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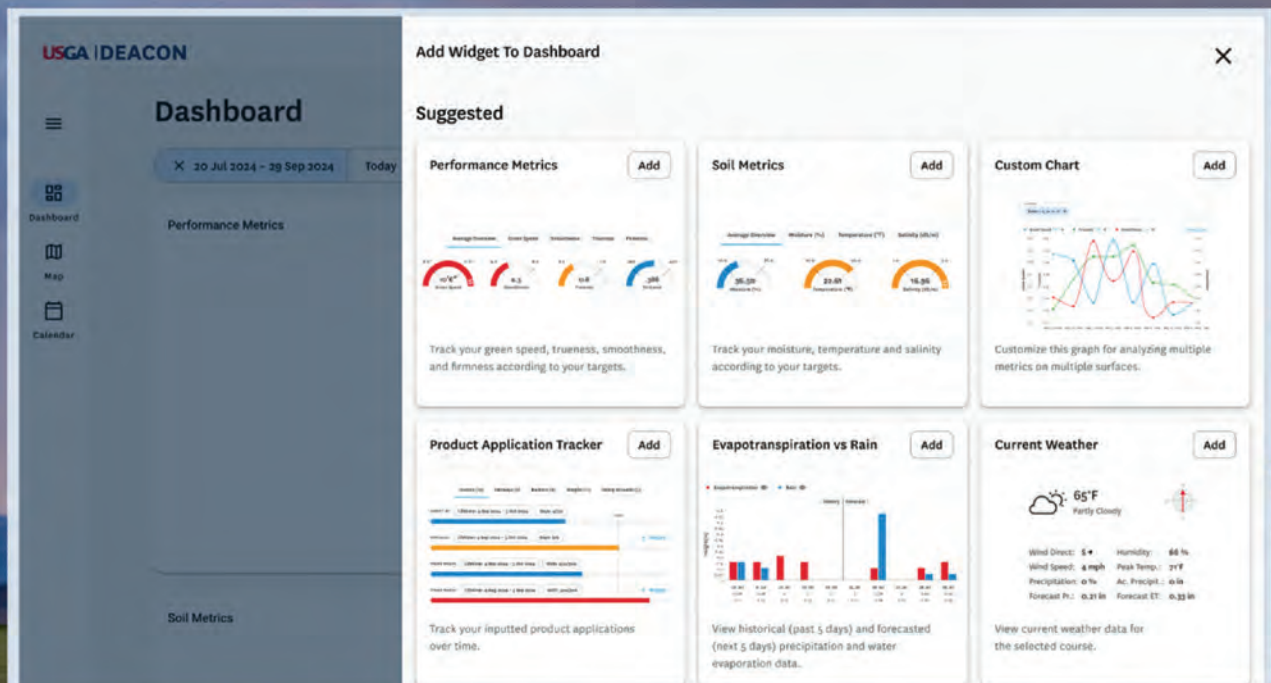
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OUR BIG DAY



What happens when turf teams prepare their courses for impactful charities, invitationals, regional championships, qualifiers for huge events and the arrival of celebrities? They always deliver. Let's celebrate those efforts — again.

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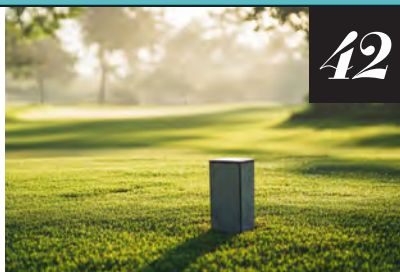
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No matter the special event — charity or championship, invitational or qualifier, even the arrival of celebs — maintenance teams always deliver. Let's celebrate their efforts.

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ANYTHING BUT ROUTINE

Changes in weather conditions, customer desires, activity calendars, and sunrise and sunset times limit the monotony golf maintenance professionals encounter.

Subtle alterations make the profession alluring. Sudden shifts make the job maddening. The variety separates golf from related and unrelated industries.

Mail carriers often walk or drive the same routes. Office workers report to the same cubicles. Chefs guide teams cramming the same kitchens. Placing a fitness tracker on a golf course superintendent invents geometry-defying lines and patterns.

At some point in 2025 nearly every superintendent will lead a crew preparing the course for somebody's big day. For the second straight year, in partnership with BASF, we're celebrating those days when starting times might be a bit different and more people crowd the course. Stories about the least monotonous days on breakroom and Outlook calendars fill the *Our Big Day* section (pages 16-27).

In charming, lake-dotted northern Michigan, superintendent **Jordan Caplan** and the Belvedere Golf Club team welcome the state's best amateur players next month. In the same golf-crowded state, superintendent **Craig McKinley**'s Bucks Run Golf Club team helps raise money for causes supported by the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation and Mecosta County Community Foundation by providing playing surfaces for the two-day Shamrock Invitational. In bordering Ohio, superintendent **Chad Dorrell** and the Springfield Country Club team witness U.S. Open dreams fulfilled—and shattered—in their small central Ohio city.

The way Cog Hill Golf & Country Club director of grounds operations **Reed Anderson** willingly explains it, every day is somebody's big day at Chicagoland's largest golf facility. Think your course hosts some giant outings? Anderson's team supports multiple outings using all 72 of Cog Hill's immensely popular holes.

A facility doesn't need a major metropolitan ZIP code or four regulation layouts to enter the charity or competitive outing business. Venerable 9-holers serve as recreational and social hubs throughout small-town America. Groups ranging from youth wrestling programs to volunteer fire departments can fill modest coffers because of the local golf course. Fundraising, an already challenging endeavor, suffers in communities lacking adequate golf facilities.

The National Golf Foundation released shareable and powerful data in 2023:

- Golf's charitable impact reached \$4.6 billion in 2022
- That total was \$3.2 billion in 2000
- More than 11,000 facilities hosted a charity outing in 2022


The numbers tell a terrific story and should inspire those around you. When your team wonders why it must frantically hustle to complete tasks for a 9 a.m. shotgun or why they must park somewhere else on a random Tuesday, explain how their work helps raise thousands of dollars for veterans, seniors or children. Motivation is about dispensing perspective.

Not all big days exist for charitable purposes. Local, county, regional and state events, member-guests, club championships and qualifiers require turf teams to present tournament-caliber surfaces. Peaking for an event requires persistence and tolerance for working grueling hours.

But event preparation induces adrenaline rushes few professions can match. Smooth, striped and vibrant turf delights golfers and pushes teams to achieve collective excellence. Written goals on a calendar remain an enduring managerial tactic.

Staring down at turf sometimes means avoiding eye contact with the people savoring their big days. A charity scramble, corporate outing and competitive tussle might represent the greatest afternoon of somebody's year. Look around the course during your next outing. Listen to the laughs. Study faces. Tell your team about the joy their work provided for others.

Breaking maintenance monotony for event preparation places unique demands on golf maintenance professionals. The numbers and expressions suggest the effort must be celebrated.

We're doing our small part by sharing stories of relatable moments. You're doing the big part by making communities and lives better by deftly handling tournament day. That story is worth remembering—and tactfully sharing. 



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GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

MISSION STATEMENT
To provide an independent, innovative and inclusive voice for today's — and tomorrow's — golf industry professionals.

Vol. 37 No. 5

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NOTEBOOK



Springdale Resort in Cruso, North Carolina

Diverse education

Assistant editor Kelsie Horner reflects on a recent turf excursion involving a field trip, a certain golf tournament and active construction site.

You can learn a lot from reading, studying and talking with others. But there's no learning experience better than going out in person, walking a golf course and meeting the people who maintain it.

I had the good fortune of visiting a trio of contrasting courses over a three-day span: Springdale Resort in Cruso, North Carolina; Augusta National Golf Club; and Pine Lake Country Club just outside Charlotte. Each course led to unique experiences to reflect on.

Springdale Resort

On a chilly Tuesday morning, our *Golf*

Course Industry editorial staff met outside the rustic clubhouse for the start of a First Green event. A gorgeous view of the sun beamed off the Blue Ridge Mountains following a peaceful night of sleep in the villas. General manager and director of agronomy **Jeremy Boone** enthusiastically welcomed us and let us follow more than 70 sixth-grade students to six stations focusing on tasks and careers on the golf course.

Even after writing about the industry for almost a year now, I learned so much about all the aspects of golf careers. The students were engaged at each station, anxious to learn more and get hands-on experience.

The course is located in western North Carolina and Hurricane Helene devastation was still visible. The maintenance staff revealed the cleanup it required. This aspect made the visit even more meaningful, meeting students, teachers and staff members who have endured so much.

Augusta National Golf Club

"You don't know how lucky you are."

I heard those words many times during our southern road trip. We were fortunate enough to attend the Masters Wednesday practice round and Par 3 Contest. It was an experience I will never forget.

Stepping through the gates at Augusta National is like entering a new world. No phones. Every person is happy to be there. Blooming azaleas and dogwoods line the walkways. The Golf Shop line sat at a 50-minute wait and pimento cheese sandwiches were already being consumed.

When I stepped on the course, the turf took my breath away. No patch of damaged grass spotted. It was clear how much time and energy determined workers put into preparing the course.

Throughout the day I walked the course for the practice round, celebrity hunting



covering construction and renovation, but observing a project in person was astonishing compared to sifting through progress photos. Superintendent **Will Laine** and I rode around the course in his cart as he explained every step of the process. His goldendoodle, **Charlie**, raced ahead of us.

I watched the contractors lay sod, move dirt, shape bunkers and mow greens. Laine explained his career journey and how he joined Pine Lake's staff because of the project. Architect **Jeff Lawrence** (page 8) accompanied us on the tour, explaining each of his decisions and additions. I could see the excitement on his face as he discussed his passion.

This trip was full of so many insightful and diverse educational experiences that I'll carry with me for a lifetime. Each visit taught a variety of lessons. Consider the journey a success.

Kelsie Horner is Golf Course Industry's assistant editor.

by the clubhouse and watching golfers and their families on the par-3 course. Watching the golfers relax and have fun left a smile on my face. I even took time to call my dad from one of the phones, giving him a glimpse of the scene.

Experiencing the Masters in person, as opposed to on television, was educational and inspiring. I'm not sure it will ever sink in just how fortunate I am.

Favorite Masters food: The Georgia peach ice cream sandwich

Favorite golfer to see: Bryson DeChambeau

Favorite Golf Shop purchase: A 1,000-piece Clubhouse puzzle

Favorite scenery: Amen Corner

Pine Lake Country Club

I've worked on numerous stories

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Tartan Talks 106

Few occupations require a professional to demonstrate an abundance of left and right brain tendencies like owning a golf course architecture firm.

Jeff Lawrence, owner of Lawrence Golf Design, describes the two-sided tussle on a *Tartan Talks* podcast. "You get caught up on drawing, designing and drafting," he says, "but you have to keep that pipeline moving forward with client development."

Once Lawrence engages a client, the multitasking doesn't stop, as he bounces between his Greer, South Carolina, base and project sites to deftly handle massive and targeted renovations such as the one at Pine Lake Country Club (page 7). How does a day in the office look? What are his goals when he visits a site?

The episode with Lawrence, along with the entire *Tartan Talks* archives, can be found on the Superintendent Radio Network page of popular podcast distribution platforms.



▲ Jeff Lawrence and Will Laine



PEOPLE NEWS

Dr. Jared Hoyle joined PBI-Gordon Corporation as the marketing manager for the professional turf and ornamental market. Hoyle is responsible for the development and execution of strategic marketing plans to grow PBI-Gordon's professional product portfolio. The company also announced the launch of its new field development team. **Brian Aynardi**, **Alan Estes** and **Kevin Miele** will serve distributors and end-users across the country.

... **Joshua Tapp**, an environmental professional with more than two decades of experience, is the new director of environmental programs for the GCSAA. Tapp will provide direction and program management for environmental and research programs. ...

Josh Del Bene joined AQUA-AID Solutions as its Florida technical manager. ... Advanced Turf Solutions announced **Scott Lund** expanded his role as sales representative to provide demonstrations for Steel Green Manufacturing. ... Pinehurst Resort's **Bob Farren**, CGCS, will receive this year's Distinguished Service Award from the Carolinas GCSA. ... KemperSports and Touchstone Golf are joining forces. Touchstone Golf will operate as a division within KemperSports.



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The 11th hole at Dunedin Golf Club

COURSE NEWS

Dunedin Golf Club, a historic **Donald Ross**-designed public course, completed a \$6 million restoration. The course is returning to its Golden Age roots through the guidance of **Kris Spence**, a leading Ross expert. ... Atlanta Athletic Club members endorsed capital funding for a long-term master plan to update and renovate key operational areas of the club. The investments will touch golf, tennis, athletic and dining operations over the next seven years. Among the more significant changes will be the renovation of the Highlands Course, guided by architect **Andrew Green**. ... Zinkand Golf Design is nearing the completion of a renovation project at Monterey Peninsula Country Club's famed Shore Course in Pebble Beach, California, led by architect **David Zinkand**. The Shore Course opened in 1962 and received critical acclaim after a significant 2003 reimagining by the late golf course architect **Mike Strantz**. ... Montana's Mountain Sky Guest Ranch announced the start of a bunker enhancement project on its Rising Sun Golf Course. Spearheaded by **Davis Love III's** Love Golf Design, the project will include the removal of 10 bunkers, while adding 30 more. The existing bunkers will be modified and updated for improved drainage and edging using the EcoBunker system. ... Tidewater Golf Club wrapped up

its extensive bunker renovation, designed to enhance playability and aesthetics. The South Carolina project started in fall 2024 and included the renovation of all greenside bunkers, repaired drainage, reshaped bunkers for increased playability and aesthetic benefits, and renovated several fairway bunkers to improve sight lines and reduce hidden hazards. ... KemperSports is partner-

ing with Swansea Country Club to manage their semi-private 18-hole golf course and 9-hole par-3 course in Swansea, Massachusetts. ... Troon recently reached a 10-year management agreement renewal with the Chicago Park District to manage the City of Chicago's eight golf facilities, which includes six golf courses, three driving ranges and a miniature golf course.



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The 14th hole at Dunedin Golf Club

Andi Young

TPC SAN ANTONIO

When **Andi Young** joined **Rick Woelfel** for the *Wonderful Women of Golf* podcast, she was in countdown mode, ticking off the days to the arrival of the PGA Tour.

Young is an assistant superintendent at TPC San Antonio. The club's Oaks Course hosted the Valero Open the first weekend in April, the last Tour stop prior to the Masters. It has hosted the tournament since 2010.

Young spends the bulk of her time at the club's Canyon Course, which hosted a Champions Tour event from 2011 to 2015. She notes that the club's agronomic calendar is set up with the Valero Open in mind.

"We're planning all year long," she says. "Our IPM plans, products we can use, products we can't use. Everything — insect control, weed control—is done all year long for that one week."

Young says the fact that the club is part of the TPC network gives it a leg up with its preparations for the Valero Open. Specifically, it receives regular visits from a PGA Tour agronomist.

"He visits us twice a year outside of the tournament," she says. "He'll do inspections and make sure we're in good, healthy, working condition. He knows if we push our greens too far or push our golf course too far, in a way he's responsible. It's nice to be managed by the TPC network because they know not to push it too far."

As is the case with other PGA Tour events, the Tour essentially assumes control of the golf course the week before the event.

"At that point, we're at their discretion," Young says. "Any goals they set, it's our job to meet those goals. We already have an idea what those goals are going to be so we can start preparing beforehand."

Young has been at TPC San Antonio for five years, with her scope of responsibilities gradually expanded under director of agronomy **Roby Robertson**.

"The responsibilities and trust I've been given to make decisions and handle difficult decisions has increased," she says. "I feel trusted to make agronomic decisions and trusted with personnel decisions as well. It really has helped my confidence, my esteem and my level of self-respect to have someone believe in me. It

helps me to believe in myself."

During her time at the club, Young has also completed the requirements for her two-year turf certificate at Penn State, taking her courses online while also raising three daughters.

Two weeks before the Valero Open, Young was at TPC Sawgrass as a volunteer for The Players Championship, where her responsibilities included everything from serving as a bunker captain, to hand watering, to driving a bus.

"I really enjoyed their attention to detail," she says. "I appreciated how they mowed every single fairway line, every single green line, every single tee and approach line. They would have two guys walking with each mower on each path or area of the golf course. I thought that was incredible."

Despite the long hours she put in at The Players, Young found the experience of engaging with her professional peers invigorating.

"It gives you energy to finally get out on the golf course and be able to share what you love to do with people you've never met before," she says, "and you all share the same passion. To just go out there and shine is a feeling I love about tournament golf that I don't really get on a day-to-day basis."

Young discussed the emotions she feels when she has a chance to step back from her work and look at a golf course in tournament condition the same way players, fans and those not connected to the turf industry do.

"I feel a deep sense of pride and accomplishment," she says. "That's a feeling that no one can ever take from me, no amount of money can buy. It's a very precious gift." 🌱



I feel trusted to make agronomic decisions and trusted with personnel decisions as well. It really has helped my confidence, my esteem and my level of self-respect to have someone believe in me. It helps me to believe in myself."



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Steps toward sustainability

Winnetka Golf Club is hitting all the check marks for environmental efforts.



