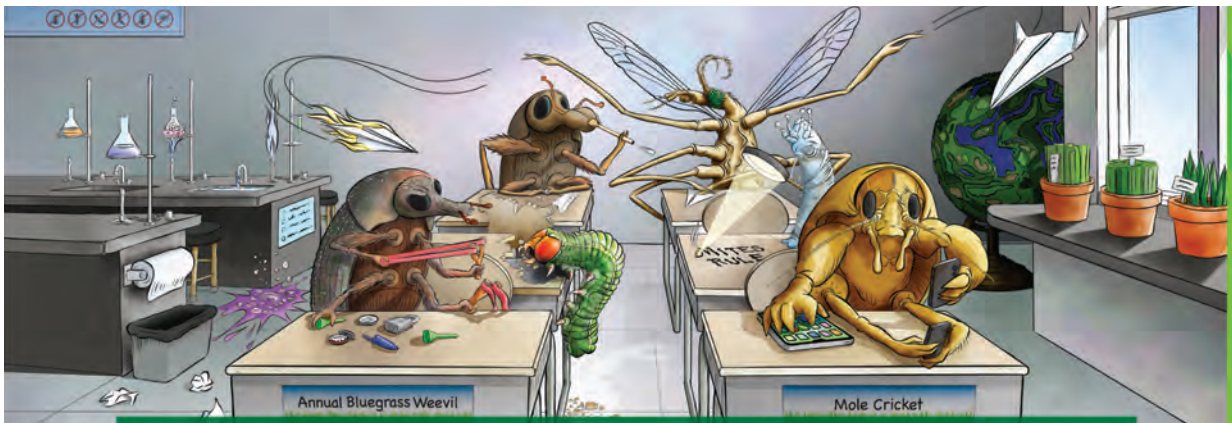

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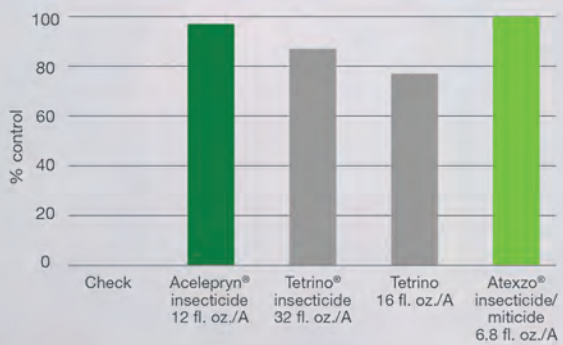
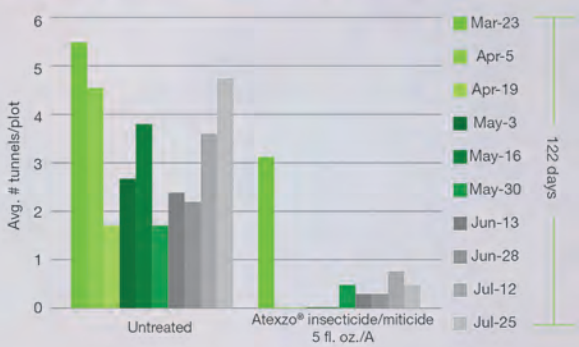


Source: Steve McDonald, Turfgrass Disease Solutions, Pennsylvania, 2022. Applications made on May 11, 2022. Assessment made on June 1, 2022. Check plot had 75 larvae/ft.^{2}.

Curative Treatments on Tawny Mole Cricket Adults



Source: A.D. Ali, Ph.D., Davey Institute, Lehigh Acres, Florida, summer 2025. Application made on March 23, 2025.

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INSIDE: Visionary peace in Virginia / 26 | Smartphones on the course: Interaction vs. Distraction / 46

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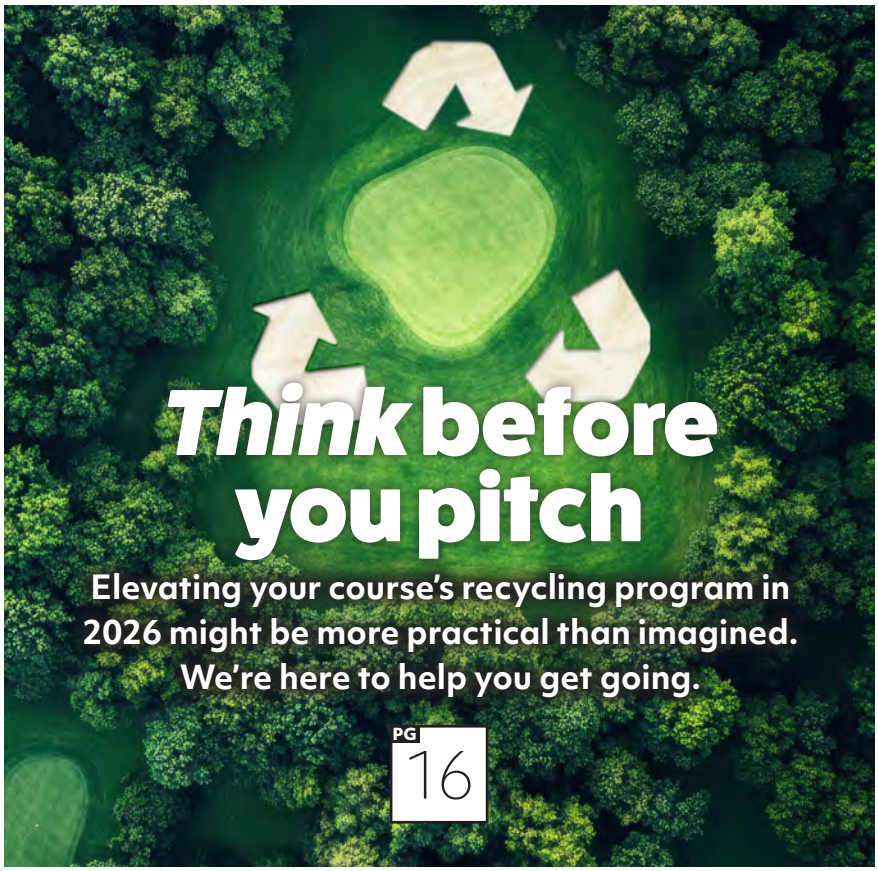
IN THIS ISSUE



FEATURES

16 RECYCLING: Elevating your on- and off-course program might be easier than you think. We can help you get started.

26 THE OMNI HOMESTEAD: The Virginia resort features much more than two courses and a historic connection to Sam Snead.

34 ZOYSIA IN PALM DESERT: A Southern California turf pro explains the basics and nuances to a crowd unfamiliar with the variety.

38 NY STATE PARK COURSES: Cornell University continues helping Empire State facilities make more sustainable decisions.

42 TURTLEBACK MOUNTAIN: The New Mexico course was beat up and neglected just three years ago. Now it's hosting PGA of America events.

COLUMNS

14 GAME PLAN
Henry DeLozier: Clearing up ambiguity

24 OUTSIDE THE ROPES
Tim Moraghan: Meeting management

40 GOLF THERAPY
Bradley S. Klein: Dual visions for golf

50 TWO FOR THE ROAD
Delsandro and Corcoran: Symbiosis

DEPARTMENTS

4 TEEING OFF: Caring for the course

6 NOTEBOOK: 10.5 holes is just right

10 WWOG: Grace Allen

12 CONSERVATION: Sugar Creek GC

46 TRAVELS WITH TERRY

48 CLASSIFIEDS / INDEX

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RECYCLING IS COURSE CARE

I strive to fix multiple ball marks on every green, collect trash from turf, paths and ornamental beds, rake bunkers as meticulously as **Ted Scott** and demonstrate gratitude toward golf course employees. I'd repair more divots, but I take course care to such extremes I swipe instead of dig at the ball to avoid wounding playing surfaces.

My father, **Guy Cipriano Jr.**, and grandfather, **Guy Cipriano Sr.**, instilled protecting the course in me from the moment I uttered, "I think I want to give golf a try." I wasn't playing golf anymore if I disobeyed their orders. Spending time on the course represented a privilege. That beloved privileged was removed if I abused the course.

Since that mid-1990s introduction to golf, basic course care hasn't changed much, besides the elimination of the nuisances and tattered afternoon putting surfaces created by metal spikes. Ball marks and divots must be repaired and replaced; bunkers need raked.

What has changed drastically in the past 30 years are the number of people using your courses and their feelings toward protecting the planet. Education, awareness and relentless advocacy have cultivated more eco-conscious humans. And, yes, golfers are humans, despite some of the behavior witnessed on courses.

For this month's cover package (page 16), we pitched to digital editor **Kelsie Horner** a story about practical ways courses can pitch fewer bottles, cans and other reusable materials consumed around the course. Kelsie, author of our monthly "Conservation Mindset" column, enthusiastically accepted the assignment.

Our eyes sparked the story concept. Finding recycling stations at some golf facilities can be as tricky as spotting a mountain lion on a woodsy hike. Only 57 percent of courses support formal recycling programs, according to an industry survey we distributed in late 2025.

Labor, time and lack of knowledge/training were cited as the top reasons why courses neglect to implement recycling programs. Kelsie's reporting gently debunks those myths. Recycling is a giant industry — our parent company, GIE Media, owns the ultra-successful *Recycling Today* Media Group — employing nearly 600,000 determined professionals capable of helping businesses such as golf courses establish formal systems and programs.

Recycling, like golf, is a passion endeavor. The people involved with the industry strive to contribute to the greater good, often accepting career discounts along the way. Education and advocacy permeate the higher rungs of the recycling business. Owners and operators of recycling facilities face the same challenges identifying and developing talent as golf industry leaders. The industry's demands often mean recycling leaders and their employees feel overworked. But that doesn't stop many of them from dispersing knowledge and guidance.

The golf industry employs a glut of consultants to examine everything from bunkers to balance sheets. Seeking non-golf assistance to establish or improve a recycling program isn't a sign of weakness. It's savvy management.

Consider recycling a form of course care with enormous benefits extending beyond the game's playing grounds. Most courses place divot boxes on par-3 tees. Effectively using a divot box means golfers must grasp why their presence matters. Approach a few recycling stations around the course with the same mindset. They must be visible for a strategic reason.

There's been a movement over the past decade to "declutter" courses, making it tougher for golfers to find places to clean equipment, toss trash and recycle. No-clutter philosophies yield a gigantic clutter transfer. Golf courses without formal recycling programs make bottles, cans, paper, cardboard, wood and other reusable materials somebody else's issue. That's not the form of giving back golf wants to demonstrate.

Effective course care means golfers acknowledge how their actions, or inactions, impact the experiences of others. When golfers commit to doing a few simple things, it helps staff focus on more critical parts of the job.

Recycling should be placed into the same category as fixing ball marks, repairing divots and raking bunkers. The cost of not letting golfers contribute to a pursuit bigger than golf is too important to continue ignoring.

Guy Cipriano

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

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10.5 holes?!?!

There's nothing traditional about Gravel Pit in Brainerd, Minnesota, and adding a second course makes the vibe even more unique.

By ***Judd Spicer***

The character-driven Gravel Pit in Brainerd, Minnesota, keeps digging itself a bigger hole.

And that's just how ownership and patrons like it.

Following applause for the 2022 debut of its 13-hole par-3 course on a property that was an actual gravel pit a mere two years prior, the grounds have bet its own "Big Short" on a host of new holes.

In mid-2024, Gravel Pit introduced a 10.5-hole course, serving as a sister course to complement its original par-3 play. As the 2026 season approaches, Gravel Pit is one of the few facilities in America with two par-3 courses.

"I never thought that in our second year of business, we'd expand," says **Chuck Klecatsky**, co-owner and operator at The Gravel Pit. "But people have been having a good time at the Gravel Pit since we opened in '22, and, on the land that is now the 10.5, we'd initially drawn a driving range. Then, as kind of a survey, I kept asking people if they wanted to hit balls when they arrived, and I was getting one 'Yes' to every 20 'No's."

Informal poll conducted, Klecatsky went back to the design pit, re-tapping his superintendent-turned-architect.

"**Scott Hoffman** walked the 10.5 land a number of times and said, 'Hey, man, that's a little gem of a property over there,'" Klecatsky says. "So, we decided to build the second course and something that was a little different."

Being "different" than traditional golf (or, even untraditional golf) has continued to define Gravel Pit's budding culture of inviting inclusivity. "Here, the jam is social," Klecatsky smiles. "It's all about fun."

With the fun tenet across the original 13 defined by some quirk, some genuine test and an awesome, natural aesthetic, the second course borrows from its 1,632-yard sibling.

Albeit with a bit more forgiveness.

"It's a little bit less intimidating than the original, and while I wouldn't necessarily say that it's *easier*, people do lose fewer balls," Klecatsky says. "And the course grew in really well, just like the 13-hole course. There are very few trees over there, so, the turf quality — even though it was only a year old — grew in so nicely."

Carded at a shade over 1,100 yards, the 10.5-hole course sports two water hazards, small greens and a happy host of **Tom Fazio**-style bowled collection areas that bank and feed back to the pin. While eight of the holes play at 116 yards or shorter, the newer grounds do sport earnest meat on No. 3. Listed at 156 yards, the test plays much longer over wetlands to a perched, muffin-top green; the hole understandably stands solo as the lone 10.5 play with a forward set of tees.

"Very fun, but extremely difficult," Klecatsky says. "I mean, I like all of our golf holes, but between the two courses, there are three — No. 3 on the 10.5 certainly included — that are legit and could be on any course in the world."

Laughing in self-deprecation when noting that the new addition "blew up" the grounds' original concept and marketing of a two-hour day, Klecatsky has been pleased with early returns on the dual-play offer to guests.

