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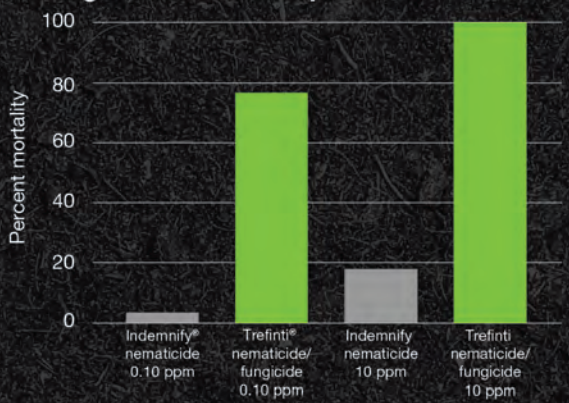

Source: Jeff Simmons, Syngenta, Vero Beach Research Center, Vero Beach, Florida.

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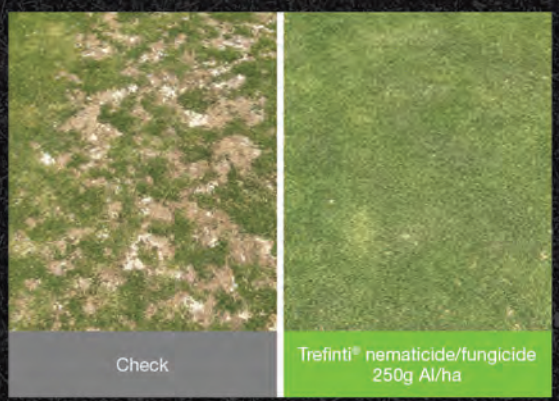

Source: Dr. Jim Kerns, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina. Applications made on Sept. 27 and Oct. 17, 2022. Photos taken on May 25, 2023.

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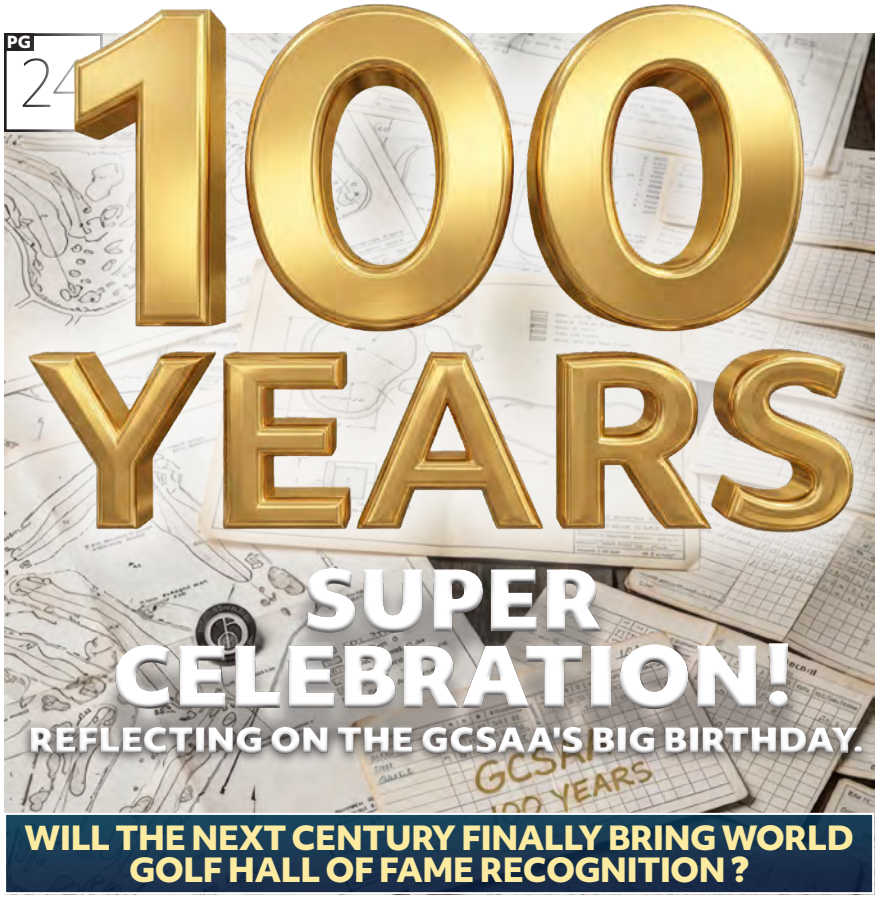

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MAKE THE CALL

A stroll through anywhere — outdoors or indoors, on turf or pavement — within the Village of Pinehurst boundaries should be calming and enthralling.