The words Winnetka Golf Club and sustainability have been found in the same sentence quite often recently. The Illinois club earned the Green to a Tee Award from KemperSports this year. Green to a Tee is a structured sustainability program aimed to promote environmental stewardship on golf courses. Winnetka also became a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, the first KemperSports facility to receive all four levels of certification in a single year.

Who are the people behind these conservation achievements, and what efforts are they making at the northern Illinois course?

Winnetka Golf Club opened as a 9-hole facility in 1917, designed by **William Langford**. A few years later, those nine holes were redesigned and nine more were added to complete a full 18-hole course. A 9-hole short course has been added as well.

Andrew Garner worked as director of agronomy from March 2023 through February 2025 during a major stormwater management and course renovation at the club. He has since accepted a job as superintendent of Diablo Country Club, east of Oakland, California, and **Evan Davis** now holds the director of agronomy position. Davis says he's

excited about continuing the environmental efforts at the course.

"Something super important to me is continuing this environmental stewardship in terms of Audubon (International), in terms of preserving the wildlife and the habitats that we have here, to me, is super important," Davis says. "I'm a young guy. I'm 25 and I'm of a new generation of guys that really value sustainability and ecologically friendly practices."

When Garner was hired in 2023, he was tasked with revitalizing out-of-play areas. Revitalization areas focused on native areas, tree-filled land, banks and untouched parts of the course. Habitat revitalization for wildlife was executed alongside the task. In native areas beneath trees, Garner and his team worked to replant grass and create a clean-

er aesthetic. In benefit of the animals, wildlife have a new place to find food from fallen tree branches and leaves. Wildlife sightings are frequent on the course. Animals such as coyotes, squirrels, deer, muskrats and turtles reside on the property.

Throughout course renovations and work, the maintenance team used collected wood and sticks to build insect habitats in out-of-play areas. Following the recent renovation project, wood from construction was chopped and piled to build brush pile habitats for the small creatures.

"It creates a better habitat for some of those lower food chain wildlife and insects. Just kind of supporting the food chain here on the property," Garner says.

The club has created a safe space for birds on the property. Twenty bluebird houses and purple martin birdhouses are placed all around the course, and flocks use them regularly. Blue herons, geese, ducks, cardinals and robins also visit the property.

Last year, an Eagle Scout worked with the course to install two adult bat structures and two juvenile bat structures. "I think the biggest thing about our bat project is that we were able to engage with the Eagle Scouts," Garner says.

Davis plans to emphasize water management and conservation.

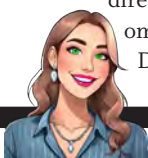
"The new trend in the in-

dustry is firm and fast. Overwatering just creates so many problems," Davis says. "When you overwater, you get thatch. When you get thatch, you're more susceptible to disease. When you're more susceptible to disease, you put out more spray applications and you go at heavier rates. The root of a lot of these problems, in my opinion, is water."

Conservation efforts are made in numerous aspects of the club. The team is working to reduce fertilizer inputs and focus on hot spots instead of blanket applications. They're also working to reduce water usage through irrigation audits and hand watering and are working to reduce energy usage. The club has also planted pollinator gardens throughout the course.

Environmentalism has been at the core of Winnetka Golf Club — during both Gardner's time at the club and for Davis's plans for the role.

"I'm excited to get in here, and what a great honor it is to manage something that is so important to the community," Davis says. "And just to know that I take the responsibility of environmental stewardship seriously, and it's a serious and quintessential part of our economic program. I'm really honored for the opportunity to see the place over, and I'm excited to sustainably practice so future generations can enjoy this property." 



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

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COOL, CALM AND COMMITTING TO THE FUTURE

Fred Couples may be the coolest guy in golf. At 65, he still tells the best stories, makes the girls swoon and has one of the game's most elegant and enviable golf swings. He also carries more hybrids in his bag than irons in an effort to keep up with the modern game.

Cory Isom, the director of agronomy at Portland Golf Club, about a three-hour drive down the I-5 from Couples' hometown of Seattle, says superintendents find themselves in a similar position: at the intersection of cool and technology.

A former USGA agronomist, Isom marvels at advancements such as moisture meters, data collection programs and autonomous mowing. At the same time, he knows that superintendents have produced some amazing results over the years at courses around the world without many of the advanced tools, systems and methods now at their fingertips.

"As cool as some of this technology is, I have to keep reminding myself that we have collectively done a pretty good job of caring for golf courses without this stuff for many decades," Isom says.

That's why he takes a pragmatic view of the role of technology in turf care.

"The lens I look at tech through is, how will it make us better and/or more efficient?" he says. Failing to strike the right balance can turn technology's promises into distractions. "Sometimes, cool doesn't always mean better. I've seen some courses get bogged down in tech."

But he knows there's only one direction and one speed in his pro-

fession: forward and fast.

Ask Isom what adjustments turf managers and agronomic professionals should make immediately and he's quick to settle on two must-have priorities: moisture and water management, and data collection. He calls moisture meters "no-brainers" and is also a fan of programs from companies like ASB taskTracker, GreenKeeper and USGA's DEACON that track and store information that enables superintendents to monitor key aspects of their operations and make informed decisions.

"With moisture sensors, irrigation decisions can be based on data versus feel," Isom says. "Once a course establishes thresholds, it makes irrigating so much more precise. This typically results in using less water to achieve similar or better course conditions."

Advances in data collection allow turf managers to fine-tune their operations continually. "Collecting clipping volumes and comparing that to fertilizer and/or plant growth regulator applications can be very informative for future applications," he says. "You can then compare those to things like green speeds, mowing/rolling frequency, verticutting, and sand topdressing to further refine how you prepare surfaces for play."

Isom has also seen the benefits of scheduling and data collection when it comes to managing crew assignments and tracking labor.

On the analog side of the issue, he's quick to note the profession's time-honored tradition of asking reliable vendors and trusted colleagues for advice and suggestions. He considers it a low-tech but fiscally appealing way of in-

creasing one's own knowledge by leveraging that of others. Three questions he favors:

- Which new technologies do you consider to be most reliable?
- Where have you seen these technologies in use?
- How readily could you and your staff implement the new capabilities and science?

Isom sees autonomous mowing capabilities as the next-to-emerge technology worthy of consideration.

"Autonomous/GPS tech is here," he says. "Some are better than others. With GPS sprayers, if you have a good signal, these can be very good. Precision of application is exceptional."

Going deeper into the details, he adds that, "On the autonomous front, for rough mowing, smaller units from Kress, Husqvarna, Echo and Mammotion are a low-cost entry point into this world. With a lightweight footprint, they can mow in wet conditions better than our traditional rough mowers."

For fairways, he considers FireFly Automatrix "the leader in the clubhouse." He's also been intrigued by international companies now offering aftermarket kits that convert existing fairway mowers into autonomous mowers, noting that the kits offer a cost-effective way to sample the innovative technology.

Isom is one of the thousands of course superintendents who are experiencing firsthand the inexorable pace of change in their business. The trick to keeping up without being distracted by the shiny new object syndrome?

Be more like Freddie. Call it advanced cool. 🍌



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.



DOUBLE DUTY

CHICAGOLAND SUPERINTENDENT **MATT MCDONALD** IS FIGURING OUT HOW TO BALANCE MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT.

By **Matt LaWell**

Everyday maintenance and operations hummed along throughout **Matt McDonald's** first nine seasons at Water's Edge Golf Club in Worth, Illinois. Everything hummed along during his 10th season at the Chicagoland course, too — just to a slightly different tune.

McDonald arrived at Water's Edge a decade ago this month after five years as an assistant superintendent at two other area courses. He honed his craft as the superintendent, developing a 14-person team, working outside five or six hours almost every day and collaborating with folks in the clubhouse to provide a memorable experience in a crowded market. Then he joined those folks in the clubhouse.

Water's Edge operated without a general manager throughout the 2023-24 offseason. As opening day 2024 neared, McDonald told his direct reports at Orion Golf, which manages

the club, that he "would be able to do a bit extra if need be."

"Oh, we're really glad to hear that," he recalls them telling him, "'because you're the guy we're going to trust.'"

The Pittsburgh transplant is still figuring out the finer details of balancing work as both the superintendent and the GM — he now works more indoors than outdoors, and he knows that once the clubhouse pulls you in for the day it is nearly impossible to return to the turf — but after a year in the dual role, he has learned plenty. Chief among those lessons? "Trust people on your team to do a good job," he says. "My management style has always been more guide people than direct people."

That starts with his assistant superintendent, **Brian Lysne**, now in his third season. McDonald delegates plenty of responsibility to Lysne — which, he says, has been perhaps his biggest hurdle.

"If you move onto a new superin-

tendent job, you're off the property, you're gone. You're not there to witness it on a day-to-day basis," he says. "We're not having any issues, it's just giving up that control but still being here every day is a challenge for me."

McDonald also relies on equipment manager **Manuel Gomez**, a 20-plus-year industry veteran who literally walked in one day, said his last course had closed and he needed a new position. He remembered Water's Edge because it appeared in the background of his daughter's wedding photos.

McDonald oversees 11 other maintenance team members, five of them full-timers, though he now works closely with assistant GM **Debbie Schneider**, food and beverage man-

ager **Kristi Chmura** and golf pro **Chris Hoffman**. "As long as I have a strong team," he says, "it's fairly simple."

He has also worked with the management team to engineer a better experience on the course: Water's Edge moved its opening tee time from 30 minutes after sunrise to 7 a.m. every day and extended tee-time intervals from eight minutes to 10. "We didn't lose anything," he says. In fact, rounds played last year remained right around 34,000 and year-over-year revenue actually increased 4 percent.

Course conditions are an important part of that success, and McDonald has relied throughout his decade at Water's Edge on a variety of SePRO products — most notably Legacy and Cutless MEC plant growth regulators.

"Legacy has been the biggest one," McDonald says. The village owns the property and has a 99-year lease with the water reclamation district, and "part of the deal with the construction of the course was they were going to use biosolids. But they used way too much and it is so nutrient-dense that I haven't put a granular piece of fertilizer on any piece of the property except for greens and tees, which are sand-based. Stopping growth is No. 1 on my list." He subscribes to 16 ounces of Legacy per acre every two weeks.

He's also a fan of SePRO's SeClear algaeicide and water quality enhancer and Sonar aquatic herbicide. "We didn't really treat the ponds at all the first couple years and we got algae and duckweed really bad each year," he says. The SeClear and Sonar handle everything.

Even now — more inside than out, learning to hand off responsibilities — there are some constants for McDonald. They even hold the same tune. ■





We create chemistry

OUR BIG DAY

A hand holding a large, ornate silver trophy cup. The trophy has two handles and a wide base. The background is a solid teal color.

What happens when turf teams prepare their courses for impactful charities, invitationals, regional championships, qualifiers for huge events and the arrival of celebrities? They always deliver. Let's celebrate those efforts — again.

OUR BIG DAY



Dear *Golf Course Industry* readers,

As another exciting summer season unfolds, bringing with it the thrill of tournaments and the camaraderie that makes golf so special, BASF remains steadfast in our commitment to supporting the courses and professionals who make these events possible. From club championships and charity outings to regional invitationals, these tournaments are more than just competitions—they are celebrations of the game, the people who play it and the dedicated teams who bring them to life.



At the heart of every tournament are the superintendents and their teams, working tirelessly to prepare immaculate playing conditions for competitors and guests alike. Their expertise, dedication and relentless pursuit of excellence are the foundation of every great golf event. At BASF, we share their passion for exceptional turf quality, and we take immense pride in providing innovative solutions that help them achieve championship-ready conditions.

Our **Intrinsic® brand fungicides** continue to set the standard for turf disease management and plant health, ensuring resilient, stress-tolerant turf that performs under pressure. Lexicon® Intrinsic brand fungicide, now in its second decade of success, remains a trusted cornerstone of high-performance turf management. Navicon® Intrinsic brand fungicide provides reliable disease control even in the toughest summer conditions, while Honor® Intrinsic and Insignia® SC Intrinsic brand fungicides round out a portfolio designed to keep every playing surface at its best.

Now in its second season, Aramax™ Intrinsic brand fungicide is proving to be a game-changer for fairways, offering powerful dual-active disease control with up to 26 labeled turf diseases, including snow mold, large patch, brown patch, and dollar spot. Superintendents who incorporated Aramax Intrinsic brand fungicide into their programs last year saw firsthand how it enhances fairway resilience, and we're excited to continue building on that momentum in 2025 and beyond.

This summer, we celebrate not only the game of golf but the people who dedicate themselves to making every tournament a remarkable experience. Your passion, expertise and commitment to excellence inspire us, and we are honored to stand alongside you in ensuring that every course is primed for success.

Thank you for your dedication to the game, and we look forward to sharing more about our solutions and support in the pages of *Golf Course Industry*.

Sincerely,

Jan Coetzer

Jan Coetzer
Turf Marketing Manager
BASF Professional & Specialty Solutions

U.S. OPEN LOCAL QUALIFYING

ANDALUSIA COUNTRY CLUB LA QUINTA, CALIFORNIA

Qualifying for the U.S. Open: That's a long-shot.

Prepping premier grounds for a U.S. Open local qualifier at Andalusia Country Club in La Quinta, California: That's a lock.

Among five Open local qualifying sites across SoCal's Coachella

Valley — a/k/a Palm Springs — region, the big and bold **Rees Jones**-designed grounds at Andalusia present what is arguably the toughest area gateway to final qualifying. For veteran superintendent **Kevin Wallace**, readying Andalusia for the big day — May 6 — satisfied his crew's competitive juices.

"We try to be as dialed-in as possible,"

Wallace says, "and, setting up for a competitive event like this, it gives a little shot in the veins."

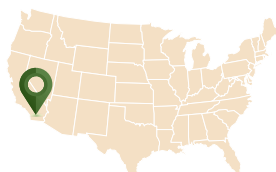
Prep begins with paperwork, as Wallace communicates with the USGA, which works the event in concert with the Southern California Golf Association.

Along with a detailed pre-event checklist — pro shop set-up, scoring tables and tents on Nos. 1 and 10 for a two-tee start — course specs are a key part of the advance work.

"They send us out a preliminary sheet with their parameters and what they're looking for in terms of green speeds and those kinds of things," Wallace says. "And they also come out and look at the course, just looking for ground-under-repair and anything like that. They also handle the pins. But unless they see something that's way out of the ordinary, they pretty much let us do our thing."

Prepping proper big-day green speeds — especially amid the desert's shoulder season — proves premier onus. While the club generally runs fast (around 11 on the Stimpmeter), the qualifier saw an uptick for its 84 entrants.

"By May, we're already in the transition season and trying to convert back to Bermuda, so it makes it a little different animal on the greens, because the growth is much more on the Bermuda-side of things," Wallace says. "So we might have to start double-cutting. Right now (in-season), we'll roll them around four times a week. For the qualifying, just to make sure we're close to 12, we'll roll whatever is needed. I'll start monitoring those speeds every single day for at



least 10 days out. And we'll also closely monitor water and try to dry-down as much as possible."

Across the grounds' 180 acres of turf, 40-plus acres of landscape and nearly 40 acres of lakes — "They don't build 'em like this anymore," Wallace smiles — less-oft equals more come qualifier time.

The USGA and the SCGA "don't want a lot of extra things out there, so we make sure to take out ropes and stakes and some signage and just let 'em have at it," Wallace says. "They don't quite tip it all the way out to our 7,500-plus yards, but they will still play at over 7,300. Course rating is 75.4 and they'll play at 74.9. And the rough, it's not U.S. Open rough, and they're not looking for full-on U.S. Open conditions, so we'll probably be at an inch. But, since the tournament is on a Tuesday, we'll probably hold off that Monday, which will give it five days from the previous cut. I mean, if we let it get to 2 inches? Oh, my gosh."

Come the qualifier scores, Wallace has seen no shortage of trunk-slammers, and . . . maybe a few players not quite the caliber of the event's 0.4-handicap requirement.

"I don't wanna name names," he says with a smile, "but I've seen plenty of guys, head pros, come out for the qualifier and weren't even sniffing it. Weren't even close."

Part of the fun for Wallace and his team isn't merely prepping the grounds and watching the sticks but also trying out the test themselves.

"This crew takes a lot of pride in what we do, and they're fully aware of the qualifier," Wallace says. "And this event is really neat, as we'll have a lot of people who don't normally play here. It's a showcase for us. And the other really cool thing is that not only do our guys want to show that we've got a great golf course, but they also want to play, so the day after, many of our guys will play in the Ironman, and see how they fare in the qualifier setup, same tees and pins."

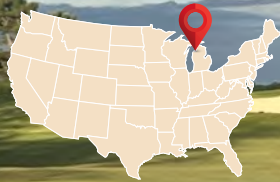
— Judd Spicer



© COURTESY OF ANDALUSIA COUNTRY CLUB

MICHIGAN AMATEUR

BELVEDERE GOLF CLUB
CHARLEVOIX, MICHIGAN



Belvedere Golf Club sits 54 miles from the tip of Michigan's Lower Peninsula in Charlevoix, a buoyant city wedged between Lake Michigan and two translucent inland lakes.

For a century, the club has provided summer escapism for golf aficionados living in mighty Midwest cities such as Detroit and Chicago. And for the last five years, superintendent **Jordan Caplan** has led a veteran golf maintenance team striving to provide an experience to take those golfers back in time.