"We've had a number of people who have been playing both courses in the same day, or, a lot of people who say, 'That was super fun. Do you have a replay rate?' So, then we send them to the second course," Klecatsky says. "And that's been a pleasant surprise, to see how many groups are playing both and making the Gravel Pit a little bit bigger part of their day."

And for those still looking for some quick swings? There's marketing muscle in that angle as well: "If people only play one of the courses," Klecatsky says, "then they have this reason to come back and play the rest of the holes."

As for that 0.5 on the card, the 69-yard putting-only hole rounding back home befits the grounds' Good Times milieu and has fast proved an engaging bet setter.

"It's been fun to hear the hoots and hollers from the last hole," Klecatsky says. "And, now, I call 23.5 holes my new jam."

Growing in popularity and renown far beyond its lake-laden northern Minnesota frontier, Gravel Pit's penchant for laughs, challenge and accessibility to new golfers, all ages and ability levels is thriving with its increased variety of holes. And the guy behind a half-hole finisher doesn't need an abacus to figure that out.

"Well," Klecatsky says, "we've never been too good at math here."

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Tartan Talks 115

Chris Wilczynski has honed one of the trickiest assignments in golf course architecture: plotting and designing a layout surrounded by homes and neighborhoods.

Wilczynski joined the *Tartan Talks* podcast to explain the philosophies and tactics behind projects with significant real estate components. He and his team recently started field work at Esplanade at Rivergrass, a new residential golf course community in Naples, Florida. Rivergrass is Wilczynski's fifth collaboration with national homebuilder Taylor Morrison under the Esplanade brand.

"It's a unique balance," he says. "If you were to build a new golf course that didn't have the housing parameters, the deliverables and the aesthetics are probably going to be different than something with residential. The balance is really to understand the intent of what the community is. The golf course is an amenity to sell lots or sell homes."

A different business purpose, though, doesn't mean the golf needs to be compromised: "My goal is to have interesting designs, and to make them beautiful and make them playable," says Wilczynski, who learned the importance of residential golf while working for the late **Arthur Hills**. "I can accomplish those goals within a residential golf community."

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

PEOPLE NEWS

Legendary turf pro **Paul R. Latshaw** will receive the USGA's Green Section Award later this month. Latshaw is the only superintendent to have hosted all three U.S. men's majors — four Masters, two U.S. Opens and a PGA Championship — during a 37-year career at Oakmont Country Club, Augusta National Golf Club, Winged Foot Golf Club, Congressional Country Club and The Riviera Country Club. … **Charles Aubry**, director of agronomy at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, is the Georgia GCSA's Superintendent of the Year. … Veteran golf course architect **Brian Silva** and colleague **Brian Johnson** partnered to launch a new design firm, Silva & Johnson, Ltd. The pair are working this year on San Antonio Country Club in Texas,

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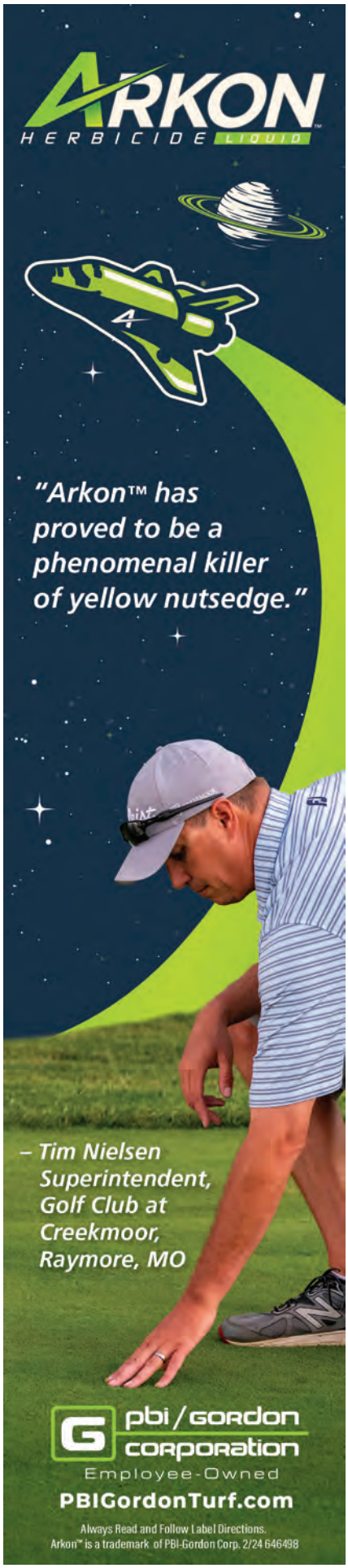

NOTEBOOK

Old Westbury Golf & Country Club on Long Island and Boca Raton Golf & Country Club in Florida. … **Erin Wolfram** is the new director of First Green and workforce development for the GCSAA. She brings 15 years of experience in the career services profession to the position. … The GCSAA also named **Shelly Robbins**, a sales and business development professional with more than two decades of experience, as its new senior director of foundation, corporate sales and events. … **Kevin Laycock** is the new VP of sales and order to ship for PBI-Gordon Corporation. … Soil Scout launched the Grandmasters Program, the first international recognition dedicated to professionals whose mastery of the rootzone has quietly shaped the modern game. The Grandmasters founding class includes **Brent Downs** and **Andrew Northeim** of the United States, **Janne Lehto** of Finland and **Rodney McKeown** of Singapore.

Lyman Orchards GC

COURSE NEWS

Construction is underway at Old Shores in the Florida Panhandle, the fourth golf course commissioned by developer **Michael Keiser** with architect **Tom Doak**. Lead associate **Angela Moser** is on the ground, busy at work shaping the course. Preview play on select holes is expected to begin as soon as the fourth quarter of this year, with a grand opening planned for fall 2027. A second 18-hole course is being designed and a short course is also being planned. … INFINITUM, the 45-hole golf resort and real estate development on Spain's Costa Dorada, started work on the front nine of the Hills Course as the second stage of its renovation project gets underway. The project is led by **Dave Sampson** of European Golf Design. … Troon is partnering with Buffalo Creek Golf Club, a daily-fee club in Rockwall, Texas, providing agronomy, operations and sales and marketing advisory services. … Bobby Jones Links is managing Meadia Heights Golf Club in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. … KemperSports, meanwhile, is now managing Lyman Orchards Golf Club (pictured), a 45-hole public facility in Middlefield, Connecticut, and Village Greens of Woodridge about 30 miles southwest of downtown Chicago.

INDUSTRY BUZZ

LebanonTurf received EPA registration for Fertilizer with Acelepryn insecticide plus Barricade herbicide, which control grubs and crabgrass. … Syngenta's Atexzo insecticide/miticide is now also federally registered by the EPA. … The California Department of Pesticide Regulation has approved Albaugh LLC's Diamid T&O for use in the state.

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Grace Allen

PGA WEST

Grace Allen epitomizes the future of the turf industry. She took her first job in turf while still in her mid-teens. Today, she is more passionate than ever about the industry. Still in her early 20s, she is a second assistant superintendent at PGA West in La Quinta, California.

Golf has always been at the center of Allen's life. She grew up in Northern California and took up the game at the encouragement of her father, an avid golfer who also served as a tournament volunteer on occasion.

Allen was playing in U.S. Kids Golf events by the time she was 8. She played for her high school team as a freshman but was ineligible after that because of her enrollment in an independent study program.

At 16, she applied for a job at a local golf course because she wanted playing privileges. She related that experience on the *Wonderful Women of Golf* podcast with host **Rick Woelfel**, recalling that she originally applied for a position as a cart attendant.

"They ended up not needing anybody for that role," she says, "but he said, 'I need a weed whacker. And me, having zero landscaping experience, but having confidence, said 'I'll do it.' and he said 'See you tomorrow at 5:30 a.m.'

"I was like, 'What am I getting myself into?' I showed up, and I had no waterproof shoes. I didn't know what I was getting myself into. But my first day there I was like, 'Hey, this is cool.'"

That first day was what Allen calls "a doorway" to her career in turf. Allen admits that early on she felt somewhat isolated, not realizing how many women were entering the field.

That mindset changed over time through connections she made over social media. At the encouragement of **Heather Schapals**, a two-time Wonderful Women of Golf guest, Allen applied to the GCSAA's Leadership Academy, which she completed in 2024. Since then, Schapals has been a role model. "I love getting to talk to her whenever I can," Allen says. "I've seen her a couple times now at some events. She actually worked close to me in the past and was very close to one of my professors as well. She's good person. I love hearing from her."

Allen worked at several clubs in Northern California before arriving at PGA West (and the Citrus Club) in June 2024 as an agronomy intern. She was named an assistant-in-training four months later and was promoted to a second assistant's position last July.

Along the way, she was certified in turf/maintenance at the University of California Riverside and participated in the Greenkeeper University online program last August. Allen approached her return to the classroom enthusiastically and with a fresh mindset.

"It's not that school wasn't for me," she says, "but I was always intrigued by other things. Going to school is something [if] you're truly passionate for, [it] makes a huge difference. I found my focus was a lot better because I was really intrigued by what I was learning. And I wanted to apply it to what I did day to day."

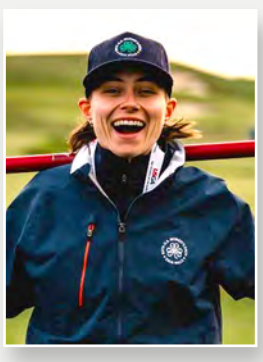
And Allen's job at PGA West offers an abundance of learning opportunities.

"I've had opportunities I never would have imagined in regards to developing and being promoted and being given opportunities I wouldn't have had elsewhere," she says. "Coming here, I found exactly what I was looking for. I'm not saying this is going to be my forever home, but I'm taking advantage of all the opportunities here."

Allen was also part of the corps of female volunteers who worked the 2025 U.S. Women's Open at Erin Hills.

"Whenever anybody asks me about this, my mind goes in really different places," she says. "There were so many awesome things that happened throughout that week. Being around the top women players in the world was truly inspirational. But also the family part of being a team. Getting there super early after being there super late in the day. … It's truly an amazing thing and being there with all those women. It's hard to put words into what that week was like."

"I was like, 'What am I getting myself into?' I showed up, and I had no waterproof shoes. I didn't know what I was getting myself into. But my first day there I was like, 'Hey, this is cool.'"



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Communicate in the community

Illinois superintendent Kevin Goss is advocating for conservation both on and off the golf course.

Sugar Creek Golf Course superintendent **Kevin Goss** earned the 2025 Communication and Outreach Award from the GCSAA's Environmental Leaders in Golf Awards — and rightfully so. Discussing and advocating for environmental stewardship is something he's been doing for a while.

"I was surprised at first," Goss says. "I didn't expect to win. I thought maybe I'd be a runner-up, but then I kind of thought back, and I was like, 'Well, I have been talking many people's ears off for a couple decades about this.'"

Located in Villa Park, Illinois, about 20 miles west of downtown Chicago, Sugar Creek is a public facility home to a 9-hole, par-32 layout. The course is run by Elmhurst Park District and the Village of Villa Park. When the course recently renovated out-of-play areas and the creek shorelines, a key part of Goss' job was keeping the community informed of those changes.

"Most people realize why we did it. We put up a lot of posters, and I gave a lot of presentations," Goss says. Because of Goss' communication, the course hasn't received much pushback from golfers on the changes.

Goss has been working with the park district for more than a decade to plan and fix the course's stream shoreline and irrigation pond. The pond had been filled with silt, and the stream banks, lined with metal, were fully rusted through. The project was funded by the golf course, village, park district, DuPage County and the Illinois EPA, requiring extensive engineering and permitting.

One deep pool was created for irrigation, and the rest of the areas were converted to wetlands. Three acres of the compact course were naturalized. "It's a very small golf course," he says. "It's 45 acres total, so we didn't really have very much area to naturalize except for the stream banks."

Buffers along the shore are now 30 to 40 feet, preventing inputs from entering water streams. "Some golfers like the extra challenge," Goss says. "I'm sure some don't, but it was best for the project and necessary to receive the grant funding."

Goss believes that being environmentally smart is not just the right move for the golf course, but for the entire community.

The property holds a large pollinator garden that has successfully attracted monarchs, hummingbirds and other butterfly species. "We serve a lot of functions for the surrounding community that we should promote," Goss adds, "and we do our best to be a link in the ecosystem."

Goss promotes the club through multiple avenues:

- He serves on the Elmhurst Park District Environmental Committee
- He teaches as an adjunct professor in the horticulture department at the College of DuPage in nearby Glen Ellyn.
- And he provides informative posters and social media in the community, explaining the course's environmental work

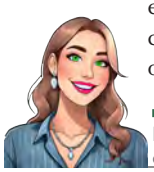
Through his role on the park district's environmental committee, Goss has helped write IPM manuals, invasive species plans and policy manuals.

"The superintendent's job — I see it as much bigger than just maintaining the fine turf surfaces," Goss says. "We have to look at the whole property and then the area surrounding the property."

Working in the community where he grew up provides a motivational boost for conservation and outreach. Goss started working at Sugar Creek when he was 16 years old, and started playing there even earlier.

"A lot of it is having a personal connection to the area," he says. "But I feel like even if I didn't have a personal connection to the area, and hadn't grown up in the community, I would still have the same priorities.

"Being a public golf course, we want to do what's best for the entire community."