Yet there's one Pinehurst-based entity that flusters, infuriates and causes this half-Italian blood to race like a Carolina Sandhills-trained thoroughbred. It's the same sensation I experienced when attending a previous version of this entity in St. Augustine, Florida, theoretically another soothing locale.

The World Golf Hall of Fame left Florida in 2024, moving into new digs in the Pinehurst Resort golf epicenter. The World Golf Hall of Fame shares a campus with the USGA Experience. The exhibit halls opened to the public in 2024, when Pinehurst No. 2 hosted its fourth U.S. Open.

The WGHOF physical appearance changed; the Pinehurst building is sleeker and attracts more golf-focused traffic than the St. Augustine location. But switching addresses doesn't solve the root of the angst attentive golf minds endure when scrolling the exhibits: there's no WGHOF recognition of the professionals responsible for ensuring root systems and playing surfaces have been sturdy enough to support the game's global growth. Visitors see exhibits honoring competitors, historic players/amateurs and contributors, ranging from **Annika Sörenstam** (duh!) to trick-shot artist **Dennis Walters** (huh?!). Actors, course designers, developers, two former U.S. presidents, and club, association and tour administrators also fill the WGHOF's roster. They even let a few writers in — which peeves at least one scribe.

This card-carrying Golf Writers Association of America member will passionately argue that every name **Brian Rizzo** mentions in his essay about whom the golf maintenance community should embrace as a WGHOF candidate (page 31) is more deserving of inclusion than any writer, broadcaster or entertainer. How does golf evolve if its playing fields stagnate or deteriorate?

The retort is already reverberating, "You dumb writers can't get anything right. **Old Tom Morris** is in the Hall!" One part of this retort reigns true: writers can be dumb. But Old Tom's greenkeeping wizardry is a footnote in his WGHOF bio. The word "greenkeeper" is mentioned just once, and the following line makes it clear he's a WGHOF inductee for other reasons …

> *He is revered today not only as a golfer, but as a course designer — he had a hand in Prestwick, Royal Dornoch, Muirfield and Carnoustie, among other great Scottish courses — and statesmen.*

Meticulous research and logic resulted in Rizzo gently recommending four names with impeccable cases to break political barriers and become the first superintendents/course managers enshrined in the WGHOF: **Paul R. Latshaw**, **Bill Powell**, **Eb Steiniger** and **Walter Woods**.

Politics, coincidentally, might be holding back the case of the superintendent. While deserving candidates abound, it's unlikely the 24-member selection committee comprised of seven WGHOF board of directors, four working group chairs, and a combination of media members (those writers again!) and WGHOF members, will strongly consider more than one superintendent for inclusion. Nominations for the 2027 class closed on July 31, with a selection announcement expected later this year.

Until recently, the affable and humble side of golf, which includes superintendents and their supporters, struggled to unify behind one name. Dispersing support among multiple candidates, instead of aggressively lobbying for one professional, means advocacy efforts have lacked focus. That changed this year, as a behind-the-scenes movement among well-connected individuals and organizations emerged to garner support for Latshaw, whom we believe is the perfect candidate for the moment.

Latshaw's résumé melds major-championship credentials with grassroots impact. He elevated the game's playing fields while raising the standards, pay and visibility of the game's most essential professionals. His network is enormous and influential. He guided others in a quest to make the daunting doable.

Golf survives without major champions, commissioners and broadcasters. The game and surrounding industries quickly wilt without the pleasant playing fields preserved by Latshaw and his peers.

The upcoming WGHOF selection announcement coincides with the GCSAA's 100th celebration (page 24). A living superintendent receiving the WGHOF call would be the dream anniversary gift.

