requests as we could to get every piece of technology in here so that we can make the best decisions,” he says.

Schriever and the club waded deeper into the exploratory process in 2025 and leaned into its solid relationship with Toro distributor Professional Turf Products. Schriever worked collaboratively with PTP’s Brad Gray and Derek Harrison and Toro district sales managers Guy Oyler to determine the feasibility of using the Greensmaster eTriFlex 3360 with GeoLink Mow on Wichita Country Club’s fairways. Factors assessed ranged from cell signal coverage and proximity to a RTK station to the width of the six bridges crossing a creek intersecting the property. Toro placed sensors on existing fairway mowers to measure signal strength throughout the course.

“It was huge for me to know before we even got official quotes that our site was exceptional for this technology,” Schriever says. “If we had a mediocre site with mediocre GPS and satellite quality, we probably wouldn’t be going this route.”

Oyler, who lives in Kansas City and collaborates with Toro distributors



and superintendents west of the Mississippi River, has coordinated a dozen autonomous fairway mowing demos this year for distributors and superintendents. Wichita was one of his 2025 stops. The demos and subsequent conversations reveal contrasting and nuanced reasons for the impetus behind autonomous fairway mowing exploration. “It’s interesting to learn how there’s a different fit for everybody,” Oyler says. “You show up to a place thinking this is how you’re going to pitch it. But it’s about listening and finding the best solution for the customer.”

Schriever emphasizes Wichita Country Club’s implementation of autonomous fairway mowing isn’t about replacing labor. “The way I see it is that we can keep the same staff and just relieve some of the burden of mowing,” he says. “Mowing is a job where

### Part 1: Preparation



### Part 2: Execution





every time you do it, you know you're going to have to do it again. It's one of those jobs you're never gaining ground on."

The club employs around 25 golf course maintenance employees during the busy golf and active Transition Zone growing season, with fairway mowing occurring three or four days per week. A typical fairway mow begins at 6 a.m., ends at 1 p.m. and requires four employees.

"We can now reallocate those hours to something else," Schriever adds. "I think about how much more we can accomplish and how much more detailed we can be with our water applications, our bunker maintenance, our edging. All the little things that make a really exceptional experience we're going to be able to do by trading out those labor hours."

Little things separate good from great in the modern golf market. Oyler, a former golf course superintendent, hears turf pros and stakeholders cite straighter mowing lines, more dynamic striping and even tidier cleanup passes as attractive tangible benefits of autonomous fairway mowing to complement the intangible efficiency gains and labor reallocation.

"Everywhere you go somebody has a different thought about the way it's going to be best utilized on their property, which has been shocking to me," he says. "I thought it would be everybody goes out and buys a few of them to replace their units and then moves on."

Supporting the befuddling quest for elevated conditions requires a deep understanding of technology's potential. Helping superintendents and clubs determine autonomous fairway capabilities requires different mindsets. Toro responded to evolving needs by creating an advanced technology field support team to bolster its Greensmaster eTriFlex 3360 with GeoLink Mow and other autonomous solutions, including the Turf Pro and Range Pro series. Toro distributors are adding specialized positions to oversee efforts involving autonomous equipment.

"As this technology is changing and growing, we need to change and grow," Oyler says. "Part of that is hiring somebody in that role, which is interesting because it's not your typical salesperson. It's now somebody technology driven in that role."

Wichita Country Club is among

the first clubs to purchase the Greensmaster eTriFlex 3360 with GeoLink Mow. The units arrived in mid-October, and Schriever's team is using the end of 2025 to map fairways and gradually integrate autonomous fairway mowing into its operation. Constant 2025 dialogue with PTP and Toro, plus nearly a decade of GPS spraying experience at the club, yielded instant comfort and anticipation about 2026 possibilities.

Assistant superintendents Perry Schmiedeler, Eric McKinsey and Hunter Hill rotate leading daily maintenance efforts, with each one holding the role for a one-week period. Crew leaders, Schriever says, will manage autonomous fairway mowers like they would employees. Schriever and his assistants have discussed having the weekly crew leader arriving earlier than other managers to dispatch the autonomous fairway mowers, increasing the gap between maintenance and play. They are also considering mowing fairways at night when irrigation doesn't need to be run.