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

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MANAGING AMBIGUITY

***am·bi·gu·i·ty**, noun 1. the quality or state of allowing more than one interpretation: the quality or state of being ambiguous:* The movie's ambiguous ending left the audience confused and frustrated. *2. a word or expression that can be understood in two or more possible ways:* The ambiguous forecast called for a chance of rain.

Golf course superintendents are not fans of ambiguity. A mostly straight-forward, no-nonsense bunch trained in scientific discipline and tenaciously dedicated to their responsibilities, their job demands certainty.

"Maybe" is not an answer they look upon kindly. Also, "it depends" and "we'll see." But those are sometimes the answers they get from their managers, owners, boards, members and customers. The best of them learn to navigate the roiling waters of inexactness to get the answers and information they really need.

Here's how they do it:

Many of the most agile managers use what is known as "scenario planning" to organize their options and intentions. Scenario planning seeks to answer the questions, *"What if?"* and *"Then what?"* Their ability is founded in a five-step process for tackling ambiguity, reducing stress and increasing effectiveness.

1. They describe the problem to be addressed, being as clear in their description as possible.
2. They identify the options realistically available and sort them into three categories: best-case, worst-case and probable-case scenarios.
3. They evaluate the various impacts that could arise within each scenario. These evaluations should include considerations for labor and staffing, financial impacts, environmental responsibilities, supply chain capabilities and impacts on the course's stakeholders.
4. They determine the most likely outcomes of each scenario and evaluate them against their responsibilities, course objectives and access to resources. Like all of us, they hope for the best and plan for the worst.
5. They establish the indicators and metrics to be monitored in-process and at key points to make sure all pre-planning possibilities have been identified and considered.

Once clearly defined and described, they evaluate the risk factors that will impact their plan.

- Scale and scope of the undertaking
- Capabilities and skills of staff resources
- Availability of and access to required external resources
- Reliability of third-party assets and suppliers
- Access to necessary capital (with contingencies)
- Weather variability and possible impacts

Dealing with ambiguity extends beyond projects and project-related matters. A superintendent also deals with irregular and inconsistent guidance from throughout the organization. Managing organizational ambiguities requires a mutually agreed upon set of primary goals and objectives … and a lot of communication.

This is where a carefully considered agronomic plan provides the structure that enables and empowers superintendents to do the required work. In this sense, the agronomic plan is the first responder, providing direction and purpose.

Launching into a new calendar year, superintendents should take the following steps to minimize risk and to reduce ambiguity:

1. Complete your annual update of the agronomic plan. Add recently acquired tools, capabilities and expectations to ensure that your plan is consistent with 2026 goals and budgets.
2. Organize your conference and trade show trips to optimize your time. Keeping current on resources, information and best practices reduces risk at your facility.
3. Review your agronomic plan with assistants, supervisors and your crew. They need and want to understand what they are expected to achieve.
4. Conduct your annual equipment review with your mechanics to update your understanding of the useful life of your equipment and other physical assets. This will eliminate or reduce uncertainty up the organization and send a clear message regarding needed capital reserves.
5. Review your 2026-and-beyond capital plan with your general manager and CFO/accounting manager. Successful budgeting needs always require ample up-front discussions with these important gatekeepers.

Dealing with ambiguity is as important as the numerous other details that challenge superintendents on a daily basis. Now is the time to put a plan in place to reduce ambiguity and bring needed clarity to your work.

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

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Think before you pitch

Elevating your course's recycling program in 2026 might be more practical than imagined. We're here to help you get going.

By
Kelsie Horner

"If you don't have somebody who's really excited about it already, then you really need to explain to people. You need to inspire people on why this is exciting and worth the extra effort."

— Eleanor Brown

Recycling is the action or process of converting waste into reusable material. Golf courses are filled with recyclable materials, used by employees and golfers. Recycling systems can be complicated, making them intimidating for staff. But as superintendents, leaving the ground you work on better than you inherited remains part of the job.

The intersection between golf and environmentalism is huge. Notably, the Waste Management Phoenix Open, hosted at TPC Scottsdale every February, has been recognized as the largest zero-waste event in the world. Booze containers, drink cups and food wrappers, along with everything else consumed on site, is diverted from landfill, prioritizing recycling and decreasing its footprint.

On the micro level, superintendents and their teams can play a big role in determining how to leave the course a better place. After speaking with sustainability savants, here are some large- and small-scale ways to begin reducing, reusing and recycling at your facilities.

If you want to put a true recycling program in place, Southworth director of sustainability **Eleanor Brown** suggests the first step you must take is to ***understand every part of recycling*** on your course. Learn which types of services are in your area, which aspects the course operations team already handles, and what responsibilities will be added. Programs and recyclable items vary by state, so it's important to research.

Pending on location, some heavy metal and used equipment can be recycled. Ditto for plant protectant and other product containers. "There's a lot of resources online to be able to look up if your county or city area has different types of recycling," Brown says.

When Southworth-operated Creighton Farms in northern Virginia decided to start a recycling program, it was discovered that the county's waste services provided recycling procedures but didn't handle material pickup. The course had to designate someone to deliver the recyclables to a local facility.

Properly disposing of chemicals and hazardous materials is also essential and even included in the GCSAA's Best Management Practices: "Be sure to familiarize yourself with all state and local laws related to disposal/recycling of these waste materials."

Recycling is a time and labor commitment, and as Audubon International director of Signature Sanctuary Certification **Ken Benoit** says, "Handling the recycling of the waste that comes off a golf course is a pretty big job. It's just a matter of making the commitment to actually do the work."

The next step to take is ***communication with stakeholders***.

"Check in with management," Brown says. "Let them know what you're thinking about doing, get their concerns and questions, and also the heads of departments that it's going to be touching."

Brown says finding a strong advocate on staff is important — whether that's the superintendent, a board member or even a chef.

According to a recent *Golf Course Industry* survey, the biggest challenge superintendents face with recycling programs is a lack of participation and engagement from customers. Forty-seven percent of respondents noted this as an issue. Use your voice, fliers and board meetings to advocate for recycling and its importance.

"If you don't have somebody who's really excited about it already, then you really need to explain to people," Brown says. "You need to inspire people on why this is exciting and worth the extra effort."

After speaking with the necessary people and receiving approval, the next step is to ***decide on your program and which companies you will be working with***, if any. Consult with nearby facilities, research and reach out to experts.

Once a recycling program is set, the final step involves ***following up***. Check in with your staff. See what's working and what's not. Challenges might arise, but, Brown says, "don't accept no or what feels like a no. Just pivot."

LOCAL AND NATIONAL

programs exist to get your recycling programs started. Every Can Counts U.S., a nonprofit organization funded through members of the Can Manufacturers Institute, focuses on encouraging aluminum can recycling at concerts, festivals and other events. The program began with implementing a Mardi Gras recycling plan in New Orleans. The chapter officially launched in 2024. That first year, alongside other recycling programs, approximately 145,408 cans were collected and recycled during Mardi Gras celebrations.

"We've been at Mardi Gras for the last three years, and we helped the city design a recycling program along the parade routes, recognizing there are so many people who are using aluminum beverage cans away from home, but they didn't necessarily have a place to recycle them," says **Tim Ebner**, CMI's vice president of marketing and communications.

The organization has 21 chapters worldwide. In the United States, the nonprofit is focusing on sporting events and venues, which naturally led them to the golf industry. East Potomac Golf Links in Washington, D.C., has started their pilot program for recycling infrastructure on golf courses.

"We looked at this as a great opportunity to step in and say, 'Hey, let's help some public golf courses around the country get access to some infrastructure that can not only make recycling accessible, but also really fun and eye-catching'," Ebner says.

East Potomac Golf Links is a public facility located in downtown D.C. with views of the Washington Monument and Jefferson Memorial. Until late last year, East Potomac was one of three public courses run by the nonprofit National Links Trust. The course was chosen as the pilot program because it is the busiest of the three. The course already had a recycling system in place, but Every Can Counts came in to provide an aluminum can-only system. Two cages shaped in the letters D and C were placed on the property. The cages hold up to 1,500 cans combined.

© COURTESY OF EVERY CAN COUNTS

"When this project's over in a year, if Every Can Counts wants to do this somewhere else in the city, it's something that can seamlessly move," says **Andrew Szunyog**, who handles sustainability efforts for National Links Trust. "We don't want to make something that's only going to be used for a year, and then it just goes somewhere and sits. We want to think through how long these things can last."

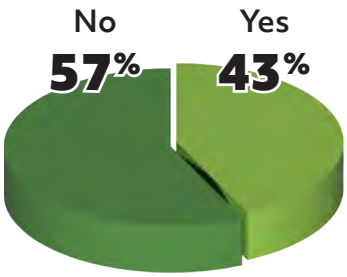
"It's really so that folks not only notice the recycling bins, but they also notice this artwork, and they feel compelled or just excited to recycle their beverage can," Ebner adds.

In collaboration, all cans collected at the course can be delivered to a local scrap yard, Potomac Metals, in exchange for money. The money raised from the aluminum cans is then put back into the course and its sustainability efforts.

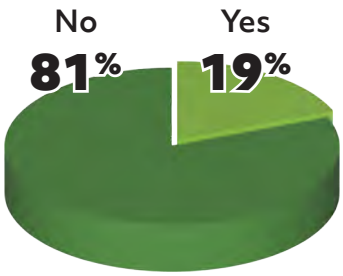
If your course is interested in partnering with a local or national organization to get recycling efforts moving, Every Can Counts is a possible route. "We really want public golf courses or private golf courses around the country to reach out to us

Numbers to know

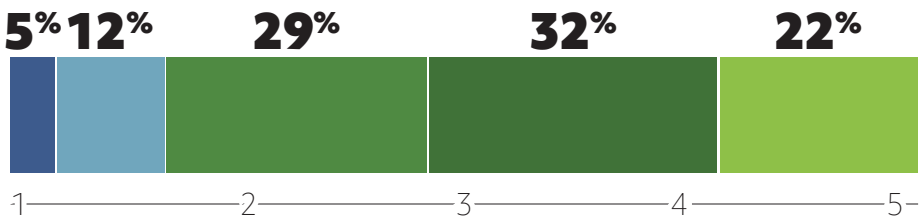
Does your course currently have a recycling program in place?



Do you plan to implement a recycling program in the next two years?



Confidence in your knowledge on which items and resources on your property can be recycled



Biggest challenges you face with recycling at your course

Lack of customer engagement/ participation	47%
Labor	42%
Time	40%
Lack of knowledge/ training	22%
*Other	4%
None of the above	19%

Other responses included: Cost, lack of proper storage areas, upper management, no pickup available

Who is primarily responsible for recycling/sustainability efforts at your course?

Superintendent	38%
General manager	13%
Owner	4%
Director of sustainability	2%
*Other	9%
Nobody	34%

*Other responses included: Everyone, chef, members, pro shop and grounds departments, facilities manager, recycling department, director of golf, bureau chief

Source: 2026 Golf Course Industry Numbers to Know survey; 236 respondents

and let us know if they need help with recycling," Ebner says.

Szunyog worked collaboratively with Every Can Counts. Having a partnership, a mentor or a group of people you can discuss sustainability efforts with is essential for success.

"I think having good partners that are operationally aligned and also adaptive and creative are really the key elements," Ebner says. "We really use Andrew's team as a sounding board to say, 'What would work well within your team?' and 'What kind of facility infrastructure do you need?'"

EVEN IF IMPLEMENTING a full recycling system on property isn't currently possible, there are plenty of small, practical things you can do to get started.

Reduce …

One extremely effective way to reduce is to steer away from single-use products and order in bulk so less packaging is used. Things such as coffee grounds and tea bags can be composted, and food waste can be as well.

Minimizing single-use plastic water bottles is also a possible route.

"Unfortunately, as a society, we still use a ton of water bottles," says Benoit, a 25-year superintendent. Americans churn through more than 50 billion single-use plastic water bottles each year. While they are recyclable, they cost money and don't help minimize plastic use. Offering the crew a refillable water bottle and placing water refill stations throughout the course is one way to help.

Reuse …

Reusing material is a win for everybody. It's better for the environment and it allows for less spending in the long run.

When a piece of equipment goes bad, don't just trash it. Work with equipment managers to see if it can be fixed. If it can't, work with a local recycling company to determine which parts can be reused.

Wood from old buildings or no-

Recycling from the start

At Mickelson National Golf Club in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, recycling responsibility lies in the hands of the department heads. Mickelson National is home to an 18-hole **Phil Mickelson**-designed golf course, a wedding venue, a restaurant and a golf academy. Hosting so many customers means opportunities for recycling are wide and far — and the team is making the most of those circumstances.

"Everyone's fully a part of the programs and encouraged to be part of that," master golf course superintendent **Robin Sadler** says, "and it's a very open operation, we're always up for input and ideas from any team member."

Because the club is newer — it fully opened in 2020 — it had the chance to implement sustainable practices from the beginning. The club is also the first GEO-certified course in Canada, earning the achievement in 2024. Working to earn the certification helped expand thought processes and programs, Sadler says. The Mickelson National team has worked to implement efforts in all aspects of the club.

© COURTESY OF ROBIN SADLER

In the kitchen

The club restaurant buys nearly 30 percent of ingredients from local suppliers to limit the cost of purchasing goods. Mickelson National sources produce from Springbank Links Golf Club, which uses a vertical-modular farm to grow kale, basil and spinach, among other food, 100 percent pesticide-free.

To mitigate waste, the club purchased a meat grinder to repurpose food waste. In the first year, they saved more than $4,000 by repurposing extra trims and portions of meat.

On the course

The club made the eco-friendly choice to switch from gas-powered to battery-powered golf carts. "Switching from 72 gas carts to 72 lithium carts saved us 18,000 liters of fuel," Sadler says. "Side benefit — that's $24,000." The maintenance team also uses several lithium-powered vehicles.