Designed by renowned architect **Willie Watson**, who experienced the summer dream of living and working in Charlevoix for four seasons in the late 1920s, Belvedere will host the Michigan Amateur Championship for a record 41st time this June. The event has been on the club's calendar since Caplan arrived in northern Michigan five years ago, and he views a 156-player tournament with 36 holes of stroke play followed by six rounds of match play as a laboratory for understanding how a classic design handles elite modern players.

"It will be fun to watch," Caplan says. "There are holes out there where you can hit it far, but you might not want to. You need the golf skillset here and you also need that golf IQ. There's going to be quite an age gap in those who participate. I'm curious to see if the 'veterans' who might not hit it as far as the younger guys can find a way to get around the course maybe a little bit more intelligently."

If conditions are favorable, the course should play as bouncy and strategic as Watson intended, because the calendar works to Belvedere's advantage. The event is June 17-21.

"We're looking to push it and hopefully the weather cooperates," Caplan says. "The one thing that I have learned is that you can push grass in northern Michigan. With our cooler nights, things do bounce back. It will be a fine line between how much we are pushing it and taking into consideration that we have a remainder of a golf season to finish as well."

Northern Michigan boasts an abundance of fabulous golf courses operating under a condensed golf calendar. On the late March afternoon Caplan discussed Belvedere's big

2025 moment, six inches of snow covered the grounds. Belvedere typically opens during the back half of April, with summer crowds arriving around Memorial Day.

Losing a week of the peak golf season represents a big commitment for a frigid-weather club. But history inspires the Belvedere experience.

The club hosted its first Michigan Amateur in 1930. The event returned every year from 1963 through 1988. Belvedere last hosted the tournament in 2014, two years before Watson's original drawings were discovered in a downtown Charlevoix building being demolished. The drawings guided a restoration led by northern Michigan-based architect **Bruce Hepner**.

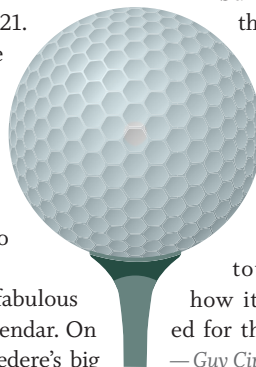
So, why not celebrate Belvedere's centennial by testing Michigan's marvelousness on a throwback layout tipping out at under 7,000 yards?

"It's a testament to the old-school architecture of the club," Caplan says. "Back in the day, it was a stern test for the tournament. Even in modern times, despite its length, it's still tricky around the greens and you have to place the ball right with your drives. It's cool to bring in the best in the state ... and it's not going to be a pushover."

Summer 2025 officially commences on June 20, the penultimate day of the tournament. A trip to Charlevoix to play a preserved Golden Age layout multiple times sounds like a perfect way to begin a Michigan summer. Caplan's team embraces making those delightful memories possible.

"Almost everybody on our crew has been here since before I arrived," he says. "And some of them have been through this tournament before back in 2014. They know how it works — and they're excited, too. I'm excited for their hard work to be on display for that week."

— Guy Cipriano





We create chemistry

THE SHAMROCK INVITATIONAL

BUCKS RUN GOLF CLUB
MOUNT PLEASANT, MICHIGAN



Hosting the 48th annual Shamrock Invitational at Bucks Run Golf Club provides a chance for superintendent **Craig McKinley** and his team to give back to Michigan's Mount Pleasant and Mecosta County communities. The event, scheduled for July 16, is held as a two-player scramble on the 18-hole **Jerry Matthews**-designed course.

"The company that I work for, The Fisher Companies, has always been a very giving organization," McKinley says. "They're active in the community. This is just another way for me to be a part of that. Those guys can write the checks, and these construction companies can be a part of that community. This is my way of participating in the company's generosity, and my way of participating in the good that they do in our community."

The two-day event raises money through golf, dinner and games for the Shamrock Fund, which donates proceeds to the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation in Isabella County and to Mecosta County Community Foundation in Mecosta County. The organizations donate to numerous community causes such as the Humane Society, student scholarship funds and soup kitchens. Nearly 10 scholarships are given to local high school students graduating. Shamrock Invitational committee president **Kim Von Kronenberger** says the foundation donated upwards of \$50,000 to charities in 2024.

The event began in 1977 and was originally called the **Michael Sweeney** Memorial Golf Tournament for the benefit of the American Heart Association in Mecosta County. The name has changed numerous times, eventually landing on The Shamrock Invitational Golf Outing. The outing location rotates between Bucks Run, St. Ives Golf Course and Tullymore Golf Resort.

"I remember when I was told that the Shamrock Invitational was coming here, I was very excited for that because in this area, it's a huge deal," McKinley says. "It's the who's who. They're all big golfers, they're all good people, so we always

try to put our best foot forward."

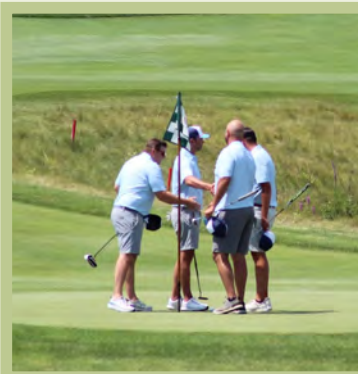
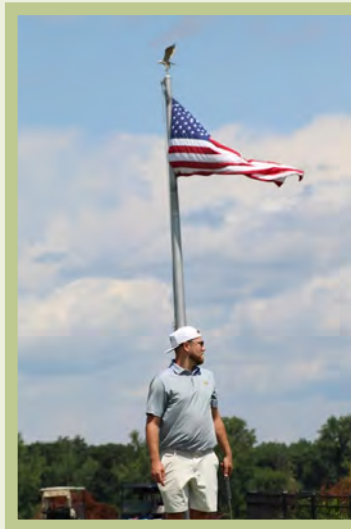
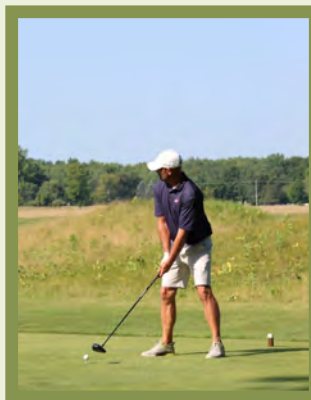
The outing comes just a few days after the club's member-guest outing, so the maintenance staff is "already in the zone." Evening mows are completed two to three days before the event to finalize green speeds and the preparation gets the staff excited.

"They just kind of feel from our management staff how big of a deal it is," McKinley says, "and this is our way of putting the vessel forward for our facility where these guys get to see that."

The tournament kicks off with a cocktail party on Tuesday night, attended by participants and their spouses. Wednesday brings the golf tournament and a 10-team, two-person horse race. Other golfers watch the elimination tournament and dinner is held in the evening.

The event will be held at Bucks Run in 2026, and the 50th anniversary celebration will be at Tullymore in 2027. "We're excited about the next few years," Kronenberger says.

—Kelsie Horner





CDGA CHICAGO ADAPTIVE OPEN

COG HILL GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB
LEMONT, ILLINOIS

Cog Hill Golf & Country Club, a four-course Chicagoland public golf behemoth, deftly balances business obligations with using the game for the greater good. The bustling nature of Cog Hill means employees see nearly every imaginable outing in a calendar year.

And, unlike some other cool-weather facilities, Cog Hill uses as much of the calendar as possible. Christmas Day is the only scheduled closing. Day after day, month after month, outings help fill the four courses. Even in January, arguably the harshest of Windy City months, Cog Hill conducts the aptly named Eskimo Open on Courses No. 1 and No. 3. Once temperatures fully thaw, the outing business becomes brisk.

"Every day from the middle of May through October — I don't want to say it feels like an event day — it is an event day," director of grounds operations **Reed Anderson** says. "We will have a shotgun almost daily on a golf course during that time frame and if we don't have a shotgun, it's 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. full tee sheets. There are no breaks. We have to be real creative on how we get stuff done around here."

From events conducted by major golf associations to four-course corporate outings, the Cog Hill staff provides memorable experiences for participants of nearly every imaginable type of outing. Consider it the work-here, seen-it mantra guiding Anderson's team of more than 70 employees.

"I'd like to think we make it shine every day," he says. "That's part of the reason why I take such pride in having this job because we get to put out such a great product for anybody in Chicago to play 364 days a year. I'd like to think we don't need to put too much lipstick on for tournament

days — however we do. We might double cut, we throw in an extra roll or cut the water to firm things up. We feel like we're good every day so we don't have to take the extra steps, but there are certainly a few little wrinkles we can add in if we need to."

Last year Anderson's team hosted a unique event on the No. 3 course: the inaugural Chicago District Golf Association Chicago Adaptive Open. The tournament included golfers with physical and intellectual disabilities competing across 15 sport classifications. The par-72 layout had yardage setups of 4,807, 5,843 and 6,060 as players started rounds on the first and 10th tees.

Ensuring players could safely enter and exit bunkers required the crew to add sand or ramps to some of the course's steeper bunkers, with the goal of keeping as many hazards in play for the event as possible. For many employees, the tournament represented the first experience hosting an adaptive event. Reasons behind temporarily altering bunkers and storing dozens of wheelchairs in the maintenance facility resonated with the crew once they learned about the tournament's inspirational participants.

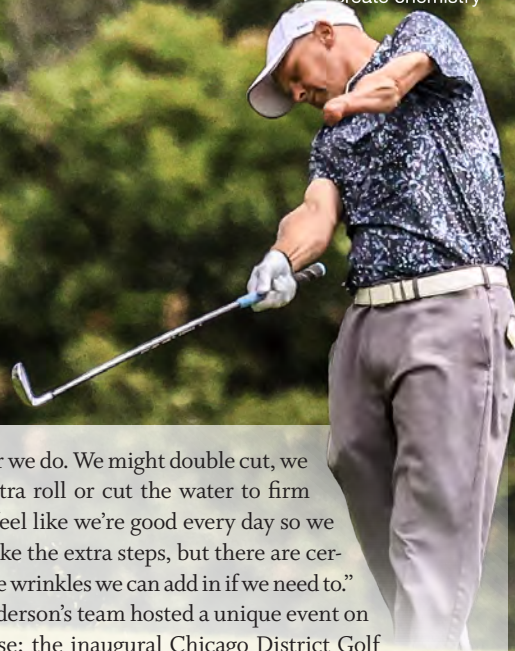
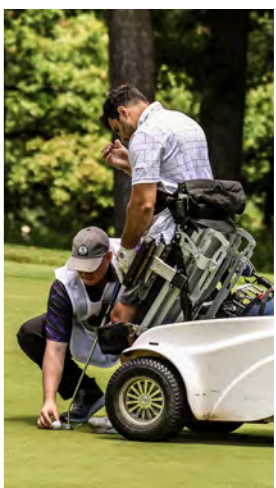
"Throwing extra sand at the bottom of the bunker probably didn't make sense to some of the guys until they understood who was going to be playing he golf course," Anderson says. "We informed our team what was going on so they could get excited about it. There were some cameras and that type of stuff around. It's exciting when their product gets to be showcased a little bit."

In typical Cog Hill fashion, activity didn't slow on the facility's other three courses as adaptive golfers were competing for money and ranking points. Courses No. 1, 2 and 4 were packed during that weekend. "It never stops here to the say the least — including on event days," Anderson says.

Impactful outings and robust play numbers will likely always remain a Cog Hill staple.

"This place has done so much for golf in Chicago, golf in Illinois and golf as a whole," Anderson says. "We're proud to host some of these cool events."

— Guy Cipriano

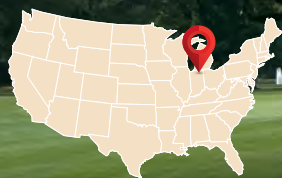




We create chemistry

PRO/SUPER INVITATIONAL

ELCONA COUNTRY CLUB
BRISTOL, INDIANA



Elcona Country Club hosted its third Pro/Super Invitational April 28 for the benefit of the Wee One Foundation. Opened in 1956 and designed by **Bill Diddle**, Elcona is home to an 18-hole parkland-style course.

The event was previously held by the PGA at rotated host sites but ended a few years ago. Superintendent **Ryan Cummings** and head golf pro **Zach Dryer** decided to bring the event back and host it at Elcona.

"We had kind of said, 'Hey, we should host that every year. We should get it going again, because it is a lot of fun,'" Cummings says. "It's a great way to network and for Zach to talk to fellow golf professionals and, for myself, fellow superintendents."

The tournament returned in 2023. While considering options, Dryer had another idea. What if the tournament was for something more?

Proceeds from the event are now donated to two organizations — the Wee One Foundation and PGA Hope. The Wee One Foundation was founded in 2004 in memory of superintendent **Wayne Otto** and distributes funds to those in the industry dealing with medical issues. PGA Hope introduces the game to veterans and active-duty military members. In even-numbered years, profits go to PGA Hope; in odd-numbered years, to the Wee One Foundation. That means this year's tournament will benefit Wee One, which has proved close to Cummings' heart.

"The Wee One Foundation does such great work for our superintendents and their families that, for whatever reason, have some health issues that burden them financially, and this foundation just gives back so much to those families," Cum-

mings says. "It's just a great thing to be a part of."

The event has grown in both participation and funds raised each of the last two years. In 2023, more than \$4,000 was raised among 26 players, and more than \$6,000 was raised last year.

This year, Cummings says the field should reach 50 to 75 players.

The tournament is a day for superintendents and their pros to come together and have fun. But that's nothing new for Cummings and Dryer.

"We just try to make each day fun and try not to make it a job," Cummings says. "The old adage, you never work a day in your life if you enjoy what you're doing, that's kind of what Zach and I try to instill in our staff every day and with our relationship personally."

Cummings and his team prepare for hosting the tournament the same way they would for a high-end tournament. "That late April window is the beginning of our prime conditioning season, so we go all out," he says. The tournament falls on the same weekend as the club's opening men's event.

Hosting the event is another way Elcona can give back to the turfgrass community. It provides an opportunity for superintendents in Indiana, Illinois and Michigan to gather at Elcona, which is what excites Cummings most.

"It's providing them that refuge," he says, "to get away from their golf course and their day-to-day grind from their facility."

—Kelsie Horner





October 23, 1993, is a date etched in the collective memory of even casual Canadian sports fans. With one swing of the bat, **Joe Carter** became a national hero. Thirty-two years since his walk-off home run in the bottom of the ninth inning—sealing the second of the Blue Jays’ back-to-back World Series titles—the retired major leaguer gives back to the country and the community that gave him so much during his seven seasons in Toronto.

The Joe Carter Golf Classic started in 2010. Since then, it’s grown from a one-day event that raised \$75,000 to a two-day celebration that has raised more than \$5 million in support of a variety of charities, including Jays Care Foundation, Cardiac Kids, Princess Margaret Foundation and the Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada.

“I’m proud that it’s grown to be the largest and most recognized celebrity golf tournament in Canada,” says **Rahul Mehta**, executive director of business development at ClubLink, who has spearheaded the coordination of this event since the start.

For the first decade, Eagles Nest Golf Club hosted the Classic, but for the past six years Glen Abbey Golf Club has played host. **Jack Nicklaus** designed “the Abbey,” which opened in 1976 and was constructed by the Royal Canadian Golf Association (now Golf Canada) as the home of the Canadian Open. ClubLink purchased the course in 1999 from Golf Canada. The 16th annual tournament is June 17-18. Glen Abbey superintendent **Andrew Gyba** and his team look forward to this event as much as the golfers.

“The Joe Carter Charity Golf Classic is our premier corporate event of the season,” says Gyba, who enters his 14th season at Glen Abbey. “It’s definitely the one where everybody goes above and beyond. We treat it a lot like we would a PGA Tour event. We slowly try to ramp up our green speed every day as the tournament approaches to make sure that come



event day they are firm and fast to give players a consistent experience.”

Glen Abbey is no stranger to big-time events and being in the spotlight. The course has hosted the PGA Tour’s RBC Canadian Open 30 times, so it’s not surprising Gyba treats the Classic the same as if he was preparing the course to test some of the world’s greatest players.

“For the turf department, it’s reminiscent of all the years we hosted the PGA Tour’s lone stop on Canadian soil,” Gyba says. “It’s not quite the same intensity and preparation we implemented prior to hosting our national championship, but it’s the same level of care, dedication and preparation that we put into preparing the course for premier member events like our annual club championship or member-guest.”

Celebrities who have played in the Classic over the years include sporting greats from all the major leagues including **Charles Barkley, Julius Erving, Gordie Howe, Wayne Gretzky, Emmitt Smith, Dan Marino, Tim Lincecum and Ozzie Smith**. In 2014, a fun and friendly Celebrity Skins Day was added to extend the event to a two-day affair.

Despite the extra hours—and the long days to make sure the course is ready for the celebrities, sponsors and participants—the added pressure is what makes the event so much fun for Gyba and his team.

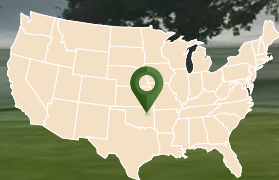
“My team and I put pressure on ourselves to deliver the best product possible every day, but it’s extra exciting to prepare for a high-profile event like the Joe Carter Classic,” the superintendent says. “The staff love prepping for it. It’s a ton of work, not just for my crew, which averages between 20 and 25, but also for the golf operations staff and the corporate event staff. ... They’re working on this event for months to make sure everything goes off without a hitch that day.”