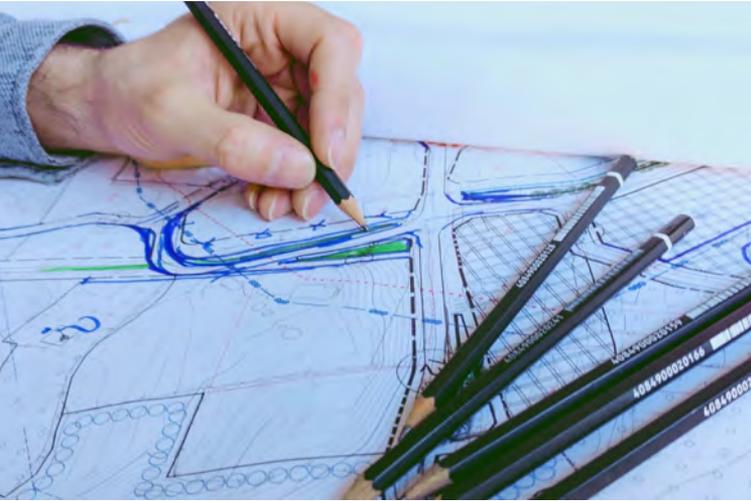
"There are a lot of different scenarios," Schriever says. "From the playbook we have talked about, the options are pretty much limitless."

Since PTP delivered the Greensmaster eTriFlex 3360 with GeoLink Mow units to Wichita Country Club, Schriever has become a popular figure in his text message chains with industry friends and peers. Visitors wanting to learn more about the mowers are frequent; questions being fielded by Schriever are abundant.

"I don't think there's a way we're not all doing this in the next 10 years," he says. "In some form of fashion, we all will be trying to automate."

Establishing and thoughtfully tweaking proven routines amid societal and technological changes will always keep places like Wichita Country Club revered and relevant.

"People like cool stuff," Schriever says, "and this makes people excited knowing that we're doing something on the cutting edge." 🌱



## SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO MASTER PLANNING

**G**olf course managers are getting smarter and more comprehensive in their planning. The change is palpable across the industry.

In part that's due to better training among superintendents. Credit also goes to the professionalization of general managers, who have largely graduated from the ranks of glorified clubhouse overseers to corporate business executives with an understanding of ROI. Golf professionals have also become far more attuned to overall facility performance and the bottom line.

For all that, I still see too many clubs where the planning process is short-term and piecemeal — as if making hash rather than sirloin steak. The signs of it are everywhere as soon as you access the grounds: a classic course, even with a notable design heritage, where in the post-World War II era architects have been shuttled in and out like **Elizabeth Taylor's** husbands. Trees planted 50 years ago now overarch the fairways, and even where faint-hearted efforts at “tree management” have taken place they are counteracted by evidence of yet more saplings to fill the newly opened spaces.

There are many courses where a new irrigation system was installed without accompanying plans for infrastructure upgrades or consideration of renovation. The golf landscape is also littered with clubs that have hired an architect to rebuild faulty bunkers in place without due consideration to their possible restoration or movement. Good that they are addressing infrastructure needs. But bad that they isolate the practice from larger planning considerations.

In large measure, the reluctance to think big emanates from a

misguided fear that developing a master plan commits a club to master-level spending. Planning big does not require implementing *everything*; it simply provides a framework for any smaller projects within that larger model. In the process, it eliminates duplicate spending.

Think of it as a deductive process: large-scale planning that establishes small-scale projects. Once you have a master plan in place you can pick and choose projects according to available capital or willingness to tolerate disruption.

Most club members interpret a master plan as a commitment to shut down the course, blow up existing features and present the members with a huge assessment. On the contrary, the cost of a master plan is but a small investment that provides the opportunity to budget, schedule and fix things on a reasonable schedule.

I just got back from an annual meeting of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Each of these gatherings provides further evidence of the gradual evolution about how architects do their work. Back in the early 1990s, most designers took the approach of being the aloof “auteur” of a process in which their expertise went largely unchallenged by their client and the membership.

That attitude has given way to a far more “relationship-oriented approach” in which the architect makes a long-term commitment. The new approach to a master plan involves working closely with a designated committee whose provenance within the club is not limited to your traditional green or golf committee.

The most successful programs do not hold back from looking at everything comprehensively. That means pool, tennis and pickleball courts, maintenance facility, additional parking, indoor golf performance center, pro shop and cart barn. It also means tending to basic golf course needs as well: trees, irrigation, greens, drainage, bunkers, turfgrass selection, teeing ground equity, cart paths and range.