One of the land's ponds features ultrasonic algae control powered by solar to increase biodiversity in the pond's ecosystem.

All course materials such as clippings, trees, shrubs and weeds are composted. Composted materials are then used throughout the course or picked up by a landscape company operated by one of Mickelson's owners.

Cans and cardboard are recycled on the course and near the clubhouse. Bottles are collected in partnership with Kids Sports, a local program that works to help underprivileged children participate in athletics.

All government-provided guidelines are followed for hazardous waste, and tires and oil are recycled by bringing in a local recycler.

Water is provided at comfort stations throughout the course to decrease plastic bottle usage.

"We created the freshwater taps, which we call the water-on-go," Sadler says, "and really promoted with our membership to carry reusable water containers, versus buying the plastics, because we found that nearly 40 percent of each water bottle we collected still had unconsumed water in it."

Off course

Instead of paper scheduling and tee sheets, the club uses scheduling apps and an iPad for tee times. Any paper used out of necessity is put in recycling bins.

The course has even thought as far ahead as employee travel. They try to hire staff members within 30 miles of the club to limit environmental footprint from transportation.

The lights in office buildings are LED and motion-sensor, preventing unnecessary energy usage. Parking lot lights are also LED and set to a timer based on daylight hours.

After extensive research and discovering that 40 percent of a building's heating and cooling can escape through windows, even the window paneling is being selected with sustainability in mind.

"As we're building and moving into new facilities, we selected high-performing UV-style shades for windows with blocking fabrics that reduce glare and heat gain from solar radiation, managing our energy costs and efficiencies there," Sadler adds.

Mickelson National is a prime example of taking a step. There are opportunities all over the course to make a difference. Implementing programs took some time. Each step required a transition, but not an addition of work. It's now part of the normal day-to-day.

"When our leadership got together with a specific subject of sustainability, and everybody's brainstorming and putting ideas together, it was surprising how much we can do," Sadler says. "And so much of it is just simple little things. And every little thing adds up and makes a difference on a daily basis."

longer-in-use infrastructure can be repurposed. When Manistee National Golf Club in northern Michigan started construction of a par-3 course, telephone poles were used to build a bridge. Signage was built from planks from a retired boat dock. The pump-house was built out of reclaimed lumber from a barn. Be creative.

Recycle …

If you want to start small, start with the grass itself. According to the Northern Ohio GCSA, experts estimate grass clippings and yard waste make up nearly 20 percent of landfill waste. According to another GCSAA study, recycling clippings helps with soil health and can reduce fertilizer usage. After mowing, spread clippings in the rough or in native areas.

"Some consider it the single largest potential point source of pollution on a course," Benoit says. "Implementing a closed-loop wash system is the most effective defense against this type of contamination."

Mickelson National Golf Club in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, worked with a local welding shop to build its own grass clipping separator. The machine sits at the wash bay. Clippings go from the wash bay into the separator. From there, the machine has four stages: Water pumps the clippings into the machine, which then uses a screen to separate out the grass. The second stage filters out larger material, followed by the third stage that pulls out smaller material. The fourth stage files out fine materials, and then clippings are added to the compost pile.

"It's a simple, functional system that is very manageable and very effective," master golf course superintendent **Robin Sadler** says. "There's numerous golf courses around our area that have reached out and are kind of looking at what we've designed here and doing similar things because it's functional, it's cost effective and it also is maintenance friendly."

Work with local companies to recycle batteries, tires and metal scraps from equipment. The GCSAA's BMP study also revealed golf courses are already doing well with that. Keep it up!

A few stats from the research:

- 93 percent of courses reuse or recycle equipment or golf cart batteries
- 89 percent reuse/recycle hydraulic fluids
- 79 percent reuse/recycle pallets
- 77 percent reuse/recycle tires
- 76 percent reuse/recycle aluminum

Cardboard boxes from shipments should be recycled, as should any plastic waste used in the maintenance facility like plates, cutlery and those ever-present water bottles. Place bins in convenient, high-traffic areas to encourage participation from your team.

Some courses prefer not to keep separate recycling bins out on the course — and rather separate out recyclables from trash. In the long run, this provides more work. If it's possible, provide both trash cans and recycling bins in high-traffic areas and throughout the property.

A small upfront time commitment can make a significant difference in achieving a higher purpose.

"It's important for our industry to embrace the environmental movement and do everything that we can," Benoit says. "It's really not that complicated or involved, to be honest with you. It's just a matter of making the commitment to actually do the work."

Kelsie Horner is Golf Course Industry's digital editor and author of the monthly "Conservation Mindset" column. Contact her at khorner@gie.net with your recycling success story.

What's recyclable?

Yay

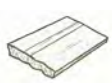
Plastic bottles, cups and containers

Food and beverage cans

Paper

Newspapers & magazines

Empty paper cups


Flattened cardboard

Nay

Plastic bags

Plastic wrap

Flexible packaging

Foam

Bagged recyclables

Varies by state

Milk and food cartons

Juice boxes

Glass bottles

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MEETING MANAGEMENT

One point I've tried to make repeatedly in this column is that knowing your science isn't enough. To be a successful superintendent — whether at your own club or as a path to other jobs — is to master a full arsenal of skills: Everything from financial management to personnel, communication to volunteering. The better you handle a range of subjects, the greater your value.

An often-overlooked talent is the ability to lead meetings. From small gatherings to full-membership presentations — at your club, at another club, at a local or regional professional association, at a trade show — the ability to command and keep the attention of the group isn't something most of us are born with. But we do know our stuff.

Getting tapped to lead a green committee or member meeting is a bit like being handed the mic at karaoke night: it's both a compliment and a test. And the bigger or more prestigious the room, the greater the honor. But regardless of who, where and why, your ability to control the situation comes down to one thing.

Preparation.

Know your numbers — and everything else. Most of us aren't natural-born public speakers. What the audience will remember isn't how you said something, but what you said, your command of the facts. Know your material inside and out. Never try to wing it. Budgets, statistics, names, dates, how long something takes, who's the best at doing it … have command of the subject.

Expect questions — and challenges. Rest assured that someone is going to push back at something you say. Anticipate the questions sure to come up. As a mental exercise, imagine someone in the audience is mad that you got to speak and they didn't. What would they say to trip you up and lessen the group's confidence in your expertise and leadership? To answer questions before they're asked, tailor your talk to the knowledge level of the group. Are they agronomists or everyday golfers? Do they speak the language? The more you know about the audience, the easier it is to win them over with the right amount of explanation and jargon.

Stay one step ahead. The true mark of a leader is knowing what's going to come next. You want to avoid awkward surprises. Talk with people on the ground, which might be members of the club, other industry experts, club officers or employees. If you're speaking at your own club and get thrown a curveball, you have no one to blame but yourself. At another club or an association function, it's imperative you pick the brains of others so you have a lay of the land. At another club, for instance, you'll want to walk or play the course in advance so you know what everyone is talking about.

It always comes down to money. If dollars and cents are involved — and aren't they always? — be extra well prepared. Expect there to be finance types in the audience waiting to run your numbers and wanting to justify every expenditure. If your presentation involves a budget, especially if it's on a slide or part of a handout, double- and triple-check it. Even a tiny, innocent mistake can come back to haunt you.

Keep your cool. When the going gets tough, the tough stay confident. No matter what happens, stay cool, stay honest and stay the course. If you don't know the answer, don't try to fake it. Nothing erodes trust faster than dishonesty. If you have to get back to them with a response, say so (and ask yourself why you hadn't anticipated the question).

The three Ps. If things start to get sidetracked, stick to the three Ps: Be patient, polite and professional. Get the proceedings back on topic where you're the expert and you're the center of attention.

A workman is as good as his tools. Photographs, videos, sketches, PowerPoint … use every tool available to make your points. In fact, most presentations are better with visual aids. On the flip side, don't talk so much that people tune out. Build in breaks that allow for questions and the chance to repeat and reinforce key thoughts.

Maintain authority and control. As the meeting leader, you set the vibe. Don't get thrown off by interruptions, and don't let those interruptions last too long. If someone else wants to speak, that's great, but let them know when it's their turn. (There's nothing wrong with saying at the outset that there will be lots of time for questions.) Again, you're in charge, you set the rules.

Leading a meeting isn't about being the loudest in the room: It's about being the most prepared. Know your material, anticipate challenges, keep it real, and remain confident. Do all that and you won't just run the meeting — you'll own it.

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

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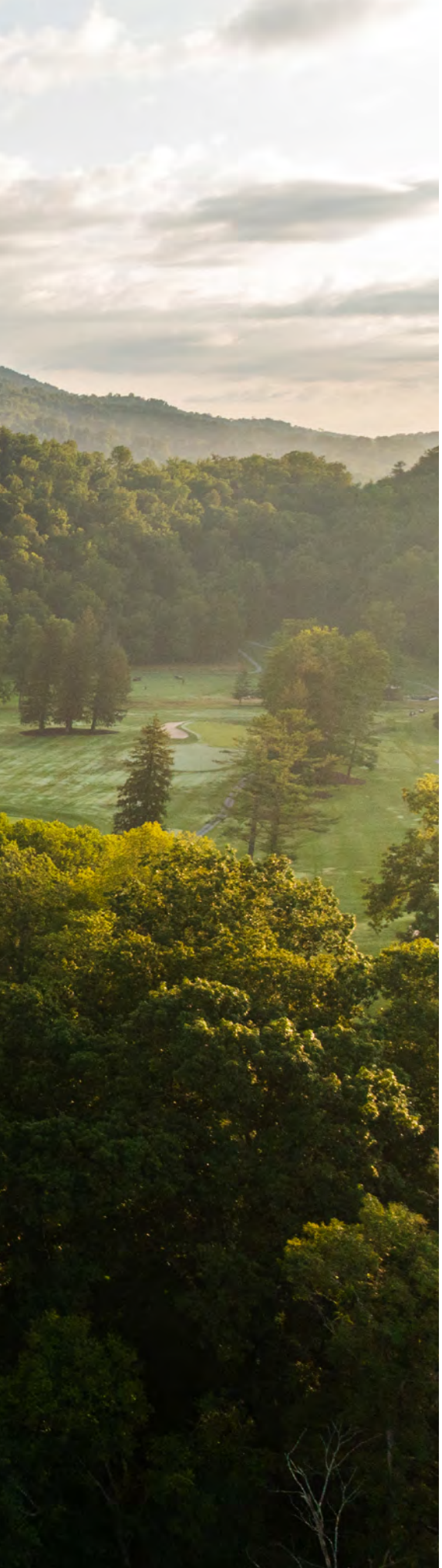

© COURTESY OF OMNI HOMESTEAD (6)

A VISIONARY PEACE

The Omni Homestead is known for two remarkable courses, its history, striking amenities, an incredible setting and its affiliation with Sam Snead. But there is more — oh, so much more — happening here.

By **Lee Carr**

Driving into Hot Springs, Virginia, on Route 220, also known as Sam Snead Highway, the land rolls and mesmerizes right up into the Allegheny Mountains. Anyone who dreams about course architecture will see nothing but golf holes on the land they pass. Infinite combinations of holes could be draped across the terrain in so many creative routings. About the time your heart is lulled into a happy, visionary peace, a sentimental resort appears on the horizon — and it feels like it was always meant to be here. Indeed, friendly accommodation has been here since 1766.

Valuable experience

The Omni Homestead Old Course superintendent **John Chaplin** has been working there for 35 years, helping everyone, everywhere on property.

"I started here years ago, back when everybody seemed to know each other," he says. "From the beginning, I was surrounded by coworkers who were patient, kind and willing to teach me, and that meant a lot. I've always tried to give that same support back whenever I could. I truly enjoy what I do and I love this area. This is home in every sense of the word."

Every year, H-2B visa workers arrive to become part of the peak-season staff, with several hundred resort workers settling into the employee housing that is located nearby.

"I've got a great crew and a lot of them have been with us for years, so they pretty much know the place inside and out," Chaplin says. "Lately, we've been bringing in more H-2B workers from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. Sometimes, communication takes a little extra effort, but we always make it work. It's fun because they learn the job and we get to hear about their lives and their countries. It makes the crew feel closer and keeps things interesting."

The property is working its way through a renaissance, with Omni Hotels & Resorts taking ownership in 2013 and investing more than $170 million into the facility. The hotel was renovated; an event venue and housing for seasonal staff were added; the demographics are demonstrating popularity with younger guests after 2020; and **Tyler Minamyer** was hired, working as director of agronomy.

With an extensive background in identifying talent and building teams, and more than 30 years of experience including his previous work with International Golf Maintenance, Minamyer and the course superintendents, **John Chaplin** on The Old Course and **Dylan Brinkley** on The Cascades course, are continuing the tradition of providing premier playing conditions on these historic layouts.

The Old Course was built in 1892 and expanded to 18 holes by **Donald Ross** in 1913. It has been worked on by **William Flynn** and **Rees Jones**, among others, and now plays at 6,099 yards from the tips. There are six par 3s, six 4s and six par 5s. The Old Course is closed on Mondays for maintenance; The Cascades, which gets more attention, is closed on Tuesdays. Together, the courses host approximately 22,000 rounds annually and the first tee time available at either course is 8 a.m.

"Most people might not realize just how beautiful The Old Course really is," Chaplin says. "Even on the rough weather days, there's still something special to see in every direction. The Old Course gives you these great views of the mountains, the hotel and the woodlands that make every day feel a little different."