—David McPherson



We create chemistry

ANNIKA WOMEN'S ALL PRO TOUR FCA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP



THE CLUB AT INDIAN SPRINGS
BROKEN ARROW, OKLAHOMA

For the fourth year, The Club at Indian Springs hosted the ANNIKA Women's All Pro Tour FCA Women's Championship in May. The Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, course is home to a 36-hole facility maintained by superintendent **David Jones** and his crew.

The club, which features the River Course and the Lakes Course, has previously hosted the All Pro Tour championships among other big events.

To prepare for the tournament, the maintenance teams focus on fixing up the bunkers. Detail work is key, edging and cleaning each one. The team also must roll and mow greens each day leading up to the event to get green speeds to the expectations of the tournament director. "We want the whole course to be in tip-top shape for them," Jones says.

Jones credits his team and the club's staff

for successfully hosting tournaments. The turf team includes assistant superintendents **Chuck Collins** and **Russell Fasig**. "It's a team effort," Jones says. "There's no way I could do this by myself, and I have two great assistants that help me out, because we do have 36 holes, two courses, so it's a lot of work to take on. But if we didn't have the staff and the crew that we do have, we wouldn't be able to do it."

Continuing to be chosen as the host site for the FCA Championship is a testament to the maintenance teams' dedication.

"It's been very rewarding to have these people coming from all over the country, all over the world," Jones says. "These ladies were coming from all over and they're very complimentary and telling us our course is really great."

"If they come back, that means we're doing something right because it's a facility

they enjoy coming back to because they know the conditions are going to be good. It makes me and my team feel really great, because we know we're doing the right thing and have a great product to give to those ladies. These guys have been with me a long time, so they kind of know the process, and they know what's expected of them. And they go above and beyond every year."

Jones also credits vendors and club members for their success. Members look forward to hosting — it gives them an opportunity to volunteer — and the event helps kick off the peak golf season.

"It's kind of the season when everything's starting to get ramped up," Jones says, "so it's nice to have this tournament to set the tone for the rest of the year."

— Kelsie Horner





U.S. OPEN FINAL QUALIFYING

SPRINGFIELD COUNTRY CLUB
SPRINGFIELD, OHIO



It was around 9 p.m. on June 3 when more than 100 club members and interested spectators were gathered around the 12th green at Springfield Country Club. The sun was setting, and **Cameron Davis** and **Adam Scott** were locked in a playoff to determine who would qualify through to the 2024 U.S. Open at Pinehurst.

Davis did. The playoff was followed closely because Scott hadn't missed a major since 2001. Final qualifying, known as "golf's longest day," takes place over 36 holes, and occasionally more. "The event is really good for our club and our community," says **Chad Dorrell**, the superintendent at the Ohio club since 2003.

"It's exciting for my team to have players of this caliber here," Dorrell adds. "We want to put our best foot forward, like any day, but we tighten the screws. We provide the best conditions we can to identify who will advance to our national championship. The whole team takes a lot of pride in it."

Dorrell has numerous high school and college students on his staff of up to 18 members in peak season and they talk about the qualifying event during the interview process. "We explain that it is a hectic first

few weeks," Dorrell says, "but then we catch our breath."

Designed by **Donald Ross**, the course is a par-72 covering 6,684 yards. The 2025 event will be the 16th time Springfield has hosted final qualifying. The event is organized by Miami Valley Golf Association, represented by **Steve Jurick**, in conjunction with the USGA. On the day, there are dozens of volunteers.

"We have done all of these together, Steve and I, so it is a well-oiled machine right now," Dorrell says. "If a player doesn't qualify, our goal is that it's not because of something we did. We stress that it's our day to be perfect because we don't want to stand in the way of someone not getting to the U.S. Open. There is some pressure, but excitement that goes with it."

They bring in six or seven golf maintenance volunteers to help, usually other regional superintendents. "Tee times start at 7 a.m. off No. 1 and No. 10," Dorrell says. "We mow and get everything done as quick as we can, get out of the way and let the day happen." Many staff members are finished working by 8 a.m. and a few will stay to manage any issues. Almost everyone finds time to enjoy watching.

Several staff play and follow golf, and they talk about weekly leaderboards with players who have been through Springfield. The Chamber of Commerce hosts lunch for the

players, caddies and their families between rounds. Small things and a friendly atmosphere contribute to make the day great.

From coverage on the Golf Channel to spectators who are close to the action, the membership is very supportive. "There is some disruption because we bring the rough height up and speed up the greens," Dorrell says. They close the course to carts 36 hours before the event and almost everyone plays a practice round the Sunday prior.

"We try to bring things up to speed about two weeks out. We want anyone practicing to see the same conditions they will see on Monday," Dorrell says. "By 9 on Tuesday morning, it's hard to tell we had an event. The etiquette of the players is great." So are their grateful attitudes.

As Dorrell gave Scott a ride back to the clubhouse after the playoff, Scott complimented him and the maintenance team. They exchanged some witty remarks. Fortunately, Scott did make it into the 2024 U.S. Open as a result of his official world golf ranking. His major streak continues, and Springfield continues to host U.S. Open qualifying. On June 2, 2025, the agronomy team, the members and the volunteers will work together to proudly host more U.S. Open hopefuls.

— Lee Carr

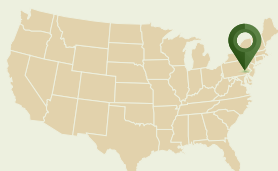


© CHAD DORRELL (2)



We create chemistry

MEMBER-GUEST INVITATIONAL



WHITEMARSH VALLEY COUNTRY CLUB LAFAYETTE HILL, PENNSYLVANIA

Even by Philadelphia standards, Whitmarsh Valley Country Club has a rich golfing legacy. The golf course, which opened for play in 1908, is the work of legendary architect **George Thomas**. Through the years, the club has hosted the 1917 U.S. Patriotic Open—which replaced the U.S. Open that year—the 1934 U.S. Women’s Amateur and the 1951 Women’s Western Open, a major championship at the time. From 1963 to 1980, Whitmarsh Valley was a tour stop.

Today, the club regularly hosts Golf Association of Philadelphia events but its member-guest event, which is traditionally held the third week in June is the “big day” on the calendar.

Superintendent **Darren Farrar**, who is in his third year at the club, is committed to making it a memorable experience for the participants.

“I’d say arguably your member-guest and then your member-member tournament, those are your big tournaments where you really want to focus on producing some of your best playing conditions,” he says.

Last year, Farrar, who earned a bachelor’s degree from NC State and an associate’s degree in turfgrass and business management from Guilford College, got a head start on member-guest preparations because Whitmarsh Valley hosted the Philadelphia Amateur the week before. Typically, however, the member-guest involves two weeks of preparation.

“Basically, what I try and focus on is any cultural practices,” Farrar says, “like brush cutting, verticutting, just trying to thin out the canopy of the greens a little bit so I can help myself get the green speeds I’m looking for like 12, 12½, all the way up to 14. Fourteen is really the highest I want

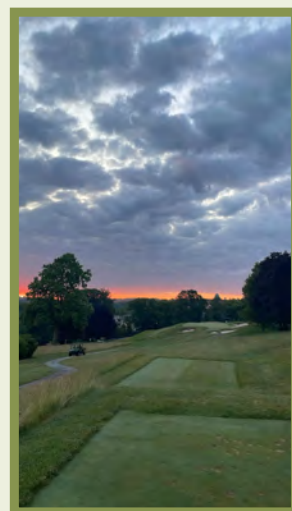
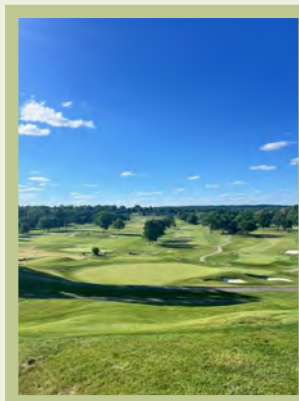


to get green speeds. Anything over that the pace of play kind of gets a little bit out of hand.”

With an eye on pace of play, Farrar is careful to keep the rough in the 2½- to 2¾-inch range for member-guest events. Farrar says his goal is to produce fast and firm conditions for the occasion.

“Two weeks out we try to get in any sort of brushcutting, verticutting, light top-dressing,” he says, “just to kind of smooth out the greens. I always back off fertilizers, applications, you always want the greens to be very lean. You really don’t want them growing very much, so we’re going to back off the fertility. We’re going to go out with plant growth regulators to make sure we’re regulating the growth of the plant.”

“At that point, once I know the greens are leaned out and I have a couple brushcuts and verticuts and get the grain and texture of the plant growing the way I want it, it really makes my life a lot easier to get



those fast speeds.”

Farrar notes that the lead up to a major event like a member-guest includes scheduling issues and long hours for his crew. The actual days of the event might mean an especially early workload depending on whether a double-tee or shotgun start is being utilized.

“Going into a big tournament, we kind of do split shifts,” Farrar says. “Late evening, once the golf is starting

to wrap up, we come back and try to plug divots, fill divots. Sometimes we’ll try to mow fairways or tees or anything else since it’s a big tournament and you’re trying to get a lot of people on the golf course as early as possible. You can’t really get things done that we can normally get done on a regular day of golf.

“You’re trying to run split shifts and do as much as you possibly can so that the experience of your member and your guest is hopefully going to be something they’ll always remember.”

—Rick Woelfel



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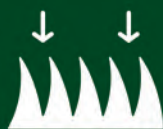
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IMAGINE HAVING A CREW LIKE THAT

The 2007 U.S. Open at Oakmont Country Club provided a launching point for epic industry careers still going strong today.

By **Lee Carr**

Oakmont Country Club's famed golf course was designed by **Henry Clay Fownes**, along with input from his brother **William Fownes**. Henry's son, **W.C. Fownes Jr.**, who was named after his uncle, also worked on the course. Fownes designed no other courses. Oakmont is one of a kind, a National Historic Landmark located northeast of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

For more than a century, hundreds of maintenance team members have cared for the grounds and the course, which officially opened for play Oct. 1, 1904. Architects **Arthur Jack Snyder**, **Arthur Hills**, **Arnold Palmer**, **Tom Marzolf** and **Gil Hanse**, among others, have all contributed, but the challenging spirit of Fownes remains. The original

architecture has been the foundation for golf history that has proudly, oft dramatically, rolled across the *Poa annua* greens.

The Oakmont membership demands excellence and, since 1919, has hosted nine U.S. Opens, six U.S. Amateurs, three PGA Championships and two U.S. Women's Opens. They are preparing to host the 2025 U.S. Open, church pew bunkers and all, and have been awarded several other prestigious events.

The 2007 U.S. Open, prepared for by an outstanding agronomy team of approximately 40 members led by superintendent **John Zimmers**, was won by **Angel Cabrera** with a score of 5 over par. **Tiger Woods** and **Jim Furyk** finished one stroke back after an intense final round. The weather and conditions throughout the tournament were good, a blessing, because the lead-up to the event



was a masterclass in perseverance.

"If you want to have a successful championship, it's before, during and after," says Zimmers, currently the superintendent at Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio. "With the after, a lot of people go into a let-down or a depression. I don't know that that has ever happened to me.

"It's like, we got this where we were supposed to, we had a great championship, now we need to put it back together for our membership."

Every phase of a championship has its own exigencies.

BEFORE

Oakmont Country Club was established in 1903, celebrating its centennial in 2003, the same year it hosted the U.S. Amateur won by **Nick Flanagan**, from Australia. The club had already been awarded the 2007 U.S. Open, and of particular interest during the event was the pedestrian bridge installed across Interstate 76, the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Oakmont is bordered to the north by the Allegheny River and is bisected by the turnpike, with Nos. 2-8 on the east side of the property and the clubhouse and remaining holes located to the west. The new pedestrian bridge was built parallel to the original and vastly improved player and gallery flow, necessary because the crowd sizes at championships were rapidly growing.

Zimmers was hired in 1999, young but already possessing championship and construction experience. He had, and has maintained, a good relationship with the USGA from his time as **Paul R. Latshaw's** assistant at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland, when it hosted the 1995 U.S. Senior Open. Zimmers then became the superintendent at Sand Ridge Golf Club in Chardon, Ohio, before the first tree came down. That construction experience proved helpful.

At Oakmont, thousands of trees were removed in the lead-up to the U.S. Open, restoring the course to the appearance it had when Fownes designed it. Removing the trees did not vastly affect the difficulty of the course, though severely penal graduated rough, introduced the previous year at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, New York, for the 2006 U.S. Open, certainly did.

The course changes heightened anticipation for the event. "Preparations begin easily two years out, including booking hotels for volunteers," Zimmers says. "I remember the challenges. It was still close to 9/11, so security was tight and we had to do background checks. So much happens behind the scenes that has nothing to do with the championship."

Chris Markel, current superintendent of Grove City Country Club in Grove City, Pennsylvania, was the superintendent of Oakmont East, the 18-hole public course next to the private course. Markel helped supervise the contractors who built the grandstands, tents and other elements designed for accommodating thousands of spectators. **Josh Pope** worked at Oakmont East before switching over to work with Zimmers in 2003.

"There will never be a turf team assembled like the one that we had in '07," Pope says. "It was talent stacked from top to bottom. We set the standard for U.S. Open conditions that has lasted to this day."

Brendon Clark, previously an assistant at Oakmont and now superintendent of grounds at Inverness, agrees. "The team we had in 2007 was the best turfgrass team on the planet that year," Clark says. "The U.S. Open was a real credit to John's management style and the team assembled."

That team extended through the administration. **Tom Wallace** was a fantastic general manager and very supportive of the grounds operations. **Bob Wagner** was critical to the championship and representing Oakmont. Zimmers also worked closely with **Rob Hoffman**, who has served as grounds chairman and president of Oakmont.

"Robbie is a super guy," Zimmers says. "We worked hand-in-hand to do the bridge, tree removal, water man-



agement and more.” Throughout the preparations, relationships with the administration, the membership, the agronomy staff, the USGA and contracted professionals all had to be balanced.

Zimmers organized the team and knew hosting his first major would take extra preparation. His friend and colleague **Eric Greytok** was the director of golf course maintenance at Winged Foot. Zimmers flew to New York every other week to learn alongside him in the lead-up to the 2006 event.

“I would jump a flight and go up and back in the same day,” Zimmers says. “Eric was kind enough to do that. I watched how they built things and what was going on. That was a big, big help for me.”

One great observation was the necessity to carry on when the weather was poor by using plywood and mats—or whatever else was necessary. At Oakmont, there were crew members who spent weeks moving plywood around for some of the heavy machinery. This protects the grounds,

extends a professional courtesy, and facilitates communication between the construction crews and the agronomy team.

Another key lesson from Winged Foot was how to integrate the graduated rough. “They had primary rough and deep rough, and I wanted to see this and understand it. I really, really did a lot of homework,” Zimmers says. “When the USGA came, there was an agreement in place. The club signed up for it and my position was, If this is what you want, how can I make it happen? How can I deliver what you are trying to do for the best championship in the world?”

So, there was the growing popularity of championships, the new bridge and the commitment to the preparations. Early on, Zimmers was also working with Marzolf, who he knew from Sand Ridge. “They did a remarkable job, helping restore the Fownes work,” Zimmers says. “Tree removal wasn’t as acceptable back then but there are things people don’t realize. We took out a lot of trees but some of them were to create areas for

hospitality tents and bussing people in for security.”

Marzolf remembers being selected by Oakmont for the course work, starting immediately after Fazio Design was hired. “My job quickly became listening to the club and the USGA, helping everyone get what they want. That turned into a lot of construction,” Marzolf says. “The USGA wanted to narrow the fairways, shift the bunkers and build back tees. Some greens needed changing to create four different hole locations that were fair at high speed. We added length all over.”

The course changed a lot in a relatively short amount of time, which was tough on the membership. The changes became tough on Zimmers, Marzolf and the team, too. The process required a lot of trust from everyone because it was a hard golf course, and it was getting harder.

“The fairways had to be 25 yards wide and we had bunkers to the left and right,” Marzolf remembers. “You would pick a side and hold that line and those bunkers but then you had to move everything on the opposite

Career notes: John Zimmers

In spending time with **John Zimmers**, two cornerstones of his career become apparent. First, he expects excellence from himself and others. Superior course conditions will be achieved and he does not shy away from the work, responsibilities or sacrifices required to achieve those results. Second, through example, instruction and thoughtful placements, he has helped develop countless careers. Zimmers often speaks fondly about — and is so proud of — the people with whom he has worked. He creates and executes meticulous plans — just one reason he has been trusted with these career milestones:

1995 U.S. Senior Open: Congressional Country Club, assistant to **Paul R. Latshaw**

1997 U.S. Open: Congressional Country Club, volunteer

1999 U.S. Open Regional Qualifier: Sand Ridge Golf Club, superintendent

2003 U.S. Amateur: Oakmont Country Club, superintendent

2007 U.S. Open: Oakmont Country Club, superintendent

2010 U.S. Women's Open: Oakmont Country Club, superintendent

2016 U.S. Open: Oakmont Country Club, superintendent

2019 U.S. Junior Amateur Championship: Inverness Club, superintendent (Toledo, Ohio)

2020 PGA Drive On Championship: Inverness Club, superintendent

2021 Solheim Cup: Inverness Club, superintendent

And upcoming...