A master plan is also a good time to consider club governance. A crucial element in club golf operations is how a green committee and chair are populated. The best clubs have low turnover, with “socialization” of service a prerequisite for chairmanship. The worst clubs turn over annually, with guidance equally transitory and the superintendent finding planning impossible since there is no continuity.

And finally, there's the process of member involvement and approval. Architects today tend to appreciate engagement with members on a limited basis, not sanctioning member input on every detail.

The whole planning process needs to be filtered through a dedicated committee that interacts with the architect and filters knowledge up to the board and out to the membership so there are no surprises. All of which means the members of that committee act as stewards for the club's welfare, as well as educational guides and advocates.

Clubs that undertake this expanded structure of decision making are likely to have a successful master plan process. 🏌️



**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.

## TRAVELS WITH TERRY

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



### BIG SNOW REMOVAL PROJECT

**J**erred Golden, director of grounds at the Hershey's Mill Golf Club in West Chester, Pennsylvania, has a team of 40 full-time year-round employees, with hourly shovelers on standby; the number of on-call employees depends on the amount of snowfall. Snow is removed at 750 of the 1,935 homes, as well as at the golf clubhouse, community center, sewer plant and shopping center. There are 17 snowplows mounted on ¾-ton 4WD pickups, four salt trucks, eight snow blowers and six skid steers with snow boxes. The two snow shovel racks were recycled from a defunct business, with the 2-inch PVC pipe in inventory, which were held in place with special hooks already in place. The racks are bolted to a hollow metal base with rubber wheels for easy mobility. There was no cost, and it was assembled by a former employee. Superintendent **Joe Owsik**, assistant superintendents **Neal Andersen** and **Alex Gomez**, equipment manager **Darryl Elliott**, therapy dog **Brando** and renovation architect **Brian Ault** are a very successful team.



*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](mailto:terrybuchen@earthlink.net).*



### BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING

**I** have seen Lot Cop Mobile Surveillance Units, or similar types, popping up at golf and tennis tournaments and even Walmart parking lots in my nationwide travels the past few years. They are solar powered and monitored on smartphones, and there are even law enforcement staff perched high above the parked vehicles in a portable tower, viewing multiple TV monitors with more than one unit at large sporting events. There are more than 4,500 current users, with more than 363 million photos taken, and more than 4.1 million video streams.

Their security platform makes it easy to track thermal signatures, monitor analytics, adjust multiple cameras/angles, manage alerts, and even adjust the unit's sounds and lights, according to their website. Each unit can be quickly mobilized, and it takes about 30 minutes to set them up. Rental costs and law enforcement staffing are site-specific.



**NAMES INDEX**

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# FAITH IN THE LEADERSHIP PROCESS

**T**he golf industry offseason for a great portion of the country is an ideal time to take a step back and investigate cultural, relational and organizational goals for the following year and beyond.

The following rhetorical questions are often asked, and attempts are made at redefining our strategy and guidance to LEAD:

- What's worked in the past?
- How can I affirm our personnel with a supporting framework?
- How can I improve the trajectory of our management team to facilitate the goals of our organization?

The above questions and countless other attempts to instill, improve and refine cultural and operational improvements are based on the leadership of those individuals in an organization who are tasked, officially or unofficially, at qualitatively and quantitatively defining the leading vision.

We were those guys. All-in, full send, the living breathing cliché. We looked to others to define our leadership capabilities, characteristics and tactics. From **Nick Saban** to **David Goggins**, to political figures, to **Kobe Bryant** and **Muhammad Ali**, and many more, we sought leadership answers from leaders in the public eye. There's nothing wrong with this approach. In fact, when the embodiment of the values and principles of those frequently quoted individuals

is effectually put into place, it frequently works. People resonate with the message, and when it comes from a credible source it carries that much more gravitas.

So please, if that is still working, lean in. In no way, shape or form are we downplaying or remotely judging that approach. We were the poster boys for it and still are to some extent. And we think it worked.

Artwork and murals on the walls, bracelets, videos. You name it, we did it. It was not only meaningful, it was fun.

But what if we find our leadership from someone else? Someone who is undefeated. Someone who is always there to lend a guiding word, principal or verse? A higher power, so to speak.