With a crew of 10 on The Old Course possessing 150 years of combined experience, they are putting out a great product that makes them feel proud. "It's a group that knows their jobs, loves the work, and puts their heart into it," Chaplin says. "What I enjoy most is that my work directly impacts people's enjoyment of the game. When golfers comment on how good the course looks or plays, it is rewarding because I know the work and planning that we put into it."

The Cascades course is more rugged and mountainous, though both courses have significant elevation changes that will test your swing from multiple stances. While The Old Course is cozied up to the resort, The Cascades is 3½ miles away, so they each have their own maintenance facility. The maintenance facility at The Old Course is charmingly known as Reese's Plaza, in honor of **Fred Reese**, who has significantly contributed to the maintenance team.

There is no lift at either shop, and most of the equipment is covered, though garage space is limited. Leadership is working to refine a long-term plan for investment in the maintenance facilities, and recently, prior to hosting the U.S. Senior Women's Amateur in September 2025, Wi-Fi was installed across The Cascades property to improve connectivity for safety and efficiency. Five new tees were also built for the event. Tree work and drainage projects are fall norms.

"The event went great," Brinkley says. "It was a learning experience that will better us for future championships." The next one is already scheduled for 2029—the U.S. Senior Amateur. It will be the 10th USGA championship to be contested at the resort, which is continually investing in its courses.

"The Cascades driving range tee

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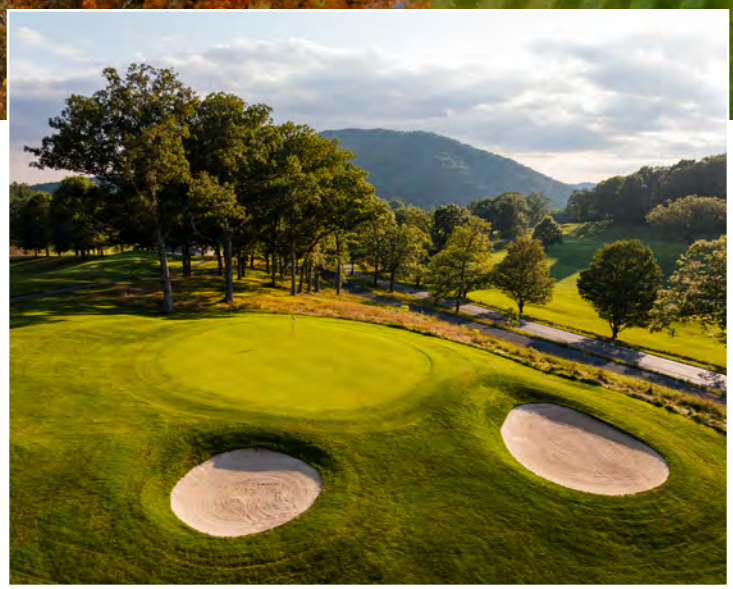

was converted to ryegrass for quicker recovery and germination," Brinkley says. "Concrete pads were installed to hold 12 artificial mats, and we are in the process of converting our native areas to more manageable and playable grasses. In the spring, the natives will be seeded to fine and red fescues and little and big bluestem."

The driving range is on a slope, so golfers hit up into a mountain. Not only is the range visually interesting, but the range picker must have four-wheel drive. Supporting the physical changes across the resort are the shifts in operation and management.

THE GUIDING TRILOGY

Driving excellence throughout The Omni Homestead is the Omni Hotels Trilogy. The trilogy represents guests, associates and ownership. "If an idea or initiative doesn't positively impact all three of these things, it is not likely to be implemented," Minamyer says.

When Minamyer arrived, the course maintenance staff was open to leadership and guidance, and as they became familiar with one another, together they adopted one rule: "No one can say, 'We've never done it that way before,'" Minamyer says. "We have to try things."

The resort mentality leads, and there are two days of training for working at the resort itself before a crew member can start with the agronomy team. If a guest has an issue, every associate is empowered to fix that problem, regardless of department, from comping a meal to leaving a task to seek help, to doing whatever is necessary to deliver

exceptional service and experience.

The campus is seven miles wide in total, with 11 different sites available for weddings. The location of Hot Springs is remote, but in so many ways, everything anyone needs is available. Near the resort there are a few small shops. The resort is so picturesque — it feels like it was dropped ready-made into this beautiful mountain setting.

Being part of the resort, the golf and grounds teams also field requests to transfer in recruits from other departments. New, younger staff typically want to work on The Cascades with Brinkley, and more experienced workers prefer The Old Course with Chaplin. The teams share large equipment, knowledge and the desire to achieve.

There is a significant difference between the courses, both bisected by Route 220 and maintained by

about 20 full-time staff in total. Having people who work at both courses or with the grounds team provides depth. The different courses receive different amounts of rain, and it's not close. There can be a 50 percent difference some years in how much rain is received, and the same course doesn't always get more. Isn't that fascinating? The superintendents track their numbers with dedicated weather stations, use the USGA GS3 ball and Deacon, and compare notes.

Minamyer says the environment and culture of The Homestead and Omni overall are the best things about his job. "The Omni Trilogy drives decision making," he says. "It is the core cultural philosophy which balances the needs of three groups equally: guests, associates and ownership. This strategy focuses on creating a positive and sustainable environment for everyone involved with the brand. It's not a tagline used in managing perception. We really operate that way, and it is incredibly refreshing and rewarding."

Employees are thinking in the same direction, as proved by a recent employee survey that covered much more than compensation.

"Me, Tyler and Johnny manage with good empathy," Brinkley says. "We don't put people doing what they are not comfortable with. We work hard and we don't do things that are bad for morale. I truly enjoy our team and management. It's amazing being a part of producing a championship-quality golf course for our guests and I love helping our team learn new skills while they teach me new skills. We learn together. Our crew is outstanding and life in Hot Springs is unique and rewarding. The Cascades course is a gem, and we take pride in maintaining its character."

There are fun runs that traipse down the holes, and picnics on the course during Fourth of July fireworks. A ski lodge sits above No. 18 on The Old Course, which is open all year, so people can actually golf and ski on the same day, if they have that temperament. The pump station is off No. 10, pumping across the valley and up the mountain to make snow when necessary.

Aerifying can pose a challenge. "We aerify annually, usually in the fall after the Cascades has closed," Brinkley says. "Rocks are an issue in fairways and rough, causing us to use a ground driven spoon tine that goes to a 2- to 3-inches depth over a PTO-driven that would be 5-plus inches depth but causing damage to the turf and equipment."

There is always a way forward.

"I enjoy leading and coaching the team," Minamyer says. "In most situations, you come into a position with job No. 1 to train and recruit. In this case, I walked into a great group with many members with long tenures that know the job and really care about the results. My job is to make their jobs easier, more productive and ultimately as enjoyable as 'work' can be. We'll never stop training but with the talent and commitment of our team, it is rewarding to see the consistent level of improvement in the operation and the product we provide."

Time changes everything, golf courses, too, though some places hold their history better than others. Visions and realities for golf holes change, and that's part of what makes the work so dynamic. Are any two days the same? Thankfully, we can appreciate the diversity of courses, towns, management styles and people throughout the world. As you can imagine, there is no place quite like The Omni Homestead.

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

Back in time

The history of The Omni Homestead is extensive, so it's difficult to pick only a few fun facts to share, but these are pretty good.

- An 18-room wooden hotel was built in 1766, which then included 300 acres overseen by **Captain Thomas Bullitt**. The area was visited and valued for its natural mineral springs, making this property older, and in operation longer, than the United States of America.
- **William Flynn** designed the Homestead's Cascades course because he was visionary. Other architects had visited the site and passed on the job, while Flynn knew that by acquiring a little more land, constructing a great golf course was possible.
- On The Old Course, the tee on No. 1 is the oldest first tee still in continuous use in the U.S.
- **Sam Snead** served as a caddie and a pro at the resort, and his family home was nearby. He practiced a lot on these courses and is intertwined with the local history and lore.
- The Presidential Lounge is aptly named because at least two dozen U.S. presidents, from **George Washington** to **George W. Bush**, have visited the Homestead. Stately portraits create a powerful aura while a mixologist serves interesting cocktails.
- Bath County, with a population of approximately 4,100, is one of the least populated in Virginia and the only one without a traffic light.

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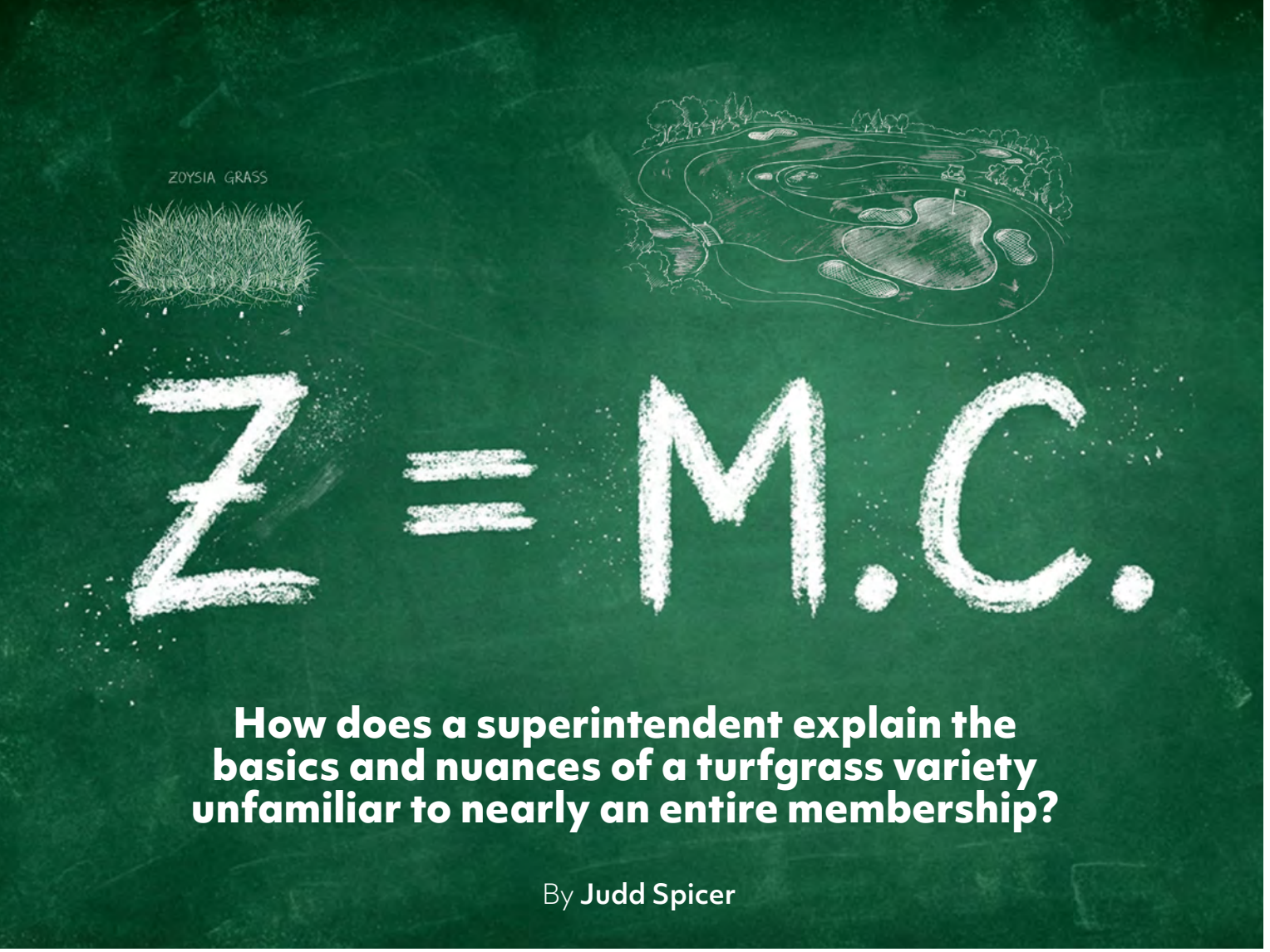


How does a superintendent explain the basics and nuances of a turfgrass variety unfamiliar to nearly an entire membership?

By **Judd Spicer**

There's a reason why the field of agronomy courts a certain personality type: Grass doesn't talk back. And yet, a time comes when every agronomist needs to answer somebody.

For **Tyler Truman**, director of agronomy and grounds across 500 acres of kept turfgrass at Sun City Palm Desert and the 36 holes of Mountain Vista Golf Club therein, recent years of proactive turf study have found him ever playing the dual roles of agronomist and ambassador.

With an ambitious aim to alter the costly, water-intensive and arduous overseed process that annually weighs upon the Coachella Valley and desert golf communities beyond, Truman has spent the past three years studying the possibility and prerequisites of introducing hybrid zoysiagrass to his grounds.

Presenting the allure of a year-round playing surface, zoysia's "Z" might be further applied to a concurrent "Zero." Though amply seen in the Southeast and Midwest, the figure marks how many golf properties in either the 120-course Coachella Valley or across the entirety of Southern California have successfully achieved or even attempted a full-on zoysia transition.

For Truman, to game the possibility and potential of zoysia upon his turf lab has been one thing.

Explaining the process to the nearly 5,000 homeowners across Sun City's golf-crazed 55-and-older population? It's been a cultivation unto itself.

LEAF LAB

Over the past three years, Truman, working in concert with the USGA Green Section, has done more than merely tinker with growing zoysia in the desert. Rather—and rather impressively—he's dispelled both long-held belief and conjecture that such growth could even be achieved in a hot and arid environment.

The process has found success by way of deconstruction — or what is perhaps better described as reverse engineering. By finding out what doesn't work, Truman has pared down to what does.