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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PGA TOUR OFFICIAL GOLF COURSE EQUIPMENT SUPPLIER

Senior thesis

Ron Furlong loves bringing in students for the summer. Hiring older folks is often even more helpful.

Last month, I wrote an article for this fine publication on the topic of shoulder-season maintenance. It included tips for managing the golf course through those tough times in mid- to late spring and again in mid- to late fall, when, for most of us, the course is still super busy but your staff might not be as filled as it needs to be.

In that piece, I mentioned the practice of hiring older folks for some of your seasonal positions and at least trying to balance the hiring of college and high-school kids by hiring retired workers — mainly to still have a seasonal presence on the crew during those tricky shoulder seasons when the kids have returned to school.

This subject got me thinking of other advantages of hiring older folks for seasonal work on the crew. This has been a practice of mine for the entire 25 years I've been superintendent here at Avalon Golf Links. I can remember fondly some of the older folks who have mowed roughs or fairways or filled divots for me over the years. Currently, I have five older gentlemen working seasonally on the crew, and all five of these fellas have returned for multiple seasons now.

When I thought of the practice of hiring retired people for part-time positions, it wasn't hard to devise several other solid reasons these folks can benefit the staff. Here are just a few of the advantages to consider when thinking about hiring older folks to round out the seasonal staff:

Shoulder-season depth

If you haven't balanced out the crew with some retired folks by the time those college and high-school kids return to school in

late summer or early fall, you might find yourself in the precarious position of not having enough people to get things done to the level you want come spring and fall.

They come to work

I can't be the only one experiencing the trend of some younger people either not being able to make it to work on time, or routinely not making it to work at all. This seems to have gotten worse in recent years. I believe there are a lot of factors related to this trend, but without getting into them here and now, let's just admit it is indeed a rather unfortunate development.

For the most part, this is almost never an issue when you hire retired men and women. Although I'm obviously generalizing, I feel OK doing that with this group. Older people have decades of work experience and, more than that, decades of learning the art of responsibility. I cannot think of a single retired person I've hired over the years who has encountered problems getting to work. Reliability is a common thread among this group.

Less turnover

Again, a generalization, but for the most part, I'd say the annual turnover among the seasonal staff is much lower among this older age group. Young people have a lot going on as they plan for their future. They also just have a curiosity to try different jobs as they are entering the job market. They are often one and done. The older folks looking to supplement their retirement income are usually content to return to a job they enjoy, as well as feel like they can still be a part of something in the job market.

A greater appreciation of the job

Expanding on that point of older folks feeling like they can still be a part of something, I truly believe this can make them appreciate the job more at this point in their lives. Golf course maintenance is a place where the older work force can indeed be a big contributor. Although most likely no longer suited for strenuous physical jobs on the course, they are more than capable of most riding mowing jobs, as well as jobs such as tee set-up, filling divots or running something like a pull-behind blower. It's usually not too difficult to find a job they can do comfortably on the course that will help the operation.

If you haven't been in the practice of hiring retired folks for some of your less strenuous seasonal positions, please consider this going forward. If for no other reason, one day you might find yourself in the same position as these folks, hoping someone will give you an opportunity.

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

Tartan Talks 122

Joel Hornickel communicates with one group of professionals more than any other when plotting and executing golf course renovations. Many of you reading this magazine hold that job title.

"It's the superintendent," Hornickel says on the *Tartan Talks* podcast. "With their role in the process and the responsibilities they are given, my communications are with them more often than anybody else. When we get into things, we're asking more questions of the superintendent and bouncing more things off them."

They are conversations Hornickel cherishes.

After starting his career with the **Arthur Hills**, Hornickel left the industry during the Great Recession and spent 12 years as an urban planner for the City of Branson (Missouri). While the job helped support his family, he was itching to be reunited with superintendents and other golf industry professionals. He received that opportunity in 2021 when **Drew Rogers** offered him an associate position with JDR Design Group. Rogers and Hornickel worked together under the legendary Hills.

The last five years have included numerous insightful discussions with superintendents — and plenty of career fulfillment.

"I think when you love something so much, you're going to do whatever it takes to be as close as you can to it," Hornickel says. "And sometimes you get fortunate with the people you run into along the way."

Hornickel's story of persistence and patience can be found on the Superintendent Radio Network page of popular podcast distribution platforms.