Someone omniscient, ever-present and all-knowing? Someone who left us a playbook of leadership with unmatched clarity? This person authored the best-selling, most-read leadership book of all time.

We think you follow our drift at this point. We know we're often not allowed to speak or write about faith. But if you've learned anything about reading our columns, we were given just enough leash to tactfully break the rules.

Let's go full circle to the opening paragraph. If you haven't noticed it recently, we'd argue you're not paying attention. Faith has begun and is aggressively permeating our culture: sports, coaches and prominent figures. The

people we often look to for leadership are now more than ever proud, overt and direct in where they obtain inspiration and leadership aspirations. And it's often a greater power. No longer does faith and the impact it has on us as individuals, our goals, our objectives, our methods and our values take a back seat to culture.

Instead of looking to a worldly source for leadership, look to your faith. We feel confident you will not be disappointed. And if you're already there, we encourage you to speak about it, openly and confidently. We think you'll be surprised about the positiveness, response and impact it will have on your ability to become a true leader.

It can feel awkward and vulnerable to weave a faith component into professional leadership, specifically in the workplace. However, if it is rooted in a place of understanding, inclusivity and acceptance, no matter what faith you subscribe to, the message should be well received.

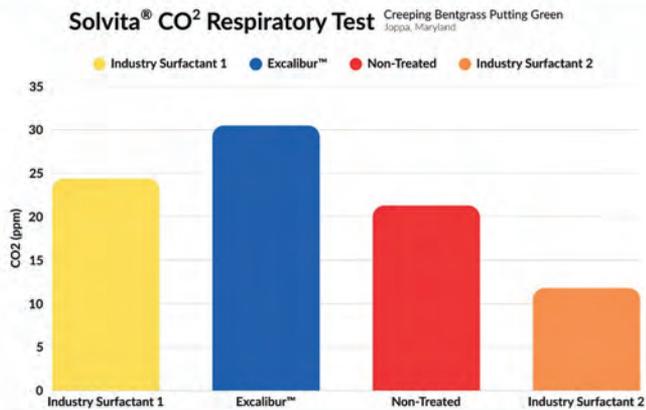
We're not advocating preaching and lecturing to your colleagues. But, personally, if you can find a posture of love and forgiveness flanked with strength and purpose, your leadership will undoubtedly empower, support and guide your organization.

If this message resonates with you, you know it. And if it doesn't, perhaps you should give it a try. 🙏



**DAVE DELSANDRO** and **JEFF CORCORAN** are former superintendents and co-founders of Agronomic Advisors, a consulting firm that assists and advises industry professionals on every aspect of golf course management. Contact them at [dave@agro-advisors.com](mailto:dave@agro-advisors.com) and [jeff@agro-advisors.com](mailto:jeff@agro-advisors.com).

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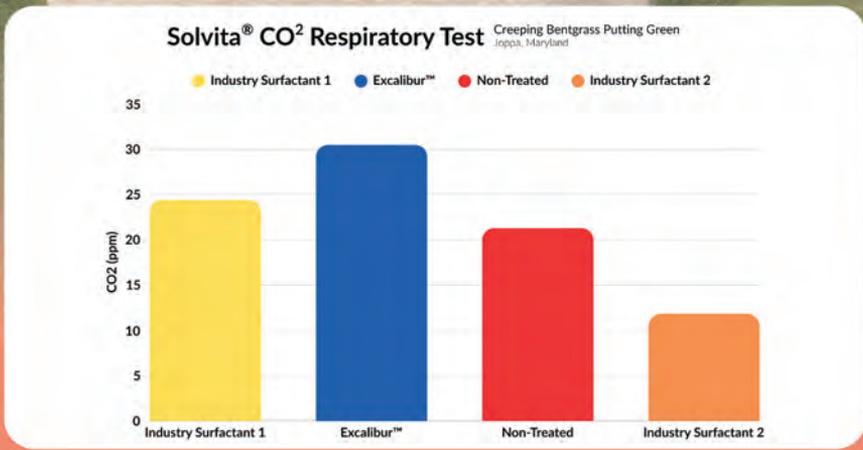
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**DON BLOOM**  
*DURAND EASTMAN GOLF COURSE*

# ROCHESTER MEAT HOT SAUCE

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- Olive oil
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 cup water
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon allspice
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 clove minced garlic

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Smoke at 375 for 35 minutes (flip halfway through).
- Optional sprinkle with Traeger Chicken Rub.
- Shake in sauce and return to smoker for 15 minutes.