2027 U.S. Women's Open: Inverness Club, superintendent

2029 U.S. Amateur: Inverness Club, superintendent

side, including irrigation." The bunkers on the opposite side would be out in the rough and disconnected so they had to be rebuilt and many were deepened.

Bob Ford, the established Oakmont golf professional, consulted on those decisions. It's another example of how many people were involved, and how hard they worked, to collaborate for a great result. McDonald & Sons did a phenomenal job with the construction and complemented the productivity of Marzolf and Zimmers.

"Johnny is the best," Marzolf says. "His is the best grass because he tests the soil, he does tissue samples all the time and he is helping the grass be healthy every single day. He understands soil chemistry. The place just glows." This was especially impressive considering the weather during the lead-up.

"The summer of 2005 was very tough," Pope says. "It was one of the top five hardest summers I have had in my career. It was so hot and so dry and we had sod everywhere. We had to keep everything alive, and perfect, to grow in for the U.S. Open."

The following winter didn't help. There was ice damage from the winter of 2006-07 and they had to plug greens prior to the U.S.

Open. "It was crazy," Pope says. "I remember the course being completely brown because it was desiccated from the wind and the cold weather. It was March and I was thinking, 'Are we going to be ready?'"

"It was pretty wild," says **Bob Davis**, general manager and director of golf operations at nearby Chartiers Country Club. He was an intern at Oakmont in 2005 and returned as a full-time employee in 2006. Shortly after the U.S. Open, he became an assistant. He vividly recalls the prep work.

"It was my first real experience with an extensive, broad renovation," Davis says. "Our day-to-day was dragging a hose to keep sod alive. It was hard work but gratifying. Everyone worked long hours and no one really complained."

The tees and fairways were a *Poa*-bent mix and the rough was primarily Kentucky bluegrass. "There was a focus on the playing surfaces, but I remember spending time identifying where those graduated rough lines were going to be," Davis says. "How were they were going to tie into the bunkers? How were we going to mow the different areas? The solution was a combination of riding mowers at different heights and push-mowing

Working together

"It takes everybody," John Zimmers says, to make events run as expected, from crew members to professionals and club members with special responsibilities, to good friends and volunteers. A special thank you is extended to the vendors that sponsor meals and gear and provide the financial support necessary to make championships run smoothly. This list, understanding it is not exhaustive, includes some of the agronomy team and volunteers who contributed to hosting the 2007 U.S. Open at Oakmont. The list is filled with recognizable names, including a few of the industry's most admired leaders.

Brett Bentley
Brendon Clark
Scott Cook
Bob Davis
Dave Delsandro
Doug Drugo
Brian Fritz
Eric Greytok
Tom Haluck
Stephen Hicks
Jason Hurwitz
Paul B. Latshaw
Paul R. Latshaw
Travis Livingston

Chad Mark
Chris Markel
Dave McCaffrey
Jason McPhail
Greg Niendorf
Brent Palich
Josh Pope
Ron Pusateri
Jim Roney
Matt Shaffer
Eric Snelsire
Jim Thomas
Tom Waite

around bunker banks.” They figured it out.

Many players became familiar with the rough. “The quality of turf and the roughs was particularly important to John,” Davis says. “We spent time testing soil and focusing on fertility. When you have a plant at U.S. Open rough height and want it to stand up upright, it’s difficult. That rough was so dense, so thick. It was remarkable.”

The success of the course reflected the leadership that developed it. “I give a lot of credit to John,” Davis says. “He was cool, calm and collected. That rubs off on people. It was one of the best-conditioned golf courses that I can recall.”

From airport runs to volunteer schedules to equipment rentals and meals and so much more, the logistics were going well. The members were proud—and so ready—to host friends and family at Oakmont for the 107th U.S. Open.

DURING

It’s a week of world-class golf, joyful conversations and creating history. Faster than a 14 on the Stimpmeter, it’s over. But “tournament week is the easiest week because the hard work is already done,” Pope says. There are lots of hands ready to help cut cups, mow, roll, trim, fix bunkers and divots, and polish the course for play.

“We had years of investment in the golf course,” Clark says, “and it played lights out during the championship.” He helped liaise with the USGA about the conditioning and was responsible for gathering and organizing the volunteer information, from accommodations to shirt sizes. He also managed schedules for the staff and approximately 125 volunteers.

“It was good,” Zimmers says. “It was one of the nicest, easiest championships in terms of weather. We had a little rain Wednesday afternoon, so the practice rounds ended and the players left around 4 p.m. With the grounds empty we were able to easily prepare for Thursday.” The course was everything it could be. Was Zimmers ready?

“The first one is really special,” Zimmers says of hosting a major. “You’re nervous and you want everything to go the way you hope it goes. You don’t want to make mistakes. It went fantastic.”

Played June 14-17, the event concluded on Father’s Day. Aaron Baddeley started the final round in the lead by two. Woods struggled on the greens and double-bogeyed No. 3, a difficult par 4. Furyk, seeking his second major

Volunteer benefits

There are many benefits to volunteering.

It’s a good way for people to give back to the industry they thrive in and experienced volunteers are a huge help to the agronomy team. Volunteering enables people to discover new courses, observe different management styles, build their personal and professional networks, and make great memories.

Sending volunteers to properties where you previously worked helps support the people who helped you develop your career and contributes to the property that fostered your growth. And let’s not overlook the joy of a few good meals, logoed apparel and cool swag.

It’s always special to feel like you are part of a team achieving something phenomenal. Volunteering requires time and commitment but it’s only a few days and it will generate excitement at your property. Volunteers gain event experience and when they return, they are inspired and bring their learning with them. The resources required to send volunteers to events are, hopefully, manageable compared to all that is gained.

title after lifting the trophy in 2003 at Olympia Fields Country Club in suburban Chicago, was cheered on as a hometown hero. The conditions were firm, fast and thrilling.

The atmosphere was tremendous. Cabrera was smoking—figuratively and literally—hitting big drives and putting and puffing his way into the clubhouse lead. No one caught him and the trophy was presented. The competition was over but there was more to do.

AFTER

“What I take away from that week is how everybody came together to support each other,” Davis says. “We walked the golf course during play and spent

time watching at the volunteer tent. Seeing all these people come back as volunteers—I am still fascinated by that network, that camaraderie.”

Zimmers notes that “at the end of the day, you get judged on the golf course.” For all the time putting up infrastructure, it comes down quickly.

“They are trying to get out of there as fast as they can and you are trying to put the course together for your membership,” Davis says. “It was an eerie feeling the next day, like, Wow. It was weird.”

Morale is tricky after events. “It was a huge letdown, the day after the U.S. Open,” Pope says. “I remember watering the greens that Monday and thinking, ‘Man, it’s over already?’ The demands of Oakmont are perfection every day so we were back at it real quick.”

“The crosswalks were relatively dry during the championship, so they weren’t too bad,” Davis says. “We aerified them and vented the greens that week. It had been limited play for the membership leading up to the event and then it’s the beginning of the summer. You have a whole season ahead of you.”

The turf needed to be nurtured but the agronomy team was one step ahead on recovery, having put down seed in the pedestrian areas throughout the championship. Those areas began to recover quickly. “We had to cut down the rough slowly because it was pretty gnarly,” Pope says. “We had sod work wherever we couldn’t put seed, from grandstands and other structures.”

Jason Hurwitz, senior project manager with the Mazzella Partnership, worked as an assistant at Oakmont from 1999 until 2006 and returned to volunteer in 2007. “A course’s culture is hard to ignore and this is especially true at Oakmont,” he says. “We were working toward something

special and our efforts showed. We knew we were penning a chapter in Oakmont's legendary storybook."

Zimmers foresaw what would happen after the event. "This was something you build for and you are prepared to lose some people. It's part of the process and a terrible business plan," he jokes. "You hire people, train them to do real well and they leave. There are so many of them that went on to do great things and they are still doing great work."

Zimmers deserves the praise he receives. "John has been the most influential person in my career," Hurwitz says. "What is most impressive about John is that there are dozens of other successful people in this industry that can say the same thing. His leadership style taught me that there is no substitute for hard work or for

leading by example."

"John is my mentor," Clark says. "What I learned from him is truly extraordinary. I would not have the opportunities or knowledge I have today without him. He teaches you to succeed in any environment, personally and professionally."

"If you know John, you know what he drives on," Davis says. "Do the fundamental things, the ordinary things, and do them well every day. Pick up the trash and focus on the details because they add up. Even though technology and our arsenal of tools has grown, the need to do the fundamental things right doesn't change."

Oakmont is so involved in championships that **Dave Delsandro**, who was an assistant at Oakmont from 2006 to 2010, returned to work

in a newly created position as the director of U.S. Open operations and projects from 2013 to 2017. Delsandro worked as superintendent from 2017 through 2022, followed by **Mike McCormick**. McCormick is ready to lead the team at Oakmont, for his first major, just as Zimmers did.

Pope went to work at The International in Bolton, Massachusetts, with **Dick Bator** after spending six years at Oakmont. McCormick was an intern at The International at the same time. Pope then became a superintendent of The Old White at The Greenbrier, which suffered a devastating flood during his tenure. Pope is now the superintendent at The Olde Farm in Bristol, Virginia. The pressure and learning at Oakmont has been a foundation for



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many stellar careers.

"I would have never gotten through that flood if I hadn't worked at Oakmont," Pope says. "The mental toughness, the pressure that we were under every day — it was my time at Oakmont that got me through that." Pope has volunteered and given back to Oakmont at all of its big events.

Beyond everything that happens on the course are the personal networks of support. Zimmers will tell you how helpful his wife, Tracey, has been and is in coordinating various efforts and organizing friends and family. "She is such a big influence and part of everything I do," Zimmers says. "She also has a big impact on the staff that works with us."

One of those staff members has

been **Jason McPhail**, currently the senior assistant at Bull's Bridge Golf Club in South Kent, Connecticut. He is also the younger brother of Zimmers, and part of that support system who worked at Oakmont and returned to volunteer in 2007. Their mom was there too, and she hasn't missed any of Zimmers' big events.

"We have a tight-knit family," McPhail says. "I couldn't ask for a better boss, mentor, friend or brother. John's always just a phone call away. I have lifelong memories from working and volunteering at Oakmont. Everything ran so smoothly. No one would have guessed how many people were helping."

Zimmers and McPhail have more events in their future and there is something poetic about the U.S. Women's Open being contested at

Inverness in 2027 and Oakmont in 2028. Both clubs have so much history and their own chapters with Zimmers leading, but events are about more than one family or person.

These spectacular events happen because of bridges — bridges across turnpikes for the players and the gallery to share; bridges between architects and the land they shape for greatness; bridges among the members, the USGA and the agronomy teams that execute the vision. Historically, bridges span from one event to another as anticipation and wonder builds.

Which people will develop into great leaders? Who will become a champion at Oakmont? 🏌️

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

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Event setup:

A superintendent's view

Not every big day is the same. Superintendent **Ron Furlong** breaks down what he does differently depending who might be on the course for a special event.

I don't think I'm alone when I say: As a golf course superintendent, I have somewhat mixed emotions when it comes to tournaments on the golf course. The main reason for these mixed emotions being that not all tournaments are created equal.

During the entirety of a golf season, most if not all courses will host various tournaments. Some of these tournaments are in-house, which is to say tournaments for members, and many of the tournaments are outside events, where the golf course gets hijacked for a good portion of the day by an outside entity.

At the course where I am superintendent, Avalon Golf Club in Burlington, Washington, most of our events are of the outside variety. Which is not to say we don't have in-house events — we also call them “member” tournaments — but from a sheer number standpoint, the majority of our tournaments are booked

by outside groups.

Although I referred to outside groups “hijacking” the course, I certainly see the benefit of having outside tournaments for the golf course, and specifically the ownership of the course. It's instant, guaranteed revenue. These outside group bookings are also great for building relationships within the community, as well as getting people onto your course who very well may have never been on your property before — or may have never even golfed before. Companies hosting events are not only paying for the use and setup of the course, they are putting people on your course who might possibly someday become members. There is no greater advertising than having people play your course. It's like an extended test-drive.

So, I definitely get the positives of having outside tournaments, seen both from the viewpoint of the

RON FURLONG (2)



pro shop and ownership. But the viewpoint of superintendents and maintenance crews may be significantly different. Tournaments can be—and often are—a big pain in the butt for the maintenance operation. Shotgun tournaments especially can put a sudden end to any maintenance on the course once the tournament starts. Another negative to outside groups is that players don't exactly treat your course as nicely or with as much respect as the everyday golfers who book tee times on your course or the members who play frequently. This is obviously a generalization, but I do think it holds true much of the time.

I also realize I'm preaching to the choir here. We all know tournaments are a bit of a different animal than normal everyday play. But whatever our feelings about outside tournaments, they are something we have to prepare for.

Just as all tournaments are not created equal, neither is the setup for those tournaments. It isn't always as cut and dried as simply setting up differently for in-house tournaments versus outside events, but sometimes it is. When dealing with an outside

event, it often depends on the size of that group in determining our setup for it and how much time we will have to prepare.

Our golf course is 27 holes, which can add an extra wrinkle to set up for the day of an outside event. While a few outside groups will pay for the entire 27 holes for their tournament, most choose 18, which means we often have a mixture on any given day of tournament play and in-house play on the other nine holes. This can often get quite confusing. The easiest tournaments for us to set up are 27-hole shotguns that usually start at about noon or 1 p.m. For these tournaments, we will have a limited amount of member play in the mornings, but with our 27 holes we often keep that member play on just 18, allowing us to close one of our three nines until the shotgun begins. This often helps us with getting some maintenance done on the closed side.

The 18-hole tournaments that are early in the day, like a 9 a.m. shotgun, can be quite challenging. We have to not only set up the entire 18 holes by the shotgun time, we also have to set up for member play on the other

nine holes before that regular play starts early in the morning.

Our tournament setup for an outside event includes many of the basic things we do daily, including changing all the cups, moving tee markers, raking bunkers, mowing and rolling greens, hand watering if needed, and a handful of other daily duties. But these tasks must be executed at an accelerated pace. And, of course, we are often limited in the amount of time available to mow other areas ahead of tournaments, like fairways, rough, surrounds, approaches, tees and collars. Some tasks can be completed before a tournament, but often we must get them done the day before or the day after. We tend to stay away from tournaments once play starts. When a group is paying a large amount of money to basically rent your course for the day, they don't really want to see a lot of maintenance getting done.

For member tournaments, we tend to not only accomplish our basic everyday maintenance — or what we do for an outside event — but we also like to focus a bit more on the playability aspect of the course, especially the greens. We really try to get the greens rolling smoothly and quickly, perhaps double rolling all the greens or combining a mow and roll. We also spend extra time on bunkers on those days. The member tournaments are usually when we try to highlight the course to its full potential.

The other aspect to consider with outside tournaments is what type of group you have and how serious the golfers are. We often host state amateur tournaments, regional tournaments and college tournaments. We have even hosted PGA qualifiers at Avalon before. For these events, we also focus on highlighting the course, like we do with the more important member tournaments.

All tournaments are definitely not created equal. But we all must deal with them. As much of a headache as they can often be, tournaments on your golf course are always going to be there. Formulate a plan and do your best. That's all we can do. 🏌️

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

“

I realize I'm preaching to the choir here. We all know tournaments are a bit of a different animal than normal everyday play. But whatever our feelings about outside tournaments, they are something we have to prepare for.”

—**Ron Furlong**,
superintendent at Avalon Golf Club





LET'S DITCH GREEN COMMITTEES

Golf course superintendents have a very defined job to do, years of training and practice in doing it, and the most advanced tools and technology ever available to do it with.

So, why do we need green committees?

The history of the green committee is rooted in the early 1920s when the USGA formed its Green Section. It was formed to promote scientific turfgrass research and offer advisory services, which led to the development of improved methods of course maintenance and playing conditions.

From that humble, yet necessary, beginning came the idea of forming “advisory” committees, usually comprised of members, at individual clubs. Their responsibilities have varied over the years, but typically include overseeing management of the course, hiring the superintendent, and making broad budget and policy decisions.

They usually do not — and, I argue, *should* not — be involved in day-to-day operations. Nor should they deal with line-by-line budget decisions, staffing or long-range planning. Because what does a layperson know about what it takes to care for a living, breathing golf course? Little to nothing. They are more than welcome to advise, to bring members’ concerns to management, to help explain agronomic practices to the rank and file, and to otherwise make life easier for those with the expertise to care for the club’s most valuable asset.

Would you step into an operating room, look over the shoulder of a surgeon, and tell them to move the scalpel a little to the right?

It’s a fair comparison: Just like doctors, we know the science and have the experience.

And yet, to assuage club politics and members’ egos, high handicaps (male and female), insurance salesmen, maybe a commercial real estate agent or dentist are appointed to green committees and think they: 1) know what’s best for “their” golf course, and 2) know how to achieve it.

They sit in on meetings, think they understand the science, then make suggestions totally ignoring or misconstruing what they heard. Or they relay false information to others, trying to look important at cocktail parties because they have the “inside scoop” on what’s really going on. Too often, their idle chatter becomes ignorant rumor-mongering that makes it harder for the maintenance crew to execute its job properly.