Between assessing myriad zoysia hybrid cultivars, multiple site plots, varied sprig timelines and differing sprig rates, what Truman has accomplished, by way of attrition, is a strong and sound zoysia argument—and one that he's in the process of presenting to his player-member-residents and their decision-making board of directors.

Both during and before such presentations came the testing.

Starting with 31(!) varieties of zoysia cultivars on an acre's plot adjacent to the 11th hole of Mountain Vista's San Gorgonio Course, Truman and his colleague, **Matteo Serena**, senior manager of irrigation research and services for the USGA, ultimately found two varieties that met their collective approval: a DLZ-1408 strain and Stadium Zoysia.

The former, not yet on the market, was supplied by Texas A&M University, which has since sold the rights to DLZ-1408. That left the Stadium Zoysia option, which Truman and Serena discerned was the quickest to establishment and held the darkest color year-round.

This past spring and summer, upon an alternate two-plus-acre test plot adjacent to the eighth tee of the grounds' Santa Rosa course, the two then sprigged with varied bushel-per-acre rates (400, 600 and 800) across March, April, May and July. Eventually, they determined that the ideal sprig time was the onset of April through the close of May, and that the sprigging sweet spot was 500 bushels per acre.

After pigmentation sampling ensued with an aim to at least approach the allure of eye-popping ryegrass, time neared for Truman to exit the vacuum of his lab and enter the world of presenter.

CONCERNED CITIZENS BRIGADE

In the days preceding Thanksgiving, at the third and final resident presentations on the potential turf transition, Truman paced near the dais of Sun City's Speakers Hall auditorium space. Approximately 150 attendees filled the small sea of seating, each eyeing a sizable screen projecting: "Project Zoysia."

With a manner offering equal parts self-deprecation, humor, educator and, yes, marketer, Truman's presentation served as his final opportunity to educate residents on zoysia's potential before bringing his findings to the community's board.

After offering introductory jokes and quips, he moved on to the meat: "Why are we looking at zoysia?" he asked rhetorically (at least at first).

Cost is, of course, boss in such framework, and amid explaining that he and his colleagues were in the final stages of a broad financial analysis, Truman wasted little time weighing his case with:

"There's the reduction in cost, of not having to overseed with ryegrass every year. It's one of the first reasons we started looking at this. Three years ago, the costs of ryegrass seed went from, like, $1.30 per pound to what is now over $2.60 a pound. For us, that means it went from $300,000 a year up to almost $700,000."

Complemented by the projection's imagery and charts, the super ensued with a stellar zoysia argument for a substantial reduction in water use (upwards of 30 percent), along with explaining the importance of regional water conservation.

As pictures paired with process, Truman went slide to slide on his zoysia testing, balancing the progress and otherwise of reverse engineering before sharing a hint of personal passion for the process.

"This was taken on April 25, a month after we seeded the first plot," Truman narrated over a zoysia image. "There was a resident who came out [of his house] and asked, 'Tyler, why do you come out every day to look at it? Nothing's changed.' But I saw changes."

Q&A TIME

His case offered, Truman, between slight inhales, opened the floor for a Q&A session. Like a boxer bracing for the opening bell, it appeared as if the superintendent knew he was about to absorb a few hits.

Part concerned citizens, part golf geeks, part repetition in query/reply and, yeah, part a few senior moments, the questions proved equally informed and skeptical, covering:

- Zoysia in home yards
- Toxicity in pigment
- The variety's ability to hold up to excessive rains
- Whether other courses in the Coachella Valley were considering it
- Cost benefit analysis (again and again)
- Sprig vs. seed vs. sod
- Greens conversion
- Course closure time
- Turf playability and divots

To wit:

Of the nascent…

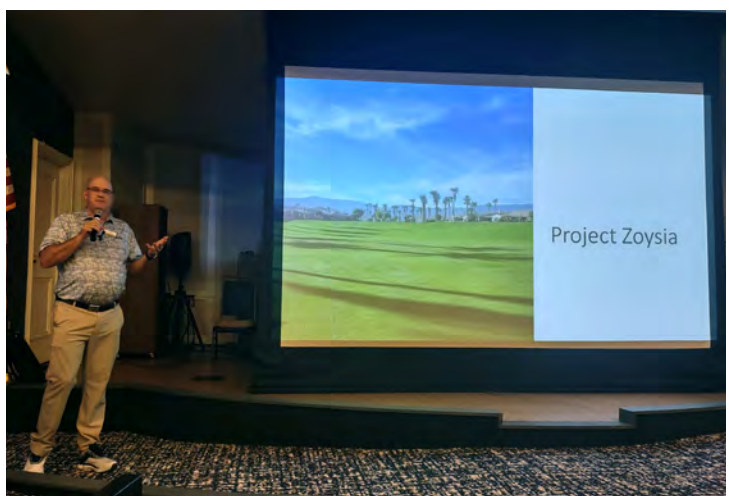
Q: Where do you get it?

Truman: I get it directly from a sod farm.

Of the comical…

Q: I'm sure many courses around the country play on zoysia. What's the playability?

Truman: From what I've heard, there are a few people who say, 'It grabs my club,' but, for the most part



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[interrupted by attendee giggles], for the most part, people have told me they really enjoy playing off of it.

And … of the noted skepticism …

Q: Your explanation and your pictures are very good, but can you tell me how many golf courses in the Coachella Valley are doing this?

Truman: Us.

Q: Us. So we are in the experimental stages, with our weather that isn't the Midwest?

Truman: Phoenix-Scottsdale is actually working with it [zoysia], which is very similar to us. FireRock [Country Club] sodded 30 acres of it just this past summer. Phoenix Country Club, a very high-end club, is looking to sprig their course this next year. So, we're not the first in a desert environment. … Everybody here on the West Coast thinks you can't grow zoysia; I have proven that you can. You need to understand what you're growing. It's not Bermudagrass. It's not ryegrass. You need to treat it as zoysia.

Q: So, you haven't got your numbers together yet, but it sounds like it's a fait accompli.

Truman: This [presentation] is what I'm seeing. I'll be presenting those numbers to the board, and we will take input from the residents.

Q: And then you will move it [the decision] to the residents?

Truman: That will be up to the board of directors.

Slightly bruised, but unbowed, Truman concluded his time with gratitude and then welcomed a queue of post-presentation comments and queries. And while the superintendent conversed onward after just wrapping up 45 minutes, his manner buoyant and energy sanguine, one could argue on his behalf that soon standing alone with his grass now seemed a very alluring place to be.

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

Outside validation

While the respective work at FireRock Country Club and Phoenix Country Club adds fuel to **Tyler Truman**'s case, what provides further cachet is having **Matteo Serena** by his side. Among the most sought-after irrigation experts in the nation, the Southern California-based Serena has been coming to Sun City on a monthly basis for nearly two years to help assist and assess project progress.

"Matteo's the one who turned me on to zoysia, so we can blame him," Truman said with a laugh during one of Serena's test plot visits in early November. "With all his work, with the USGA helping out, it gives credibility to what we're doing — that looking at different ways not to overseed, looking to the future, is being supported."

Delving deeper into the unknown has literally found the colleagues watching grass grow.

"The difficulty is the growing aspect. … Zoysia is known for being very slow-growing," says Serena, a native of Italy. "And, because it's not Bermuda, there's the aspect of learning everything from scratch."

Walking the test plots, his accent alone adding a certain authority to the aims, Serena explained that with no zoysia seeds currently available in the market, the pair opted to sprig.

"We did four planting times, and we were trying to achieve the goal to find the best establishment method," Serena says. "By looking at this different timing, different establishment method, different sprigs, we were trying to identify a timeline for potential renovation."

Tools complementing tests, Serena worked with a Sheer Strength device to gauge divot-akin force (finding a sound 14 Newtons per meter).

"We've measured the speed of establishment," Serena says between Sheer turf twists. "And Tyler sends me close-up pictures of the plots, which we run through a Turf Analyzer software that calculates the green pixels versus the brown."

A key finding in their yearslong assessment was that other testers were improperly treating (i.e., fertilizing) zoysia like Bermuda. Modern zoysia, they learned, is a plant with ample potential.

"The last few years, Tyler and I looked at different Bermudagrass [hybrids] without overseeding; and we noticed that, for how it plays, it just doesn't offer a good playing experience in the winter without overseed," Serena says. "Traditionally, we're used to dealing with an older cultivar of zoysia, which was first imported several decades ago, and was a very coarse plant material that wasn't very appealing. But research has crossbred different species and worked to develop a plant that is more disease tolerant."

Truman and Serena haven't tried and toiled for mere testing's sake. Instead, the two see serious zoysia benefits for an arid Southwest.

"Once we had it established and moving forward, what Matteo does is help validate water usage, and where we'll be using less," Truman says. "Now that we've proven we can establish in this [six-month] time period, it's now getting it to what he's an expert at, and that's finding out how much water we can save and conserve."

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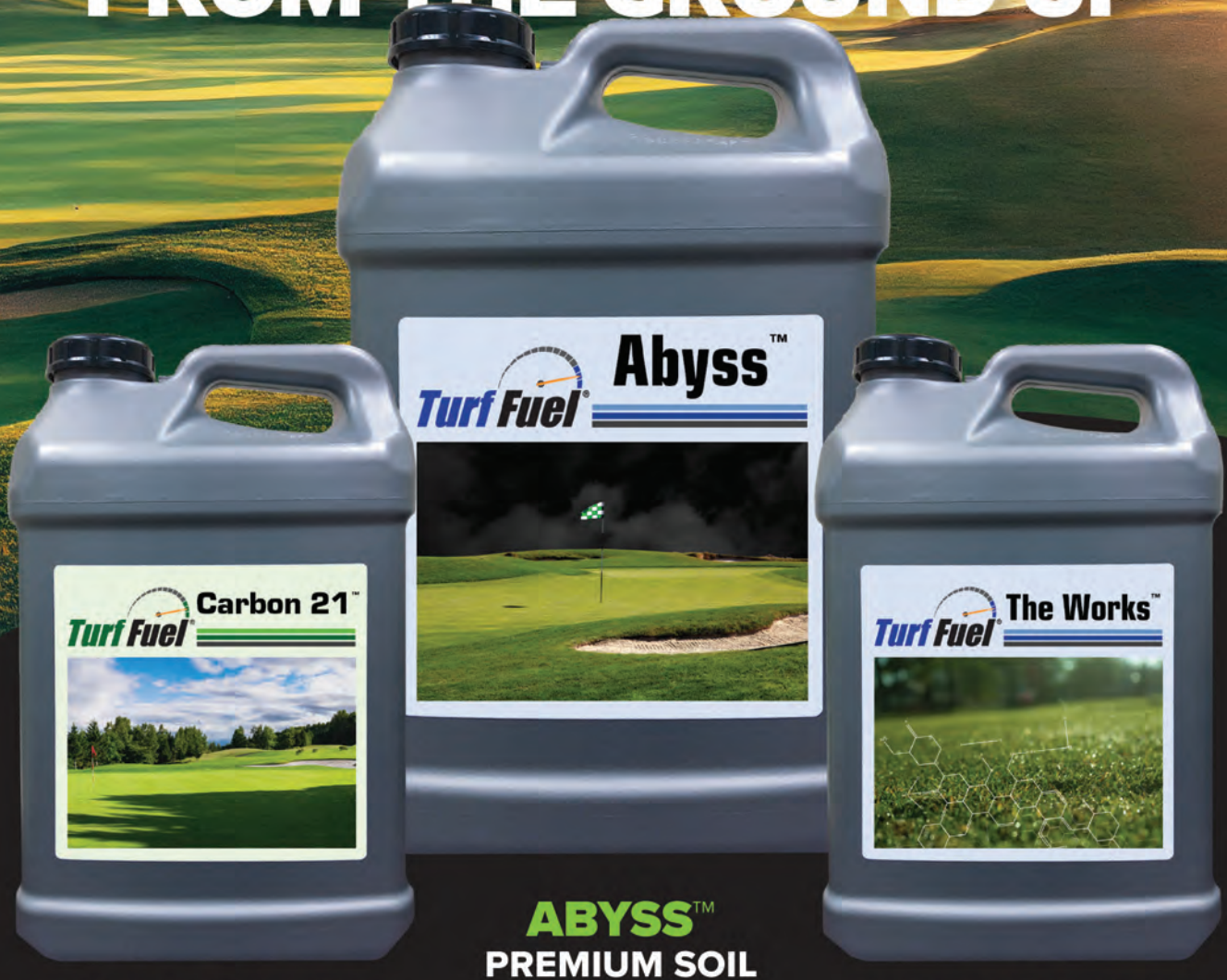

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Less spray, more play

Cornell Turfgrass Program is working with New York State Park golf courses to minimize inputs and make more sustainable decisions.

By **Kelsie Horner**

Battle Island in Fulton, New York, officially became a state park in 1938. Superintendent **Mary Gregg** joined the staff full time in 2018. But several years prior to her arrival, she worked as an intern for four years at famed Bethpage State Park. During her time there, she watched Cornell Turfgrass Program's work develop. She is following the same Integrated Pest Management programs she watched become established — this time, at her own course.

Golf courses are often criticized for high input usage on their properties, posing potential harm to the environment and wildlife. Cornell University and New York State golf courses have been partnering for 25 years to reverse this stigma and reveal to both golfers and superintendents how little chemical usage is actually needed to maintain healthy turf.

"It is pretty eye-opening," extension support specialist and state park agronomist **Chase Skrubis** says. "The golf course doesn't really need a whole lot."