## BRENT DOWNS

*OTTER CREEK GOLF COURSE/HARRISON LAKE COUNTRY CLUB*

# ELOTE MEXICAN STREET CORN

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 ears of sweet corn, still in husk
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro
- 1 teaspoon ancho chile powder
- ½ teaspoon taco seasoning
- 1 tablespoon finely sliced green onions
- 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon lime zest
- ½ cup Cotija cheese (crumbled)
- Lime wedges (for garnish)
- Red/green jalapeno slices (for garnish)
- Southwest ranch dressing (for garnish)

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Soak corn in water for 30 minutes.
- Heat a gas grill to 400 degrees, or a charcoal grill to medium-high heat.
- Place corn, husks and all, on grill and cover.
- Grill corn completely, turning every 5 minutes, or until husks have been scorched on each

90-degree turn, to preferred doneness (approximately 20 minutes).

- Remove corn from grill and allow to cool slightly.
- While corn is cooling, begin preparing corn toppings.
- Combine mayonnaise, sour cream and lime juice, and whisk vigorously. Stir together ancho chile powder and taco seasoning.
- After cooling slightly, remove husks and silks from corn and discard.
- Slather 4 ears of corn in mayonnaise mixture, coating ears of corn evenly.
- Sprinkle seasoning blend evenly over all sides of 4 ears of corn.
- Sprinkle crumbled Cotija cheese evenly over all sides of 4 ears of corn.
- Place corn on serving platter and sprinkle lime zest and cilantro evenly over tops of corn.
- Garnish plate with lime wedges, jalapeno slice and dots of southwest Ranch. Add bamboo skewers and enjoy this Summer Festival staple in your own backyard!



**KEVIN HICKS**  
*EARTHWORKS*

# JERKY

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 pack of round roasts from Costco sliced
- 2 cups Yoshida's teriyaki
- 1 cup warm water
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons granulated garlic
- 2 tablespoons Minced onion
- 4–6 tablespoons Cajun season

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Slice meat with the grain in ¼-inch slices.
- Marinade for 12 to 24 hours.
- Split the marinade and the 2 roasts in 2-gallon Ziploc bags and mix every few hours.
- Smoke at 180 degrees for 2 hours, turn over and baste with some of the saved marinade and smoke for another 1 to 1 ½ hours and you're done.



**MARK KOEPSSELL**  
*FROST, INC.*

## ROCK'S FAMOUS GRILLED CHICKEN

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 chicken leg quarters
- 8 chicken wings
- 4 chicken breasts
- 2 sticks of butter
- 2 to 3 tablespoons chopped garlic
- Lawry's Seasoned Salt to taste
- Pepper to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS

- In saucepan, add butter, garlic, Lawry's and pepper. Cook slowly on low to very low for half hour.
- Wash and dry chicken thoroughly. Place chicken bottom side down on grill cook at low to medium. If using a Weber style grill

with charcoal, put chicken around the edges at first or chicken will burn. Turn chicken often.

- Cook for 45 minutes to 1 hour.
- After chicken is cooked, brush on flavor seasoning several times on both sides. Serve with cheesy potatoes and corn.

### CHEESY POTATOES

- 1 bag shredded frozen potatoes
- 1 can cheddar cheese soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 10 ounces sour cream
- ¾ stick of butter
- Lawry's Seasoned Salt and pepper

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Mix soups and sour cream together.
- Add mixture to potatoes, making sure everything is stirred together.
- Put potatoes in glass baking dish.
- Cut butter into cubes and place evenly on top of potatoes. Season with Lawry's and pepper.
- Cook in oven at 350 for about an hour. Potatoes should be bubbly when fully cooked. Set aside for 15 minutes before serving.

### CORN

- A lot of fun things can be done with the corn!



**DANNY MCCONNELL**  
*BEARD EQUIPMENT*

## THE BEST BROWNIES EVER

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 box (16 ounces) fudge brownie mix
- ½ cup unsalted butter, melted
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ¾ cup evaporated milk (divide this: use ¼ cup first, then ½ cup later)
- 2 bags (11 ounces each) caramel bits
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¾ cup semisweet chocolate chips (divided into two portions)
- Flaky sea salt, for the finishing touch

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat your smoker or oven to 350 degrees. (Flavor doesn't matter so much but you can use your smoker with maple or mild wood pellets — adds a subtle extra layer of flavor.)
- Line a 9×9-inch pan with parchment paper, spray lightly with cooking spray,

and leave some overhang so you can pull the brownies out cleanly later.