If I don’t like green committees as a whole, I’m no more enamored of the various character types that tend to populate them. I’m sure you’ve dealt with these, too:

Internet Agronomist. He googles everything, writes it down verbatim, then spouts it back to anyone who will listen. Meanwhile, he neglects to read the fine print — geographic region, budget, grass types, etc. He’s probably also the guy who goes to WebMD before seeing his doctor.

Captain Obvious. Yes, we know there’s a drainage problem by the eighth tee. *Everyone* knows it. We all have eyes. Instead of pointing out what we all see, ask why it’s happening and what we need to

solve the problem.

Master of Minutiae. Can’t see the forest through the trees — let alone the grass, the greens, bunkers, and other things of more importance. Getting too granular means missing the big picture and taking care of unessential items instead of real priorities.

John J. Audubon Jr. Golf courses are already the best friend to all God’s creatures. We don’t need to overly enhance every native area. Leave some room for the players to play, please.

There’s another problem with green committees. Every two years, a new crop of know-nothings comes along and has its own wrong ideas. Two steps forward and one step back. Consistency is key, but hey, that’s what the superintendent is there for, right?

If there has to be a green committee, put one person in charge who stays in that position for more than two years. Make sure that person has the time and interest to serve for five years at least, devote him or herself to learning what really goes on in the maintenance arena and on the course, and provide continuity while gaining a real understanding of the land, the personnel and the issues.

Here’s my suggestion: Dump the green committee in favor of a group comprised of the superintendent, the general manager, the golf professional and one member — in a purely advisory role — who also reports to the board. That way the direction of the club’s long-term agronomic care can be consistent, correct and properly communicated. 🍷



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Setting it up *right*

How can you prepare for *another* record year for rounds played? Success starts long before the first tee times.

By **Rick Woelfel**

As the superintendent at Wilmington Municipal Golf Course in Wilmington, North Carolina, **Matt Smith** leads a busy life. The course hosts 65,000 rounds each year and clientele ranges from scratch players to those new to the game with golfers of all ability levels in between.

Smith is charged with striking a balance to give golfers of all ages and skill an enjoyable experience. Setting up the golf course requires weighing a number of factors, chief among them maintaining a good pace of play and protecting the health of the turf.

So how do he and his team go about preparing the golf course for a typical day of play? It starts with providing green speeds appropriate to the clientele.

“Being a municipal golf course, we have a lot of beginners and people who are just learning the game,” Smith says. “During our busy season during the week, for just normal play, we don’t want green speeds of 12 or 13. We have **Donald Ross** greens” — the Ross design opened for play in 1926. “They’re kind of undulating and can be hard if they’re fast.

“We take that into consideration for people that are enjoying the game. Plus, we’re so busy, we want pace of play to move along. We can’t have five- to six-hour rounds or people won’t come back. We want them to enjoy the game. So, we’re not going to make it like it’s a U.S. Open for somebody that’s just learning the game.”



On a typical day, Smith's greens will run somewhere between 9½ and 10½ on the Stimpmeter. "Which is a pretty good speed," he says, "but not overly ridiculous for our beginners. But it's very easy for me if I want to step it up a notch for the weekend for our tournament play, I have the ability to do that. I feel like that can satisfy both clientele, both the golfer that's a scratch golfer and the golfer that's a 20-handicap. We have to take that into consideration on a day-by-day basis."

Smith is careful with his Bermudagrass rough, which is normally at a height of 1½ to 2 inches.

"It's kind of a Catch-22 for us, because of the amount of rounds that we play," he says. "I have to give the golf course a little bit of extra fertility for recovery from all the cart and foot traffic. So of course, I fertilize a little bit more and push growth. (The rough) is going to grow a little bit faster and get a little bit thicker and denser."

The impact of the rough was tempered somewhat when the fairways were widened during a renovation a little over a decade ago. In addition, the green surrounds are mowed to fairway height. "If you miss the green, you can putt it or you can chip it," Smith says.

At Saucon Valley Country Club in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, director of golf courses and grounds **Jim Roney** has the underlying responsibility for 60 golf holes.

When he and his team set hole locations, they're thinking about how

much play might be expected on that particular course that day and in the days immediately ahead.

"We're looking at it holistically for, say, a two-week period," Roney says. "If we know we have something we're ramping up for and we have specific hole locations we're going to select for those special days, we'll make sure, on a normal day, that we're avoiding those spots, so the area doesn't get any excessive wear."

"In addition, we'll also consider high-traffic areas like walk-on (and) walk-off areas and things like that. So, if we have a light Wednesday, for instance, where it's just normal play and we have maybe 60 to 75 percent of our tee times taken, we will utilize a hole location that may be in an area that gets a lot of heavy traffic because you know you're not going to get as much play in that area that day."

With warm weather approaching, Roney and his team pay particular attention to unique conditions on greens.

"Let's say you have an impacted growing environment on one particular side of your green," he says. "You're going to want to stay away from that. Or, if you have any challenges, let's say you have a really wet area on a green that stays wetter than others for whatever reason. In that regard we would completely avoid that spot."

Roney and his team are especially careful about hole locations on the Old Course, which opened for play in 1922; the greens feature significant

undulations which limit the number of possible hole locations.

The crew is also careful about where tee markers are positioned on all three of the club's championship courses. Roney says it's all about protecting the integrity of the course and the handicap system.

"The course is rated a certain way for each tee-box location, so you want to make sure that your yardages are consistent with whatever your card yardage is. That doesn't necessarily mean each hole has to be that way. We can move tees up on a par-3 or par-4, for instance, just to spread out wear, but we have to make sure we balance it out on the next par-3 or par-4 so we're close enough to the yardage on the card. We don't want to be in a situation where we're shaving 300 to 500 yards off the white tee marker yardage because then you're going to mess with people's handicaps."

Every club's membership has its own set of expectations. At Montclair Golf Club in New Jersey, expectations are as high as anywhere. **Vanja Drasler**, one of the club's two superintendents, oversees two of the club's four nines. She works alongside fellow superintendent **Mike Sharpe** and reports to director of golf course operations **Michael Campbell**.

Drasler and Sharpe get together each day to lay out what needs to be done the next day.

"We sit down when everybody goes home and then we plan for the next day," Drasler says. "It's much easier,



we don't have to figure it out early in the morning. We go through everything. We start with greens, tees, fairways, no matter what, whatever has to be done. We know exactly which day we are cutting those surfaces. Greens have to be mowed every single day, and we have fairways three times a week and tees three times a week."

Located at its present site since 1899 and situated less than 20 miles from midtown Manhattan, Montclair is part of the galaxy of elite clubs in the New York metropolitan area, a group that includes some of the best-known clubs in America. Many Montclair members have played the region's other esteemed courses.

"It's an elite membership and they are playing some other courses in our area, all among the best golf has to offer, and they're expecting from us the same speeds, firmness and things like that," Drasler says. "That's why we try to try to achieve that, no matter what."

The crew works to strike the right balance between providing the conditions their members insist on and protecting turf. One step in the process is walking at least nine holes every day to inspect the turf.

"That is a priority that we walk on our surfaces every

single day," Drasler says. "Tees, fairways — everyone has to walk at least nine holes."

With an eye on the upcoming U.S. Women's Mid-Am, the crew welcomes every opportunity to monitor the turf. Oftentimes, any needed extra work is executed on Mondays when the courses are closed until noon. "We always count on that," Drasler says of the Monday window.

Mike Moyer is in charge at Bear Trap Dunes in Ocean View, Delaware, a 27-hole semi-private club situated a few miles north of Ocean City, Maryland. The club supports 60,000 rounds a year; on a busy Friday, Saturday or Sunday in the summer, it might handle 450 rounds. Moyer and his team control pace of play and wear on the turf by repositioning the tee markers on a daily basis.

"Because of the high number of rounds, the tee boxes here really take a beating," Moyer says. "What I have my guys do, tee markers will be as far back on a Monday and gradually work their way up to the front of the tee boxes for the weekend. So, it's moving wear and also pace of play, trying to have the course at its shortest for the 400-round Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in the summertime. We try to have the course at its shortest and definitely try to keep the markers moving on a daily basis, especially on the par-3s."

Moyer describes his greens as "user-friendly."

"The greens are kind of big and they're relatively flat," he says. "We do not try to push the fastest green speeds, especially on the weekend."

"For some of our members' days, men's day or ladies' day, we might get them north of 10½ on the Stimpmeter (Tuesdays and Wednesdays). But when we head into the weekend, we're comfortable if we can get a 10 on the Stimpmeter. I honestly don't have the time to Stimp that often, but I've kind of learned over the years that that number, or a little below that, is kind of friendly for resort golf and it doesn't lead to too many three and four putts and keeps people moving through the property."

Troon manages Bear Trap Dunes and emphasizes pace of play. "You have a timecard and we try to do our part to enable people to meet that," Moyer says.

In short, Moyer's top priority is promoting the idea that golf is supposed to be fun.

"We try to push the fun factor of golf," he says. "Our original members are aging and the average guy coming down for vacation, he may not have played all summer and he's grabbing a set of rental clubs, so we want people to have a good time. That's really what we focus on, just being able to enjoy the game."

"We don't take ourselves overly seriously and just keep in mind that we're a resort course down at the beach and we want everybody to enjoy their experience." 🌿



TURF REPORTS

WEED CONTROL



INSIDE THIS REPORT

Golf Course Industry has examined insects, disease, fungicides and greens maintenance since debuting our "Turf Reports" market segment studies in 2021. To expand the scope of the studies, we realized we needed to explore how the industry views and controls weeds.

With support from PBI-Gordon,

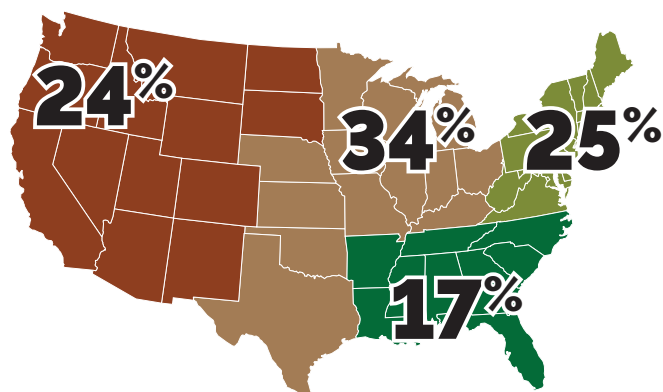
the production of this report involved collaborating with Signet Research, a New Jersey-based independent research firm, to distribute a 20-question survey from Feb. 20 until March 8 to a list of 3,481 subscribers who are directors of agronomy, superintendents or assistant superintendents. Results are based on 152 results with a

confidence level of 95 percent and sampling tolerance of +/- 7.9 percent.

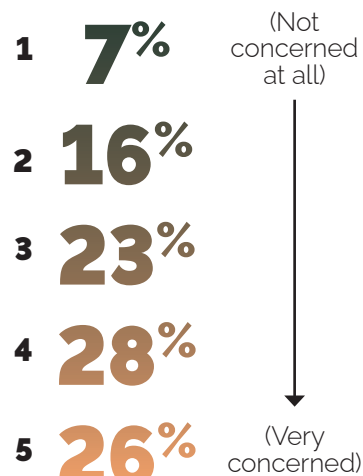
This is the first of three 2025 "Turf Reports" surveys. Results of our greens maintenance and insect control surveys will be shared in the fall. Scan the QR code below to get on the list to receive "Turf Reports" surveys sent to your inbox.



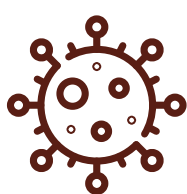
Where is your course located



Concern about weeds negatively impacting playing conditions

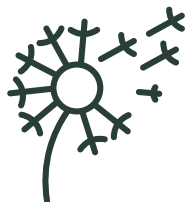


Greatest potential to negatively impact playing conditions at your course



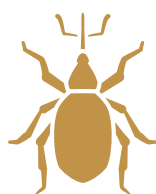
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28%

Weeds



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Pests

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DEDICATED FROM THE BEGINNING

University of Tennessee professor **Jim Brosnan** has been surrounded by concepts of weed control since he was a kid. His father ran a home lawn-care business, and he began playing golf at a young age.

“I just kind of grew up in that whole sphere of golf and turf,” Brosnan says, “and ever since I was really young and I think as I’ve gotten older, and particularly now somewhat more experienced in the industry, I’ve kind of come to this realization that the job of a superintendent is really, really hard.”

Brosnan received his undergraduate degree from Penn State, completed his master’s degree at UMass Amherst and returned to Penn State for his doctorate. After finishing school, he worked at the University of Hawaii for a year before landing his role in Tennessee in 2008. Brosnan started a diagnostic clinic at Tennessee specifically for weed testing.

How have warmer temperatures affected weed control tactics and programs?

I think you could ask any superintendent: There’s more residual chemistry that’s used in pre applications. And I think that’s true no matter where you are. I can remember in Tennessee when I started here, there were two pre’s that hit the ground a year. And now I would say, I mean I talked to superintendents about *Poa annua* control in the winter, the best programs are three-app programs just for that weed. If you look at the totality of a season, I would think you’re in a place where you might be making five applications a year in this climate, where you have some residual chemistry in the tank. And if you get to places south of here in Florida or Texas, that number could be more than five, because the period where you can have an emergence is just so much longer.

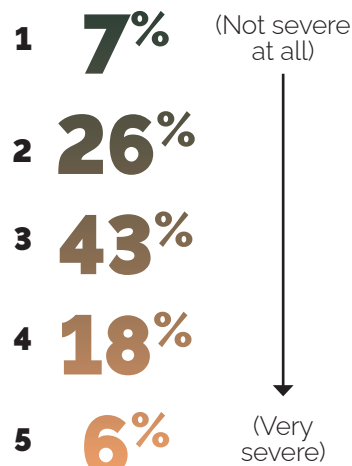
How has increased play and wear on turf affected weed emergence and control?

We all know it’s true, and I don’t think we’ve done a really good job of quantifying the effects of it. We can look at the National Golf Foundation data and see the rounds played and we know that that’s going to take a toll on the property, but I don’t know that, as a collective industry, we’ve really quantified that as well as we ought to have. One of the side projects the lab is doing this year, we have a Tahoma 31 fairway at our research farm, and a couple of clubs were nice enough to give me rounds played data for shoulder seasons, and we’re putting out cart traffic to mirror their rounds played to see like, what does running 85 to 90 rounds a day on Bermudagrass in February do to that turf? While that project is still active, we don’t have the full picture. Certainly, it’s going to affect the vigor and health of that stand, which is going to lead to a potential for more weeds down the road when that’s compromised.

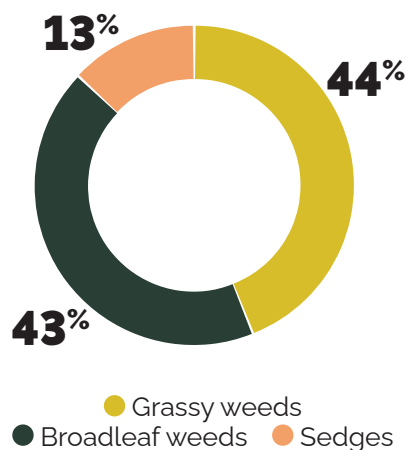
What are the best strategies for post-emergent herbicide usage?

Some of it depends on the weed, right? When we think about a weed like *Poa annua*, in this climate particularly in Bermudagrass, we’ve kind of gotten to a point where we need based on emergence patterns, and what we know about that species, we can use pre-chemistry. Pre-chemistry is critically important. We need to have it in place at optimal timings. Hitting those timings really matters. And then one of the things that I talk to superintendents a lot about is in a world where we have resistant weeds, particularly *Poa*. A lot of those resistance issues are to post-emergence chemistry. What we need to do is everything in our power to keep plants from emerging from the ground. And what that looks like in practicality is you’re really committed to using pre-emergence chemistry, and with a weed like *Poa*, probably mixtures of post-emergence and pre-emergence chemistry, and you’re really disciplined in hitting your intervals, much like you would

Description of weed pressure at your course



Most troubling category of weeds at your course



be with a fungicide program. If you have an interval that you need to reapply, to not let that residual barrier break you’re going to hit the interval. To me, I think that’s kind of what the modern use of that chemistry looks like.

—Kelsie Horner

WEATHERING THE IMPACTS

Travis Gannon has worked as a professor at NC State University for 13 years. He's been employed by the school for 25 years, earning his master's degree in turfgrass science and a master's and doctorate in turfgrass weed science in the process.

His passion for the field has not stopped growing and drives his continued dedicated work.

"There's so many challenges, and there's a very, very long list of priority issues that are being dealt with and that need to be dealt with," Gannon says. "So, there's a lot going on in this in this area right now, and it has been that way for a number of years that won't end any time soon."

How has increased play and wear on golf courses impacted weed emergence and control?

Increased play or increased rounds leads to more wear and tear on the turf itself. So, the turf is less competitive if it's under more traffic stress or compaction stress, whatever the case may be, or both. In addition, there's certain species of goosegrass that are more prevalent now than it's ever been in my career. It's directly correlated with compacted areas, traffic and less competitive turf.

How have warmer temperatures affected weed emergence and control?

Some weeds that used to be south of us are now here. In other words, there are examples of some weed species "marching north." That's one area. The other is with varying weather patterns that certainly influence weed germination and emergence. I don't want to say it's become less predictable, but every year is different. It's certainly been a complicating factor in recent years.

What does the future of weed control on golf courses and weed control research look like?