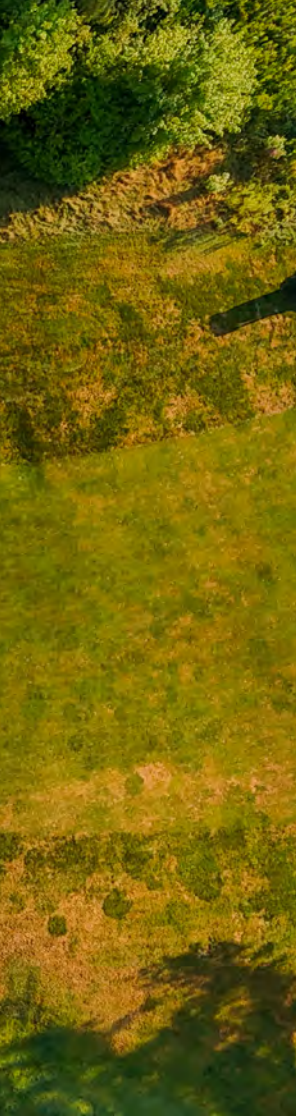
Cornell's role in educating superintendents on minimizing inputs started in 2000 when state turfgrass extension specialist and associate professor of horticulture **Dr. Frank Rossi** began the project alongside **Jennifer Grant,** director of the New York state IPM program. The research began on Bethpage's Green Course, following the state's new restrictions on pesticide usage on state park land. The Green Course carries a lower profile than Bethpage's Black and Red courses, making it an ideal location for research. "We were trying to completely eliminate the use of pesticides," Rossi says.

After 10 years of successfully decreasing water usage and input applications at Bethpage, the project began to expand to other New York State Park golf courses.

"It started as, How do we reduce pesticide use? But really the entire picture is you can't just take away pesticides," urban environmental scientist **Carl Schimenti** says. "You have to do things with irrigation and cultural practices and fertilizer."

"We packaged those practices up

© CORNELL TURFGRASS PROGRAM



and began doing some training," Rossi says. "Got some buy-in from the regional directors, and 15 years later, can talk about how courses have been able to operationalize their environmental stewardship, operationalize improved playability, and then measure the benefits in rounds of golf, less fertilizer, less pesticides being used — and not just saying we were sustainable, but have the data to prove it."

Through organic matter tests and soil nutrient tests, state park agronomists and Cornell's staff use the Environmental Impact Quotient to measure pesticide risks and implement plans to best treat each course. The EIQ is used to choose low-risk products that still effectively work in pest prevention. The EIQ is also now used as part of New York's Best Management Practices.

"We have a lot of ways to measure various things, not only pesticide use, but the risk of pesticides and fertilizer use and irrigation," Schimenti says.

The team then uses models to predict results and determine optimal plans.

Bethpage, a nationally recognized course that hosted the 2025 Ryder Cup, is fortunate to have a large agronomic budget. Other public state courses operate with much less.

Part of Skrubis' and his team's job is to work with these courses and their respective budgets to meet their goals. New York has 27 state park golf courses at 19 different parks, some more recognized than others. **Robert Trent Jones** designed Green Lakes, James Baird and Montauk Downs. Other state courses include Soaring Eagles and Saratoga Spa.

"They deal with different budget constraints, and they deal with different regions, and some regions don't have as strong of a golfing population as others," Skrubis says.

Skrubis visits each State Park course once a year. He spends adequate time with each course's superintendent, forming relationships over both golf and life. He discusses any progress or problems the course has been facing and works to set goals.

The state also allows superintendents funding for new equipment purchases, providing superintendents with an opportunity to try suggestions made by Cornell.

Cornell gives superintendents a guideline to follow when it comes to input decisions. Instead of using blanket coverage treatments, superintendents work with Cornell to focus only on problem spots.

"Back in the day, you might have gone out and just sprayed," Gregg says. "But if you can do some IPM things that are less environmental hazards, you can."

Cornell also uses aerial imaging to develop tree management plans and to identify unnecessary, out-of-play areas. Those out-of-play areas are then evaluated and potentially used for pollinator-friendly meadows.

Through partnership, superintendents can form relationships with Cornell's staff and have an outlet for advice.

"I've known Frank Rossi since I started working at state parks 26 years ago, so it's a great relationship," Gregg says. "Even if I have a question, we can text him or call him."

Since starting the program, Gregg has seen acceptance grow on a larger scale. When the program started, the staff faced some pushback.

When Rossi and the team introduced the EIQ, superintendents had questions. "'If the EPA says I can use it, shouldn't I just be able to use it? What is this business?' And so there was a lot of pushback on that," Rossi says.

Both superintendents and sales reps questioned procedures. But eventually, after giving Cornell's recommendations a try, they realized the product usage suggestions worked.

Now, thanks to solid results and industry relationships, problems are cordially addressed.

"For the first bunch of years, they didn't do anything that we told them to do," Rossi says. "It was very difficult to get them to do anything we asked them to do. But now they contact us when they're thinking about doing something. 'Hey, I want to try this. What do you think?' It's really improved that way."

Gregg says her work with the Cornell program has taught her that solutions might not be what the "norm" is. "The norms have changed, and doing stuff Cornell has suggested in regard to either aerating or seed slicing an area will make that grass more durable to the increase in play," Gregg says. "Golf courses get a lot of scrutiny with the spraying of pesticides, and if you're being more environmentally aware of what products you're using, or if there's other things you can do to an area before just having to spray, that will help the environment."

Through Cornell's work, State Park golf courses are continuing to minimize input usage and make smarter environmental decisions. The team's dedication to research and development of the EIQ is allowing New York courses beyond Bethpage to thrive and reverse the stigma.

Kelsie Horner is Golf Course Industry's digital editor.

TWO VISIONS OF THE GAME

Maybe I'm just a curmudgeon, but I prefer my golf simple. I know there is another model of the game out there, one more associated with fancy country clubs and high-end hospitality service. But my preferences are all on the uncluttered side.

Perhaps it's because I learned the game from the vantage of the caddie yard. Had to get up early, ride my bike or take a suburban commuter train the few miles to the golf course to hang out with the other would-be loopers, many of whom were older than I was and moonlighting their regular jobs on weekends or off days to supplement their income. And coming from a middle-class family on the modest end of the income bracket, I saw firsthand the value of hard work, saving and disciplined spending.

My golf values formed accordingly. To this day, I cringe when I drive up to the parking lot of a club and get accosted by what I call "bag rats" over-schooled in trying to be helpful. I know they mean well, but I don't need help removing things from my travel bag, nor having my golf bag automatically hoisted onto a golf cart under the presumption that I would be riding rather than walking.

I know some of my peers are thrilled to find their name embossed on a metal plate on the door of their locker. To me, it's merely a ritual that looks to impress with tokenism.

Things get more serious when the indulgence extends to matters like a pin sheet — as if golfers have lost the ability to make judgments and, with it, make mistakes. Or Stimpmeter reads for each green. Golf, after all, is supposed to engage the senses, not eliminate the need for them. A simple but insidious example of this sensory erosion comes in the form of red, white and blue flags on the green to denote the relative depth of the day's hole location. I can only imagine the joy of the green chairman with cataracts who invented this cheap way of avoiding having his eyes repaired. The fact is, based on optics and color science, a simple solid yellow flag provides the best way of identifying and judging the flagstick.

Out on the golf course, there are other indulgences that bespeak of excess, if not outright wastefulness to me. Like having three or four distinct heights of cut around the greens. Or elaborate ornamental floral gardens scattered around the property. Mowing fairways as if they were meticulous checkerboards. Or having caddies outfitted with radio headsets so they can tend to your every gastronomic or liquid need.

Such overloading of everyday golf threatens to ruin the game by turning a sport into an entertainment experience. Full-color yardage graphics on a cart-borne screen that starts to demand more of your attention than the golf course itself. Drive-up (or drive-through!) halfway houses as well stocked as any delicatessen.

These concerns are not abstract or merely idiosyncratic. They go to the heart of the game. They are also part of what is emerging in Washington, D.C., these days when it comes to the future of golf at three affordable, municipal golf courses at the heart of a bureaucratic firestorm: East Potomac Golf Links, Rock Creek Park Golf and Langston Golf Course. Mind you, this has nothing to do with political partisanship. Rather, it has to do with protecting affordable, accessible, down-to-earth golf rather than converting everything to a country club model.

The golf market is big enough so that both styles of the game can thrive. Golf demographics show that about one-third of all golfers prefer to indulge in the luxury version of the game, whether at elite private clubs, five-star resorts or "country club for a day" high-end public courses. Meanwhile, the vast majority of golf facilities and golfers are situated on the modest end of the spectrum.

Which is where I love to play the game — walking, with a pull cart or simply carrying, sometimes only five or six clubs. I also want a well-conditioned golf course, one with consistent turfgrass cover and firm ground when the weather allows for it. But I don't need courses where the rough behind the tee is mowed as assiduously as the rough next to the fairway. Nor where "perfect" means lush, dense green. After all, droughty, tawny, starved turf can be at least as healthy and certainly more resilient than turf that is heavily watered and fertilized.

Two visions of the game. Maybe there are more. It's always easy to dichotomize to drive home a point. And the point I am getting at is that a segment of the game needs to be kept simple and basic. It's probably a larger segment of golf than most industry leaders are willing to admit.

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

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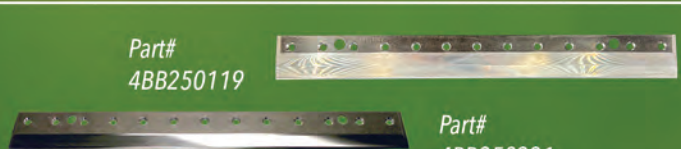

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When you wish upon a star

Three years ago, **Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort** was dry, beat up and neglected. Now it's hosting PGA of America events and helping sell hundreds of homes.

Every developer has a little Disney in them.

James Prendamano is probably filled with more of the magic of Walt than most — visions of neighborhoods growing up out of next to nothing, visits to space and, of course, some golf.

Prendamano might not have the seismic entertainment origin Disney created for himself — Prendamano can turn to Google Earth, far easier than Disney famously peering down on Central Florida from a helicopter, picking the plot for his second eponymous theme park — but there are more than a few similarities. Like Disney, Prendamano ventured far from home to build, traveling from Staten Island to Southwest New Mexico. Like Disney, he peered

© COURTESY OF TURTLEBACK MOUNTAIN GOLF & RESORT (3)

TURTLEBACK MOUNTAIN BY THE NUMBERS

70: Acres of maintained turf across the golf course

120: Acres of unmaintained desert area across the course

1,100: Acres set aside for planned home development, through five existing subdivisions and nine new ones

24: Hours of live event coverage produced onsite by the Turtleback Mountain team in partnership with KTSM-TV for the 2025 New Mexico Open

3.5 million: Facebook Live views of that coverage

into the future, figuring that an area rich with copper and site of the world's first commercial spaceport might be a good place to build homes.

And, like Disney, he wants people to have fun.

Prendamano is the owner and CEO of PreReal Investments, long situated in New York, now focused on a remote plot in the Land of Enchantment. Much like Disney wanted to build restaurants and hotels around his eponymous park, Prendamano plans to build more than a thousand homes in Elephant Butte, New Mexico, six miles north of Truth or Consequences and two hours south of Albuquerque, all around Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort, a gem of a golf course.

"We knew coming out of COVID, people wanted to get back to the outdoors, people wanted to be more in touch with nature and, I don't want to sound corny but I'm a big believer in this stuff, their inner self," Prendamano says. "COVID broke the rat race that I lived for 30 years. You don't know why you're doing what you're doing, you don't know why you're dealing with quality-of-life issues, you don't know why you're sitting in traffic an hour and a half each way. You just kind of fall into it. You get locked in this vacuum and you don't know what you're missing."

So he headed west to what he describes as "kind of like the final fron-

tier." He and his business partner, **Dave Berman**, scouted widely and wound up in Elephant Butte. The copper mines there, he figures, will be key to building artificial intelligence data centers, and wealthy adventurers will eventually flock to the region to be launched into orbit from SpacePort America, situated just 25 miles southeast of the city. More than 320 days of sunshine every year doesn't hurt.

And neither does golf.

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT helped spur the golf course construction boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s, and while it isn't the driving force behind the current course bump, it remains an important factor. According to National Golf Foundation research, property values of homes on golf courses increased about 15 percent during the first half of this decade.

Turtleback Mountain is at the heart of all those homes Prendamano plans to build.

Designed by **Dick Phelps** and opened in 2007 as Sierra del Rio Golf Club, Turtleback Mountain is a very good course. Prendamano thinks it could be great. But when he purchased it three years ago, it was in shambles. The 70 or so acres of manicured turfgrass were far from green. Many of the nearly 100 bunkers were either filled with standing water or so hard "it was like you were hitting off concrete," Prendamano says. The driving range sat on top of an old landfill and went six years without water.

Prendamano knew enough about golf course maintenance to know that the fixes were well beyond his skills. He hired **Thomas Hams**, formerly the superintendent at Torreon Golf Club in Show Low, Arizona, to revive the course.

"When I got here, the big project was getting back to the science and going into the soil," Hams says. "There were a lot of issues here that needed to be addressed. My first step was just going from the roots up." Hams pauses for a moment. "My wife said, 'I don't know how you're going to change this around.' And I said, 'Trust me. It just needs the love that a golf course needs.'"

Hams dug deep—literally and figuratively—while Prendamano worked with the city, the county and the state engineer. Prendamano purchased the rights to the water beneath the resituated driving range. The maintenance team, meanwhile, worked with golf course architect **Rick Phelps**—Dick's son—to rebuild every bunker, lining about two-thirds of them with Better Billy Bunker and seeding the rest to become grass bunkers.