- In a medium bowl, mix the brownie mix, melted butter, vanilla and ¼ cup of the evaporated milk. The batter will be thick; that's normal.
- Press about 1½ cups of that batter into an even layer in the prepared pan to form the base layer. Put the pan in your smoker/oven and bake for about 7 minutes. Edges will begin to set but center still nice and gooey. Let pan rest for about 10 minutes.
- While that's resting, in a small saucepan over medium heat, whisk the caramel bits with the remaining ½ cup evaporated milk until smooth and silky. Stir in the ½ teaspoon of kosher salt.
- Pour that warm caramel sauce evenly over the brownie base. Then sprinkle about ½ cup (or half of your chips) of the semisweet chocolate chips over the caramel.
- Crumble the remaining brownie batter over top — just bits and chunks so you'll see some caramel peeking through. Sprinkle the rest of the chocolate chips over that.
- Place the pan back in the smoker/oven and bake until the edges are set — about 20 minutes (but keep an eye on it, depending on your equipment). Remove and let cool on a rack.
- Once mostly cool, cover the pan with plastic wrap or foil, then refrigerate for about 1 hour to let everything firm up.
- Use the parchment overhang to lift the whole block out. Cut into squares. Finish each piece with a little sprinkle of flaky sea salt on top.

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**TREVOR PLOETZ**  
*CONCORD CREST GOLF COURSE*

## **KEN'S CHICKEN BAR-B-CUE SAUCE**

*Here is my grandfather's recipe for some fantastic BBQ sauce ...*

### **INGREDIENTS**

- 1 large egg
- ¾ teaspoon pepper
- 4 teaspoons salt
- 1 cup vinegar
- 2 teaspoons poultry seasoning
- 1 cup corn oil

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

- Add egg, pepper, salt and poultry seasoning. Beat with mixer.
- Add:
  - 1 cup vinegar
  - 1 cup corn oil
- Beat with beater.
- Will make enough sauce for 12 halves.



**ANDRZEJ STRZEPEK**  
*BELMONT COUNTRY CLUB*

## STREZ SIGNATURE TEXAS BRISKET

### INGREDIENTS

- Whole brisket, 12–16 pounds
- Salt
- Coarse black pepper
- Garlic powder
- Meat thermometer
- Butcher paper
- Favorite barbecue sauce

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Get your smoker warmed up to 225–250 degrees.
- Trim fat off the brisket, leave about ¼-inch fat cap and remove the silver skin and any thick hard fat from between the point and flat.
- Mix 1 cup salt, 1 cup pepper, ¼ cup garlic powder.
- Rub mix liberally all over the brisket.
- Let brisket sit at room temperature for 30–60 minutes before putting into smoker (helps rub stick).
- Insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the flat from the side (not the top). If you have a second thermometer insert it into the point of the brisket, again from the side.
- Place the brisket in the smoker, fat side up.
- Smoke until internal temperature reaches 160–165 degrees and bark looks dark and firm — about 6–8 hours — depending on how long “The Stall” takes.
- Wrap brisket tightly in butcher paper and return to smoker.
- Continue cooking until internal temperature reaches 195–203 degrees.
- Once desired internal temp is reached, remove brisket from smoker and wrap the brisket, still with the butcher paper, in a large towel and place it in a cooler for 2–4 hours.
- Internal temp should be around 145–155 degrees before slicing.
- Slice against the grain — this changes between the flat and point.
- Serve as is or with your favorite barbecue sauce.

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**ROB UZAR**  
*HAMMOCK CREEK GOLF CLUB*

## SMOKED SALSA

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 beefsteak tomatoes
- ½ red onion
- 1 sweet onion
- 2 jalapeño peppers
- 1 poblano pepper
- 6 cloves garlic
- Cilantro if wanted
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Lime juice

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Cut tomatoes and onions into quarters.
- Cut open peppers and remove seeds if needed.
- Place garlic in foil with extra virgin olive oil and wrap.
- Place everything in smoker at 225 degrees for around 90 minutes.
- When finished, remove from smoker and place in food processor.
- Add chopped cilantro and ingredients into food processor and mix until desired thickness attained.
- Add lime juice and salt to taste.