That's a loaded question. As far as the research, it's going to be incorporating cultural and management practices in addition to chemical control, i.e., herbicides. That's always been an approach, but the reality of it was that people over-relied on herbicides alone and less on other integrated weed management practices, and you can't do it with herbicides alone.

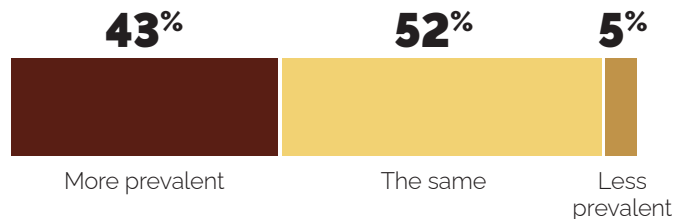
Are there weeds flourishing on courses now that weren't when you started your career? What makes those weeds difficult to control?

I wouldn't necessarily use the word *flourishing*, but certainly goosegrass is much more prevalent in this area—the Carolinas and Virginia and Tennessee. Goosegrass is certainly more prevalent. Again, I wouldn't necessarily use the word *flourishing*, but it's more of an issue today, both from a current standpoint and a control standpoint. There are some post-emergent herbicides to deal with it, but it's a very short list, if you will. From a post-emergent standpoint, it largely boils down to a limited number of herbicide options. And from a pre-emergent

Top four weed concerns

	Northeast	Southeast	Central	West
1	Crabgrass	Goosegrass	Crabgrass	Clover
2	Clover	<i>Poa annua</i>	Clover	Dandelions
3	Nutsedge	Nutsedge	<i>Poa annua</i>	Thistle
4	Dandelions	Tropical signalgrass	Goosegrass	<i>Poa annua</i>

How prevalent do you think golf course weeds will be in the next decade compared to today in your geographic region?



Mean herbicide budget by region

Northeast	Southeast	Central	West
\$21,560	\$21,420	\$41,310	\$17,020

standpoint, it germinates depending on where you are, but it germinates over an extended period. Whereas crabgrass will germinate over a 60-day window, goosegrass is more like a 150-day window.

What are some best strategies for post-emergent herbicide usage?

It depends on the weed you're going after in combination with the herbicide you're using. Nearly every post-emergent herbicide that we use is significantly impacted by environmental conditions before, at and after application. In particular, if you're talking about winter annual weeds, with the winter we just had, it was hard to get favorable weather and environmental conditions that allowed those herbicides to work most optimally. Being cognizant of how the environmental conditions impact post-emergent herbicides, you don't obviously have control over the environmental conditions, but you have to do the best you can as far as finding windows of optimal environmental conditions to optimize post-emergent group episodes.

—Kelsie Horner

NEW WEEDS, NEW PROBLEMS

David Gardner has spent more than 25 years studying herbicide usage in search of more natural inputs in turfgrass. The Ohio State University professor received his undergraduate degree in horticulture from Iowa State University and studied for his doctorate under **Dr. Nick Christians** of Iowa State and **Dr. Bruce Branham** of the University of Illinois.

Gardner has been studying natural herbicides since 1996, and that topic still drives his passions today.

How has increased play and wear on turf affected weed emergence and control?

For the annuals, the best defense against annual weeds is a good cover of turfgrass to compete with those seedlings. And the more play you have, the more wear you have and that increases the opportunity for annual weed emergence. So especially with some of the weeds that we're seeing now that we either didn't see last century, or we're seeing more of, I would say it's kind of curious. I don't see a big difference in the timing of the weeds that we already had. We just have a lot of weeds now that we didn't before.

Are there any weeds that are flourishing

on golf courses now that weren't when you started your career?

In Ohio, I would say that goosegrass is a lot more prevalent than it used to be. That was one that has always been here, but it was always very sporadic and usually only along heat sinks like sidewalks, driveways, bare soil areas, near those kinds of places. But I've seen golf courses where the whole tee is basically surrounded by goosegrass being maintained at half an inch or whatever. So, that one's a lot more prevalent. But then we have a couple of new weeds here in our parts that we didn't before. One of them is field paspalum. The first year that showed up in our parts was about 2011-2012. That's a tricky one because it's a perennial and you can't use a pre-emergent herbicide, and there's only one post-emergent herbicide that will control it. And then the other one that we've seen that's new is false green kyllinga. We've always had yellow nutsedge, but the kyllingas are something that we're seeing a lot more of here now, and that used to be more of a southern weed.

What do you think the future of weed control on golf courses looks like?

A couple of challenges: The weeds that we

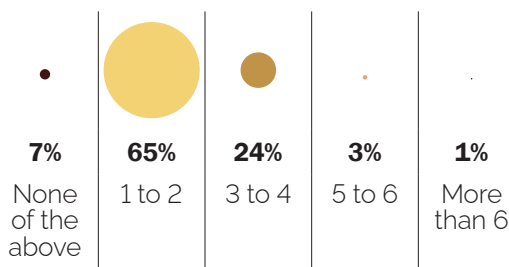
treat, some of them are acquiring resistance to the herbicides that we have registered, and the rate at which weeds are acquiring resistance to our herbicides is about the same or more than the rate at which new actives are appearing on the market. There's a lot of product innovation, but it tends to be repackaged combinations of active ingredients that we've had for like 30 or 40 years or more. But as far as new active ingredients that will control some of these weeds that we're seeing the resistance issues to, the innovation there hasn't been as quick. Most of our post-emergence herbicides, almost all of them that are systemic, all work the same way. For example, if a golf course has a buckhorn plantain problem, they spray an herbicide and they're getting great control of everything but the buckhorn plantain. That's one that we're seeing this resistance issue with. And there's a couple of alternatives, but they need to be aware of this phenomenon and be watching for it. If they make an application, and they get great control of everything but one particular weed, they might have that issue, and so they need to contact their extension folks in their state to get some recommendations for how to control that.

—Kelsie Horner

Areas of the course where you apply pre-emergent herbicides

Fairways	80%
Tees	75%
Rough	69%
Collars/approaches	67%
Bunker faces	66%
Greens	30%
Native areas	30%
None of the above	9%

Number of pre-emergent herbicides used on your course



Mean: 2.0 pre-emergent herbicides

MORE OF NEARLY EVERYTHING

Emerge earlier in the year. Pester golf courses later into the season. In the fast-growing region covered by PBI-Gordon Southeast research scientist **Dr. Eric Reasor**, weed calendars studied by superintendents in turf school are more obsolete than balata golf balls.

“Some of your annual grasses like crabgrass, they tend to germinate just a little bit earlier,” Reasor says. “That means pre-emergent herbicides are going out earlier. For goosegrass, especially, at least here in Texas, I’m seeing it come up in April where traditionally it’s been more of a hot, summer weed. Its germination window is widening. I saw it germinate in October last year down here. April to October ... that’s a wide window.”

Reasor’s position with a leading herbicide manufacturer observing trends in states where courses receive little respite gives him tremendous insight into weed emergence and control shifts.

Are there weeds flourishing now that weren’t when you started your career? If so, what makes those weeds difficult to control?

Goosegrass has become the No. 1 issue. Yes, *Poa* is always there. But through research with PBI-Gordon and other companies and universities, we’re starting to figure out a few tricks and tips around *Poa*, which is making control a bit easier. With goosegrass, its emergence is unpredictable. It’s sporadic and has a very wide window. It’s developing resistance to herbicide, and we don’t have a ton of good options for goosegrass from an herbicide standpoint. Then, you add in the traffic. It’s a weed that loves that beat-down Bermudagrass and beat-down turf. It needs light to get down into that soil. It’s a huge problem in the Mid-Atlantic and working its way westward to Kentucky, southern Illinois and getting into the Plains. And it’s all over the Southeast. Doveweed in the Southeast has become more of an issue. We’re seeing it move into new areas. Kyllinga is another one spreading. It’s becoming very problematic in the Mid-Atlantic and getting over to Indiana. **Aaron Patton** at Purdue is doing a lot of work with kyllinga. It’s moving over into the colder climates. And then I saw something last year that I hadn’t seen — purple nutsedge in eastern Tennessee in the Knoxville area. That’s as far north as I’ve seen purple nutsedge.

What are some best strategies for pre-emergent herbicide usage?

I don’t like recommending more herbicide applications, but with the way pre-emergents work, three, four, maybe even five pre-emergent applications might be needed if you’re in Florida, if it’s really sandy soils or you’re in Texas, where it’s hot from March until November. More pre-emergent applications and rotating those herbicides and modes of action so we don’t get resistance is very important.

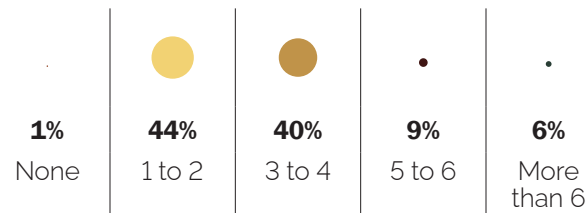
What are some best strategies for post-emergent herbicide usage?

Make sure we are making post-emergent applications in an environ-

Areas of the course where you apply post-emergent herbicides

Rough	88%
Fairways	82%
Bunker faces	75%
Tees	74%
Collars/approaches	53%
Native areas	45%
Greens	28%
None of the above	2%

Number of post-emergent herbicides used on your course



Mean: 3.0 post-emergent herbicides

ment that’s conducive to control. Herbicides don’t work as well in drought conditions. You need that plant actively growing, you need that physiology of that plant to be moving so it can absorb that herbicide and it gets into that plant and works. The weeds are there during drought. Weeds like spurge and knotweed love dry weather and they are there, and you want to control them. But they might not be actively growing. We need actively growing weeds for herbicides to work the best. Most turf professionals know where their problematic areas are, so keep an eye on those areas and target those weeds earlier rather than later. We’re also seeing water quality can affect post-emergent herbicides, so make sure you are regularly testing water. Whether it’s too high of pH, too low of pH or too hard of water, there are a lot of different things that can affect different herbicides, especially if it’s not out of a city source or municipal source.

— Guy Cipriano

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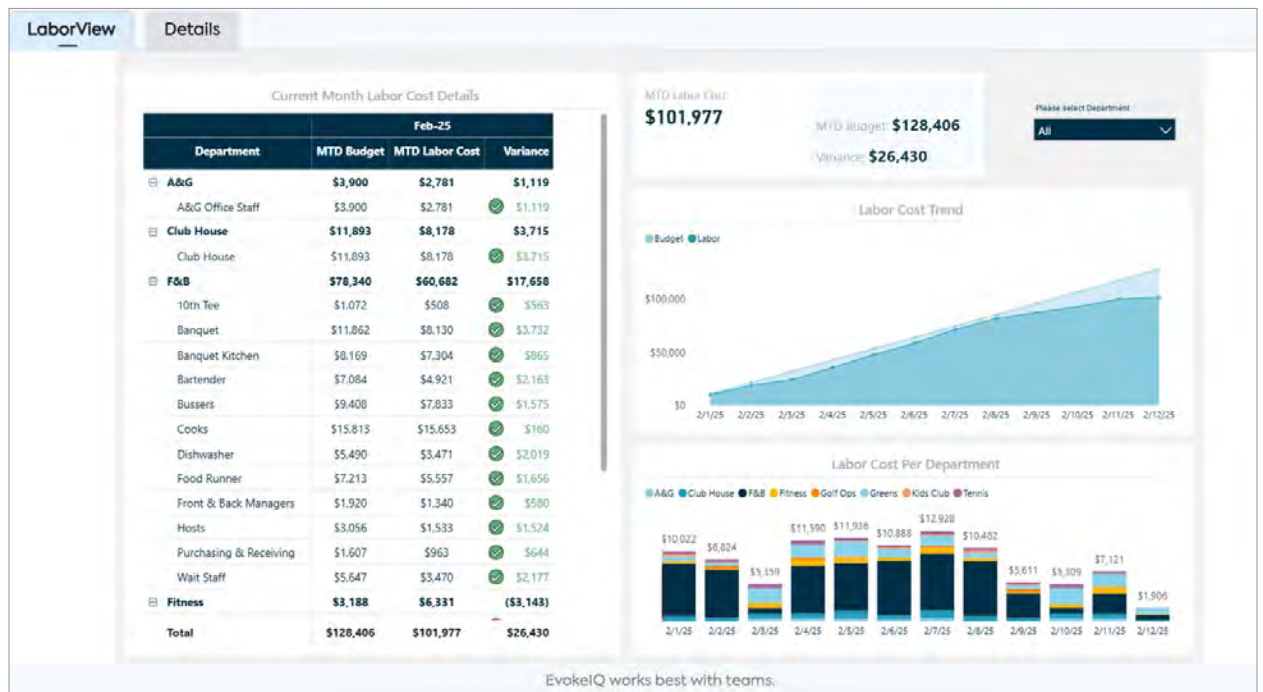
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Globetrotting consulting agronomist **Terry Buchen** visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He shares helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits — as well as a few ideas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



EVOKEIQ SUPERINTENDENT-DESIGNED ACCOUNTING DATABASE PROGRAM

David McGregor, MG, director of grounds at Westwood Country Club in Vienna, Virginia, designed the superintendent-friendly EvokeIQ software database program in conjunction with IT specialist and database owner **Andre Christian**, and has been operating it for about 1½ years.

The fully automated financial management system provides daily, real-time operating budget tracking results, instead of waiting for the traditional one to two weeks after each month has passed to receive the monthly statements. This provides proactive data-driven instant decisions for better, faster and more informed financial management, rather than traditional reactive decision making. The SuperView tab merges payroll, accounting and the golf course maintenance operating budget into one dashboard daily. LaborView monitors all the superintendent's hourly labor, also daily.

No matter how a course's payroll or accounting system shares data — whether reports are emailed, files are sent through a secure portal, or API is the preferred tool — SuperView can handle it. EvokeIQ has built a flexible, safe system that acts like a universal connector. It doesn't matter if the data comes in as a file, a report or a feed — they can take it in, read it and use it. Think of it like a smart mailbox that accepts any kind of letter from any

sender and gets it to the right place every time. EvokeIQ has already done this about 30 times with different systems, so chances are they've already worked with something similar to your course. EvokeIQ will guide the course's accounting and payroll team on how to set up this data sharing.

Financial information is only sent to EvokeIQ, as they cannot have access to any course's confidential information, like employee names, social security numbers, addresses or bank accounts. A course's private information is protected with no access by EvokeIQ. Any course is welcome to join EvokeIQ, and regional and national management companies or other multi-course operations can look at any of their managed courses' operating budget performance all combined on their dashboards. Many courses are signed up and many others are making inquiries. Costs are \$1,500 for the initial setup and \$10 a day for a subscription.



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.



RESEARCH BY DESIGN

It pays to do your homework. That is one of many takeaways from a recently concluded weeklong visit our design team took to a variety of Scottish links courses.

The four of us are involved in the development of Bluebird Club, a new private club and associated real estate project in metro Denver. I'm an advisor and notetaker. The project is the vision of veteran Colorado businessman **Pat Hamill**. The golf architect is **Dan Blankenship**, who has already racked up an impressive portfolio of work worldwide, most of it in Brazil. Crucial input on golf, membership and club culture is provided by **Charlie Soule**, a scratch/plus amateur golfer who has played in USGA national championships and won the 2023 Colorado Western Amateur. There are lots of other skilled professionals on the team who did not accompany us on our inspection of seven courses running from East Lothian, east of Edinburgh, up the coast to Dornoch.

We have our core routing of Bluebird in place. The site is awaiting final approvals to turn dirt, with anticipated opening in 2028. Each of us had already seen lots of courses. That is evident during our on-site walks, when the conversation about specific greens, bunkers, slopes and holes invariably invokes references from the likes of Pinehurst No. 2, Los Angeles Country Club, St. Andrews and Winged Foot-West.

It's one thing to invoke commonly known courses; it's another thing to experience them together and to provide not just common references but a shared experience, affirmed by extensive conversation. Thus, the purpose of such itinerant research: to provide a common language and level of emotional engagement.

At Dunbar Golf Club, 30 miles east of Edinburgh, we noted the sharp contrast between the field holes (Nos. 1-3, 18) immediately

adjacent to the clubhouse and the really stirring linksland holes (Nos. 4-17) on the coast side of a long wall. The breakthrough takeaway moment here came after the tight, low-lying stretch when, at the ninth hole, a 532-yard par 5, the uphill blind tee shot leads to a stunning, expansive view of the entire valley as it gives way to the North Sea. There is value, we noted, in the occasional blind shot that transcends the immediate shot at hand.

At nearby North Berwick Golf Club-West Links, we marveled at the intrigue of the 16th green, a Biarritz putting surface measuring 64 by 15 yards, with a 4-foot-deep swale arrayed diagonally at its waist. Curiously (or not), we spent a lot more time here than at North Berwick's more famous Redan par-3 15th hole, which has been emulated repeatedly in the United States.

Cruden Bay GC, along the east coast between Aberdeen and Peterhead, impressed us deeply with the power of its dunes and its entirely natural mounding. Fraserburgh GC, the seventh-oldest links course in the world, was less imposing but equally sound for the ease in which its holes sat down naturally on frumpy dunes. It was also quite the lesson to learn, as the entire course is maintained by a staff of three — something we found out from head greenkeeper **Calum Anderson**, whom we encountered digging out part of the 15th fairway.