Returning nearly three dozen bunkers to turf didn't change Ham's approach to maintenance too much—"It just increased my fertilized area by three or four acres," he says—though it did change his strategy for fairways.

"Everything was really wide," Hams says. "It looked like a driving range on the golf course. So, I tightened up the fairways, essentially expanding the rough to give it more of a refined look and showcasing the course layout. I did that on my own. Just kind of walked out the course and was like, Eh, let's change this here, let's move this here, let's bring that out over here, let's make this dogleg left really hit hard to the left instead of just gradually leaning out. It increased our slope a little bit as I changed the fairways out."

A superintendent with an architect's eye?

"We knew we were aligning our goal and our vision with someone who was going to put the mission first and really understood what we were trying to do," Prendamano says. "It was the right people at the right time. It's about the people. Without the right people to implement and execute, what do you have? Frustration, and not success."

Hams has overseeded the course and trucked in hundreds of thousands of square feet of new turf to jolt troublesome spots—most of the course is Kentucky blue rye, with T-1 bentgrass on the greens and Sahara II Bermuda on the driving range. He has swapped out irrigation parts. He has reconstructed tee boxes.

"Improvements over a slow period of time lead to drastic changes," Hams says. "As long as I'm here, I'm gonna constantly be improving something, clearing out some of the desert just to open up the golf course a little bit more so it doesn't seem like it's walled off." Prendamano calls it "a constant, ongoing evolution."

Hams jokes that one of the reasons he wants to thin out parts of the course is so he can better spot snakes "if they're trying to come at me."

"I've just got a mutual respect with them," he says. "They don't mess with me, I don't mess with them. They come at me, then I gotta go at them. I would prefer to not be bit by a snake

and have the possibility of dying. That's my motivation. I want to continue to live."

"I've been in New Mexico for three years," Prendamano says. "I've seen two rattlesnakes and both of them were at a house, not at the course. I haven't seen a snake yet at the course."

"Come out a day with me, we'll see about 20," Hams tells him.

"Let's do it," Prendamano says, his voice rising with excitement. "I go around looking for them. I think it's the coolest thing in the world."

"They're around!" Hams exclaims. He sounds a little like Indiana Jones.

TWO YEARS AFTER opening Disneyland and six years before that helicopter ride, Walt Disney sketched his 1957 Strategy Diagram. Sometimes referred to as Walt's Flywheel, it maps how every bit of intellectual property — parks, movies, television, merchandise, music, comics, publications — fit together. Prendamano has a similar, if less complicated, approach to Turtleback Mountain.

Last year, the course landed the New Mexico Open through 2027. Rather than just open its gate and welcome all amateurs, professionals and fans, Prendamano let his team run wild. They persuaded 1998 New Mexico Open winner **Notah Begay III** to return and pulled in two-time PGA Tour winner **Matt Every** to fly in for the week. Begay, who turned 53 just before tournament week, ultimately missed the cut. Every survived and later discussed his experience on his "Straight Down the Middle-ish" podcast.

"I had a blast playing," he said. "It was 7,200 yards, but we were at about 5,000 feet elevation, so it was very short and tight, and that was a nightmare for me.

"I honestly hope we do it again next year, because it was a killer time."

Turtleback Mountain also partnered with KTSM, the NBC affiliate in El Paso, Texas, to stream 24 hours of live event coverage on Facebook Live over four days. The digital strategy generated 3.5 million views and 23 minutes watched per view.

Tournaments bring attention and broadcasts, no matter the platform, bring eyeballs. Prendamano and his team treated a sectional tournament like a major. Will it sell tee times? Will it bring home buyers to Elephant Butte? Will it help send travelers into space?

"You're only as good as your people," Prendamano says. "I've learned over the years, you surround yourself with people who are a hell of a lot better at things than you are, not the other way around." He heaps praise on Hams and general manager **JC Wright**, and his communications and marketing team. "These guys got it," he says. "They're cranking."

Cranking to infinity, perhaps, and beyond.

Matt LaWell is Golf Course Industry's senior editor.

THEY SAID IT

"We inherited this thing with a solid decade of deferred maintenance issues and capital issues. It had a long way to go."
— Owner James Prendamano

"I guess the big challenge — getting the course back to healthy playable conditions instead of being dirt — is over. Now it's just the small victories."
— Superintendent Thomas Hams

Golf course maintenance and smartphones: INTERACTION vs DISTRACTION

In my many travels visiting superintendents and directors, one of their dilemmas is what to do about golf course maintenance employees using smartphones during working hours. Is it helping or hurting productivity? How big of a distraction are they? Are employees being smart when using them? Are they a necessary evil? And do an employee's OSHA safety guidelines come into mind?

Superintendents/directors often have a clear-cut policy of when phones can be used, such as for family or medical emergencies, weather emergencies, course issues, or communicating with the superintendent/director, assistants and equipment manager/technician. Sometimes there is a human resources policy for smartphone use for the club's operation, but it might not be adhered to by golf course maintenance employees because of their department's operational differences compared to the clubhouse operation.

Reviewing and updating the existing smartphone policy on an annual basis is common. Employees should be trusted when using them after the policies are fully explained. Smartphones are often used instead of two-way radios when there are not enough radios for the entire crew to communicate job assignment changes or other matters on the course or in the shop.

Because almost everyone on the crew has a smartphone, it can be advantageous for supervisors; employees usually pay for them instead of it coming from a line allocation in the operating budget. Plus, employees can be reached any time.

Connecting to the golf course maintenance Wi-Fi, audio/video on the course's property and making phone calls, texts and emails on scheduled breaks and lunchtime policies should be clearly communicated to the employees. Having an established disciplinary policy, if well-founded, is necessary and appropriate. And, after having the bilingual policy rules document in place, each employee should acknowledge and sign the policy.

Superintendents and assistants like to operate a job board on their smartphones so tasks can be adjusted for second assignments and throughout the day. Irrigation systems can also be operated on mobile apps for seamless operation on the fly to program and operate the irrigation from anywhere at any time. Abilities to use data-collection moisture-meter apps and other task-specific apps are another plus. Some equipment fleets can be monitored in the movements throughout the course to locate employees' locations at any time.

A significant negative of employee smartphone usage is they are probably the biggest contributor to productivity loss, especially if there is a no-usage policy in place. An employee's attention span and attention to detail can be easily curtailed and distracted from what they are supposed to be doing when in use. Employees can be texting, emailing, calling other employees or using social media with friends. They can also be listening to music through earbuds, which prevents them from hearing equipment operations to recognize if they are functioning properly, especially when mowing. OSHA safety rules can be disregarded when employees are distracted by smartphones (making or receiving phone calls) while operating equipment instead of zoned in on the equipment's operation.

Superintendents/directors and assistants can easily catch employees using smartphones instead of performing their appointed job duties. What to do about it is an interesting debate in the policy, discipline, warnings and termination. Many superintendents/directors have calculated how many labor hours are lost each day, month and year from distracted employees using smartphones when staff should be working.

I have seen some operations where there is a no smartphone usage policy and it works just fine, as the supervisors and hourly employees trust each other. I've also seen smartphone use out of control at some spots because there is no set policy. Some superintendents/directors even have a policy where all smartphones are gathered from hourly employees each morning before work begins and returned at the end of the workday.

TERRY BUCHEN, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 57-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at 757-561-7777 or terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

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NAMES

Grace Allen Charles Aubry **Notah Begay III** Ken Benoit **Dylan Brinkley** Eleanor Brown **Captain Thomas Bullitt** George W. Bush **John Chaplin** Guy Cipriano Sr. **Guy Cipriano Jr.** Walt Disney **Tom Doak** Brent Downs **Tim Ebner** Matt Every **William Flynn** Kevin Goss **Jennifer Grant** Mary Gregg **Thomas Hams** Arthur Hills **Scott Hoffman** Kelsie Horner **Brian Johnson** Rees Jones **Robert Trent Jones** Michael Keiser **Chuck Klecatsky** Paul R. Latshaw **Kevin Laycock** Janne Lehto **Phil Mickelson** Rodney McKeown **Tyler Minamyer** Angela Moser **Andrew Northeim** Dick Phelps **Rick Phelps** James Prendamano **Fred Reese** Shelley Robbins **Donald Ross** Frank Rossi **Robin Sadler** Dave Sampson **Heather Schapals** Carl Schimenti **Ted Scott** Matteo Serena **Brian Silva** Chase Skrubis **Sam Snead** Andrew Szunyog **Tyler Truman** George Washington **Chris Wilczynski** Rick Woelfel **Erin Wolfram** JC Wright

COURSES

Augusta National Golf Club Battle Island State Park **Bethpage State Park Black Course** Bethpage State Park Green Course **Bethpage State Park Red Course** Boca Raton Golf & Country Club **Buffalo Creek Golf Club** Congressional Country Club **Creighton Farms** East Lake Golf Club **East Potomac Golf Links** Erin Hills **Esplanade at Rivergrass** FireRock Country Club **Gravel Pit** Green Lakes State Park Golf Course **INFINITUM Hills Course** James Baird State Park Golf Course **Langston Golf Course** Lyman Orchards Golf Club **Manistee National Golf Club** Meadia Heights Golf Club **Mickelson National Golf Club** Montauk Downs State Park Golf Course **Oakmont Country Club** Old Shores **Old Westbury Golf & Country Club** PGA West **Phoenix Country Club** San Gorgonia at Mountain Vista Golf Club **Santa Rosa at Mountain Vista Golf Club** Omni Homestead Cascades **Omni Homestead Old Course** The Riviera Country Club **Rock Creek Park Golf** San Antonio Country Club **Saratoga Spa Golf Course** Soaring Eagles Golf Course at Mark Twain State Park **Springbank Links Golf Club** Sugar Creek Golf Course **Torreon Golf Club** TPC Scottsdale **Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort** Village Greens of Woodridge **Winged Foot Golf Club**

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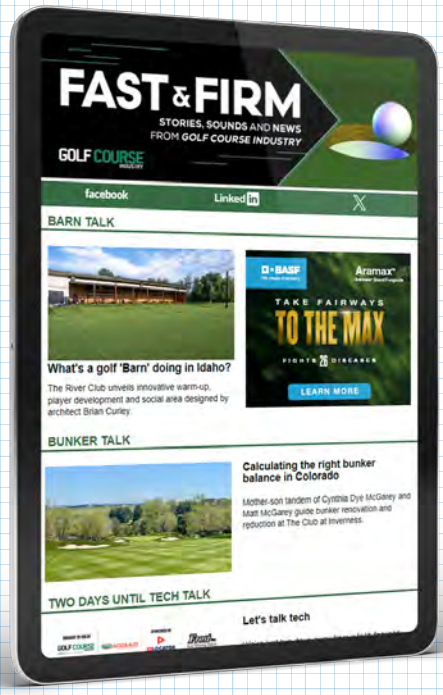

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GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

We're all aware of the current golf course construction boom taking place in our industry. In virtually every project undertaken across the country, one aspect is present: the golf course architect.

Selecting the right architect is one of the more critical decisions a club will make when implementing a project — if not the most critical. The architect wears several hats and is heavily involved in virtually every aspect of any project, including:

- Design
- Scope
- Sequence
- Specifications
- Member relations
- Contractor selection
- Communication
- Quality
- And, often, how successful the superintendent is in navigating and managing the implementation of the endeavor

As we continue to work with our clients supporting various aspects of golf course projects — and the architects working with them — we can't help but view the process from the lens of a superintendent.

However, we find it relevant to relay some of the observations we have made from our new roles. First, the life of a golf course architect is by no means glamorous. These individuals usually live out of suitcases, airports and hotels. Second, they are often at the mercy of unrelenting, indecisive, uninformed individuals who, even with the best intentions, do not and likely never will understand what it takes to successfully do their job. (Sound familiar?) In addition, there aren't enough of them to keep pace with the required scope of work found in today's marketplace. They are stretched thin without the necessary human capital and resources to support the growth of their business. Although several architectural groups have already expanded their workforce and others are working to do so in the most expeditious manner, the industry is expanding faster than they can keep up.

Our intention of highlighting all those previous observations is not meant to make you feel sorry for golf course architects. Their chosen field also has plenty of benefits. However, a clearer understanding of the issues they commonly deal with can sometimes provide an improved means for relationship building, support and collaboration.

From a superintendent's perspective, developing a productive, respectful, professional relationship with your golf course architect carries great significance. Having someone on your team to help navigate club politics, vouch for different methods and materials, and procure additional project investments are all vital aspects to help you succeed. A positive relationship with your architect will also enable the two of you to optimize the design for the agronomics and, consequently, optimize the agronomics for the design. Open, honest, direct conversations held with mutual respect and flanked by healthy accountability are not only beneficial — they're necessary. A unified voice to lobby for a better schedule, enhanced scope or the contractor of choice will undoubtedly have a higher likelihood of resonating with your decision makers than segmented, unsupported recommendations independently delivered from one another.

The architect-superintendent relationship is truly symbiotic in every fashion. The best strategic, breathtaking designs will fail without great turf, and the best turf will not be fully valued if it's grown on an unplayable or uninspired design. It is undoubtedly in both parties' best interest to work together in every facet and support one another to the greatest extent possible.

Just like superintendents, architects are a different and diverse breed. Some are analytical, some are artists, some are a blend of both. Connecting with your architect by supporting their challenges and accentuating their strengths professionally and personally will allow each of you to productively collaborate with each other and reap the benefits of a great project.

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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