## PAUL VAN BUREN

KANAWHA CLUB

# PVB'S 1-POT PORK POZOLE VERDE

### INGREDIENTS

- Pork shoulder/pork loin/pork chops (8–10 pounds)
- Tomatillos (6–8 depending on size)
- Garlic (8 cloves)
- Large white onion diced
- Cilantro (1 bunch)
- Bay Leaves (3–4)
- Cumin (4 teaspoons)
- Dried oregano (3 teaspoons)
- Chicken broth (4 quarts)
- Poblano peppers (3–4)
- Jalapeno peppers (3–4)
- Hominy (110-ounce can or more)
- 1 20-ounce jar of salsa verde
- Sliced radish
- Limes (5–6)
- 12 pack of Modelo Especial
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Cotija cheese

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Cube pork into 2-inch cubes and sear over high heat with some olive oil until browned. This will take multiple runs to complete. I'll put in pork loin, boneless pork chops or whatever

is on sale in as well. Remove browned pork cubes and set aside. Save shoulder bone and add with browned pork pieces later.

- While pork is browning, largely chop garlic and peeled tomatillos, and remove stems from peppers. I don't scald my peppers or remove the seeds. It gives it a fresher (greener) flavor.
- Add onion to pot and deglaze fond with one Modelo
- In a blender (a few runs will be necessary) add garlic,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of cilantro bunch (stems and all) peppers, tomatillos, a few lime wedges (you read that right) and some chicken stock. Blend until macerated.
- Return browned pork to onions in the pot.
- Pour blended mix above over the pork and add enough chicken stock to cover pork mixture with 1 inch and bring to a slow boil.
- Add bay leaves, cumin, oregano, juice of 3 limes

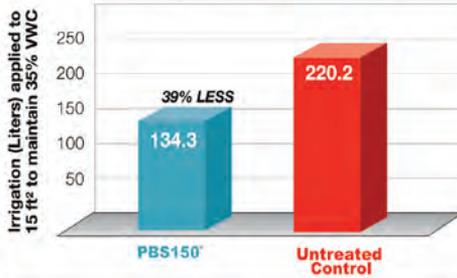
and jar of salsa verde.

- Simmer at a very low boil for about 2–3 hours or until the pork pieces are able to be mashed with the back of a wooden spatula. Remove shoulder bone.
- Add drained hominy and cook for another hour
- Up to the chef if you'd like to remove some of the rendered fat. Once cooled in the fridge, the fat cap is easier to remove. I'll use paper towels to soak up most of the fat while it's hot.
- Salt and pepper to taste and remove bay leaves.
- Garnish with sliced radishes, lime wedges, cilantro and Cotija cheese.

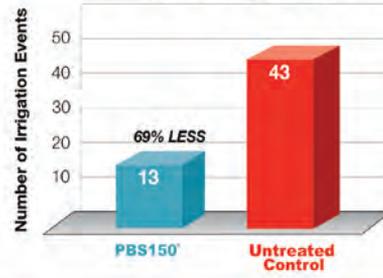
*Chef's note: I like my pozole a little brothier than some, and I like my pork to be in larger chunks vs. cooked into oblivion. Pretty simple recipe for a football weekend and a crew lunch at the shop. We have a small crew, so I bring in storage containers for them to take home. The extra Modelos and spare lime wedges can be consumed during the cooking process if the mood should strike.*



**PBS150** resulted in a **39% reduction** in irrigation water consumption



**PBS150** resulted in a **69% reduction** in irrigation frequency



Evaluation of Two Soil Surfactants for Soil Water Management of Creeping Bentgrass on a Wettable Clay Loam Rootzone During a Dry-down Period

Nolan, G. and M. Fidanza. 2016. *Journal of Environmental Horticulture*

**PBS150** is the **FIRST** surfactant in the turfgrass industry to have peer-reviewed, published research to prove and **quantify water savings**.

Penn State University research study showed that creeping bentgrass plots treated with **PBS150** resulted in a **39% reduction in irrigation water consumption** over a 63-day dry-down period versus plots only treated with irrigation water.

Turfgrass plots that were treated with 3 applications of **PBS150** prior to the 63-day dry-down period required **69% less irrigation events** versus untreated plots that only received irrigation with no soil surfactant.



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