Fraserburgh, in a working-class town that has seen better days, also reminded us of how

important a golf course can be to the sense of community culture. Members there proved very welcoming, both during our walk and afterward, when we relaxed for coffee. We then went up the road along the Moray Coast to Cullen Golf Club, where we meandered in awe amid towering sea stacks and observed what golf was like nearly two centuries ago.

At Royal Dornoch Golf Club in the Highlands, the consistency of the bunkering made a deep impression on us, though we have yet to decide if Bluebird Club will sport hazards as deep and revetted as those. We also spent a lot of time marveling at the boldness of the platform putting surface at the unbunkered, par-4 14th green. We loved how the surface snuggled into the last of a succession of intruding dunes and how the upslope fronting this green created nuanced ground elements to confront during approach (and recovery).

As a design team, we coined the phrase "two fingers" there to describe how the earthen folds create a double hazard of sorts. We knew full well, however, that the effect would best be described with one finger.

We ended our research trip at Skibo Castle's Carnegie Golf Links. It's a modern version of a classic game and filled with thoughtful bumps, hollows, mounds and deflection points.

There's no reason the work of educational research can't also be fun. Along the way, it provides a community of discourse and shared reference points that facilitate subsequent design. 🏌️



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.

BEST OF THE BEST:

JOHN ZIMMERS TAKES INVERNESS TO NEW HEIGHTS

A classified ad in a small-town newspaper changed the trajectory of his life. Then hard work, advice from an amazing collection of GOATs, and support from companies like BASF helped him reach the pinnacle of his profession.

By Pat Jones

Photo credit: Michael Wiedle, Inverness Club

At 18, an elbow injury ended John Zimmers' hopes of a career in big league baseball. He went to work for a landscaper and was "kind of soul-searching" for what to do with his life. One day he picked up a copy of his hometown paper in Altoona, Pa., and found a help wanted ad to work for someone named Paul Latshaw at Wilmington Country Club over in Delaware.

His first thought: "Why on earth would that guy run that ad in central Pennsylvania?" It turned out Latshaw had a lot of connections in the area, including a kid named Matt Shaffer. Latshaw liked the work ethic and values he found there.

Zimmers and his wife Tracey, newlyweds at the time, recruited her aunt to type up a resume for the job and Zimmers made the 4-hour drive to interview. Latshaw, who'd just left Augusta National for Wilmington, hired him immediately and Zimmers quickly discovered his purpose in life. "I was there about three weeks when he pulled me aside and told me I needed to get a degree and make this my career," Zimmers recalls. "It's been an amazing ride ever since."

That ride included Wilmington, Congressional, Sand Ridge and then two decades at Oakmont CC, where he cemented the club's reputation as a championship site and one of the best-conditioned courses on the planet.

How did a crazy classified ad inspire you to go work at Wilmington?

At that point, I knew a little about landscaping and even less about golf, but I really enjoyed the combination of nature and sports. I enjoyed seeing things grow and change, and I liked the detail and thinking involved in preparing a course. It seemed natural, and it was exciting.

How did you build your relationship with Mr. Latshaw?

As time went on, I got very close to Paul, Paul B. [his son] and Phyllis [Paul's wife]. Mr. Latshaw was tough. He was probably

toughest on Paul B. and then me...or vice versa sometimes. But I got to work extensively with both of them as well as Greg James (now at Liberty National) while we were at Wilmington. They all kind of mentored me, guided me and put me in situations where I could learn and grow.

At one point you were sharing an office with Paul Latshaw and the equally tough Dick Bator at Congressional. What was that like?

People talk about work-life balance, I never looked at it that way. I was enjoying the work and learning so many different things. I sat in the office for a few months with Latshaw and Bator doing schedules, implementing projects, planning renovations, changing out turf on the fairways and such. But I also listened and learned. Put that in perspective: I got to do something that no one else ever did working with those two. They both have very different personalities, that's for sure.

What were some of the most important things you learned working with those two that you rely on to this day?

Fundamentals. Water right, use plant protectants effectively, mow correctly and try to limit the damage from equipment and traffic. Congressional was struggling when we went there, so we had to learn to fix stuff...and it's not easy to grow grass in Washington, DC. You learn that even if you're doing things right, environmental factors can still really hurt you.

What they really taught me was to mentor young men and women. I think the greatest thing of all is to see someone move on and get a great job and start a family. That's really what it's all about to me.

Continue Reading →



Photo credit: Michael Wiedle, Inverness Club

Let's talk about GOATs.

I was so lucky. For me, my original list of GOATs was Mr. Latshaw, Mr. Bator and Matt Shaffer, who all helped mentor me. Today, I also look at Paul B. Latshaw, Jim Roney, Chad Mark and Phil Cuffare as the modern era GOATs.

What makes Inverness so special?

It's like a family here, and that's how they treat Tracey and me. I couldn't ask for more. I think when they treat you so well, you feel appreciated and you want to do more for them.



John Zimmers (left) standing with Paul Latshaw, who gave Zimmers his start at Wilmington Country Club in Delaware.

What does it mean to you to be entrusted with taking Inverness to a new level?

It never really leaves my mind. It's a responsibility that we – the staff – take seriously. Inverness is a national historic landmark. It was the first club to let golf pros come in and use the clubhouse. And, it's the birthplace of the USGA Green Section that inspired the E.J. Marshall award for superintendents. I've embraced the history, and I really believe the club knows and appreciates that.

How important is it to have a partner like BASF who helps you achieve your goals, not just for championships, but every day?

We have a lot of great partners, but BASF is special, and I'm really proud of this relationship. For me, it all started in the summer of 2016 when we partnered with them for the championship. They'd never done an event like that before, and we talked through how we'd work together. And, we're still collaborating with them today. They've come a very

long way in 10 years as a partner and as an industry leader. They've become one of those big industry players you can really rely on.

Why do you like working with them?

They're not salespeople; they're educators for us. They're coming in to help educate us and put together a program that provides better conditions or is a better return on investment. And, they've been terrific advocates for us as superintendents and a great partner for the championships.

What are your go-to products?

I've used pretty much every BASF product here at Inverness and at other courses. I've counted on Xemplar® fungicide, Maxtima® fungicide, plus Insignia® SC and Lexicon® Intrinsic® brand fungicides particularly. And, I'm excited to try Aramax™ Intrinsic brand fungicide.

Do you value the plant health benefits you get from the Intrinsic brands?

No question. We tell the membership that we're growing grass and we want the healthiest crop we can. Managing "lean and mean" is not sustainable without good, strong, healthy turf and that BASF Intrinsic plant health element is important to us.

What's been the most fun along the way?

You get opportunities around golf. It takes you to some of the greatest places in the world. Places you never even imagined...and sometimes your wife gets to go along. (Laughs.) For me, it goes back to being able to share those times with my family, staff or club leadership.

What do you hope the years ahead hold for you?

I just want to enjoy being here at Inverness every single day. I always say that it's important to be at a great golf course, but if you have a great golf course and it's a great job, that's a pretty spectacular combination.

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SLY DECISION

Michigan's **Fox Hills Golf and Banquet Center** added an 18-hole short course before building high-caliber par-3 layouts became an industry trend. Why the people involved with the Strategic Fox always believed they were ahead of the times.

By
**Kelsie
Horner**

▲ Architect Ray Hearn, right, and now-director of agronomy Eric Niemur review the master plan during construction of the Strategic Fox in the early 2000s.

“**P**henomenal,” “innovative” and “great business people” were just three ways architect **Ray Hearn** described the staff at Fox Hills Golf and Banquet Center. Fox Hills, previously known as Plymouth Country Club, opened in Plymouth, Michigan, as an 18-hole facility in 1927. The original course was designed by **Wilfrid Reid**, but in 1982, **Jim Lipe** designed an additional nine holes, finalizing the 27-hole Fox Classic course. The three nine-hole sets are named the Hills, the Woodlands and the Lakes, and blend the original layout with modern changes.

In 1989, the southeastern Michigan facility added the Golden Fox, an 18-hole **Arthur Hills** design. By 1999, Hearn began working with former

owners **Sandy Mily** and **Kathy Aznavorian** on a par-3 course plan.

The owners gave Hearn a lot of free range, with just a few requests. “Make it really, really good, and make it so it’s fun for the beginner, fun for people that it’s their first time on a golf course, fun for the core golfers that never get enough golf,” Hearn says. “And then if the pros come out and want to hone in their short game, they could go out and feel challenged.”

Hearn’s response? “I was like, OK, giddy up. Here we go.”

Early in Hearn’s career, he decided he wanted to make his design the most detailed process in the business. For the Strategic Fox, the architect and his team started walking the site over and over, taking inventory and analysis of the land. Next came what Hearn called “chicken scratch”

plans, drawing sketch ideas while on property. At the time, Hearn’s office was just a 15-minute drive from the course, giving him the opportunity to make as many course visits as he wanted throughout the process. Soon after, Hearn developed four possible master plans and dialed in on one final plan, comprised of pieces of each of the options.

Following the master plan finalization, Hearn worked on strategy and feature development, placing bunkers and getting exact tee sizes and developing construction plans. “Literally, by that point in time, I hit 30 site visits, from office to site, office to site,” Hearn says. He added another 30 visits during the site inspection process.

By fall 2001, the par-3 course opened for play. The short course came long before the boom of par-3 courses the golf

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SHORT COURSE STORIES

industry is seeing now. “We were in uncharted waters,” Hearn says, “but I felt confident.”

The course remains one of the country’s few 18-hole par-3 courses. Hearn says most courses build anywhere from 6 to 12 holes, instead of a full 18.

The design and construction process didn’t bring many challenges, as most often do. Construction moved without a hitch, with little to no delay. “The stars aligned on this project,” Hearn says. “This thing was so fantasyland. It was weird. It was silky smooth the whole ride.”

Working with Fox Hills’ staff certainly assisted in making the process cohesive.

Hearn considers Aznavorian and Mily, who sold the club to Heritage Golf Group in 2022, to be among the smartest folks in the Michigan golf community. “They’re just great people,” he says. “Fun to be around, very innovative and progressive, willing to take risks, and great businesspeople. I couldn’t say enough about them.”

Mily and Aznavorian no longer run Fox Hills, but the current regional director of agronomy, **Eric Niemur**, worked plenty of seasons with them. Niemur was 17 when he started working at Fox Hills, helping his dad move golf carts. When he turned 18, he joined the grounds crew and started working at the course throughout his summers. He started college as a business major but changed routes and transferred to Michigan State University, where he graduated from the turfgrass management program in 1995. Following graduation, he was hired as an assistant superintendent and has continued to move up in leadership. After the course was sold to Heritage, Niemur officially earned the director of agronomy title.

When Strategic Fox planning began, Niemur was the superintendent

of the Golden Fox course. He assisted with the grow-in process of the short course, and worked alongside his boss, former director of grounds and facilities **Bob Mateja**. During construction, Niemur eventually became superintendent of both Golden Fox and Strategic Fox.

Hearn credits Niemur for such a successful opening and continued joy for the course. “When it opened, they were like, ‘Oh, my goodness, not a blade of grass is out of place.’ And that’s the genius of Eric and his crew,” Hearn says. “He is a superstar in his field.”

When construction was completed, Hearn provided Fox Hills with an 18-hole par-3 course with hole yardages ranging from 91 to 195 yards from the back tees. Bunkers, wetlands and a waterfall dot the course, which features three tee options per hole.

One of the first holes to come together during construction, No. 13, is a memorable course feature for Niemur. The yardage measures 195 from the tips and 135 from the front tees, with a bunker backdrop. Hole No. 17, another of Niemur’s favorites, is a mid-yardage hole, teeing off across a portion of the pond with mounding behind the green and a bridge across the water.

Maintenance for the course differs slightly from Golden Fox and Fox Classic. **Jeremy Powell** now works as superintendent of the Strategic Fox, after working as Niemur’s assistant. The short course brings increased maintenance on filling divots and ball marks, and slight changes to

input plans. Prior to Powell’s hiring, **Dennis Nordling** held the position as superintendent of the short course. Nordling retired but still works at the course several days a week. “It’s been a good transition for Dennis,” Niemur says, “to be here to kind of help teach him some ropes and understand the irrigation and those things that he was less experienced on.”

Before COVID-19, Strategic Fox saw around 10,000 rounds a year. Post COVID? More than 20,000. The club also implemented an 18-hole FootGolf course on the property, which brings in about 1,000 more rounds.

The layout is unique in that it’s built like a championship course. “Especially in this area, there’s not a lot of par-3 courses, but it was built to stand out like a championship course,” Niemur says. “Nice bunkering, large tees, large greens, nice, bigger approaches. I’d say more of a high-caliber par-3, that’s how Ray always termed it, sort of this championship par-3 course.”

The Strategic Fox provides an opportunity for families, friends and golfers of all levels to come together to play the game. “It’s still a really nice par-3 course, and people really like playing it,” Niemur says. “And if dad or mom’s a really good golfer, and they’re playing with their kids that are learning, it offers kind of that enjoyment as well. I think that’s kind of what the overall goal was.” 🏌️

Kelsie Horner is Golf Course Industry’s assistant editor.



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CULTURE BEGINS WITH YOU

One of the reoccurring areas of interest that comes up as we speak to various industry professionals throughout the country is workplace culture.

What's workplace culture? Here's one definition:

... the shared values, beliefs, behaviors and practices that shape the social and psychological environment of a workplace. It influences how employees interact with each other, how they approach their work, and how the organization conducts business.

This definition is broad. But it does contain some key items that will shape a discussion concerning workplace culture, specifically in a golf course maintenance environment. To us, the key items within the definition are the shared values, beliefs, behaviors and practices that become intrinsic to the golf course maintenance team.

Questions that inevitably arise when discussing the topic of workplace culture:

- How do you establish culture?
- And how do you change a culture that is preexisting from the previous superintendent?

We are sure there are tomes of written material about this topic, with theories on how to establish or change culture. To us, it's much simpler and highly dependent on the superintendent and the management team.

YOU DICTATE THE CULTURE OF YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT

With this understanding, if you're a superintendent, you should embody the culture that you want your staff to demonstrate.

Identify the shared values and behaviors you intend for your staff to possess. Those values must be exemplified by you. If you value work ethic, employees being timely, a team atmosphere and executing work with a high level of detail, then you must be ready to demonstrate and

demand that from your staff, as they will derive those behaviors from you.

Recognize what you value in a great employee or staff and demonstrate those behaviors to them in everything that you do.

HIRE FOR YOUR CULTURE

We have always had the mindset that we would rather manage with fewer of the right employees than more of the wrong employees. Don't simply hire bodies, hire those who fit your culture and who you feel could embody the core behaviors that you want your staff to embody.

When communicating during the interview process, don't sugarcoat the expectations of the job and behaviors that are representative of your employees. On the contrary, we recommend slightly exaggerating the expectations.

Utilize the interview process to weed out individuals who don't fit your culture. You want to communicate the expectations in a way so that there are only two outcomes: the potential employee says to him or herself "there is no way in hell I am working here," or they say, "I have to be a part of this, and I can't see myself working anywhere else."

We understand it's easier said than done, but working on a golf course maintenance staff isn't easy. It requires long days, vari-

able weather, weekends, holidays and early start times. You want volunteers, not hostages.

HOLD YOUR EMPLOYEES ACCOUNTABLE

We realize this is very cliché. But we have all held on to an employee even though they are performing outside of values, beliefs or behaviors you have established because you feel like you need them, when actually maintaining their employment is the worst thing you can do.

There's a common saying:

“Don't simply hire bodies, hire those who fit your culture and who you feel could embody the core behaviors that you want your staff to embody.”

“Nothing will kill a great employee faster than watching you tolerate a bad one.” Ample truth resides in that statement. If there's a tumor in your staff, cut it out before it metastasizes. Your staff will

recognize that behaviors outside of established culture won't be tolerated, and your culture will immediately be reinforced. Be relentless in defense of the values, beliefs and behaviors that you establish.

Culture is one of those items that some individuals establish without ever recognizing it. Being aware that the superintendent is the embodiment and defender of the culture is key.

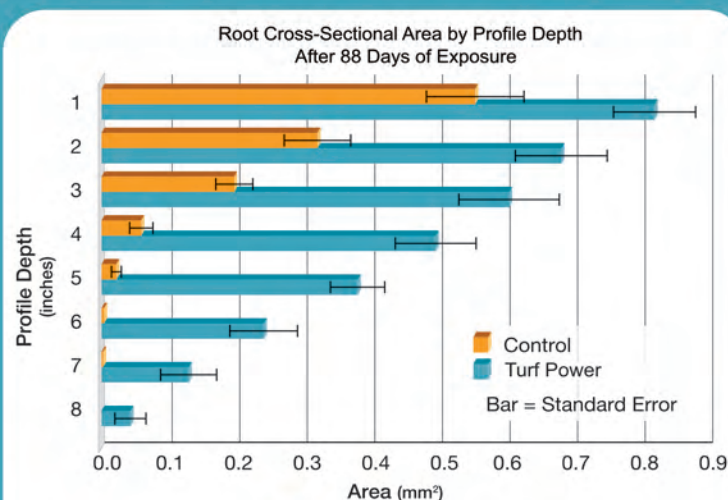
Be vigilant in your shared values, beliefs and behaviors. 🍀



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 and jeff@agro-advisors.com.

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