The Kanawha Club maintenance team

'Avalanche of **kindness'**

By *Guy Cipriano*

Enter the Kanawha Club employee break room and you will see snacks, electrolyte-infused drinks and bottled water on a table. An ice machine rests by the sink. Antacids, sunscreen and bug spray occupy a top-level shelf. In spring and fall, meat for employees often fills the freezer.

None of the above are by coincidence.

They represent parts of a calculated employee appreciation program for a club where longtime superintendent **Paul Van Buren** says an "avalanche of kindness" permeates.

"There's a tremendous amount of trust here," he adds, "and you've got to build that trust. You've got to build that trust in any relationship, especially when it's at work."

The trust-building begins in Van Buren's budget: the club handles employee appreciation as a golf maintenance line item. Located in Manakin Sabot, a Richmond, Virginia, suburb, Kanawha Club is a pleasant place in a punishing summer spot. Enduring a month like July — where 90-degree temperatures and 90 percent humidity emerge simultaneously — requires establishing personal connections.

Van Buren recently celebrated his 22nd anniversary as superintendent at the private, 9-hole, 55-acre, par-3 playground. Many of the faces surrounding him remain unchanged. The average tenure on his crew exceeds a decade. Providing drinks and snacks symbolizes something greater than hydration and nourishment.

"It's one thing if you require hearing protection, boots or stuff like that. … They get uniforms," Van Buren says. "It's about going above and beyond, and saying, 'There's stuff you're not going to have to worry about when you come to work.' It's a very insignificant cost for the immediate impact that your staff knows that you are looking out for them."

Grilling is also part of Van Buren's employee appreciation program when the weather brings less steam. Staff cookouts, after all, should be savory, not sweaty.

"Normally it's once a month," he says. "But I'll ask my guys, and in June, July and August it's one of the last things they want to do. If it's 95 degrees, most of these guys eat so light. All they want is some snacks and four Gatorades."

Central Virginia avoided the brunt of summer on July 13, when *Golf Course Industry* and AQUA-AID Solutions visited Kanawha Club for the fifth annual Turfheads Grilling cookout. Kanawha Club was selected because of the PVB's 1-Pot Pork Pozole Verde recipe recipe Van Buren submitted for the 2025 Turfheads Guide to Grilling.

Van Buren grills and cooks to unwind. "I am not agonizing, I am never upset when I am cooking," he says. "It's always something that's just a fun hobby. It's not something I have to do. It's something I choose to do."

Kanawha Club's crew is a beneficiary of Van Buren's hobby. The pozole verde recipe stems from his wife, **Stephanie**, having worked in high-end restaurants. Van Buren asked a Hispanic crew member about the dish and learned it's viewed with the same affinity as New Brunswick stew in the American South. Van Buren prepares the meal on a slow cooker, usually in the fall, because "no one wants soup in July," and distributes heaping helpings to coworkers. He also makes an alternate version with venison.

Cooking pots of pozole verde is comparable to maintaining a golf course. Experience and intuition provoke tweaks to continually improve the final product.

"Every time I make it, I learn something new," Van Buren says. "Do you cook at a higher temperature? Do you cook it longer? Do you cook it slower? Do you add hominy? How much is too much broth? There are little variants, but you still have the same foundation."

A superintendent must exhibit curiosity to thrive at the same club for more than two decades. Van Buren's curiosity extends to grilling. Ask what he wants to cook for his crew in the future and he quickly responds, "Fish!" Expect the Kanawha Club crew to eventually experience a flaky treat.

Curiosity, camaraderie and caring can take a superintendent a long way.

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

For more about how to appreciate your team, turn to page 56

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PEOPLE NEWS

The Toro Company's board of directors elected **Edric C. Funk** as president and CEO, effective Nov. 1. Funk will succeed **Richard M. Olson**, who will transition to executive chairman of the board following more than four decades with the company. … Mizner Country Club in Delray Beach, Florida, appointed **Ashley Byham** as its next golf course superintendent. Byham most recently worked as superintendent at St. Andrew's Country Club in Boca Raton. … Longtime Hunter Industries product manager **Steve Hoveln** posthumously received the 2026 Irrigation Association Industry Achievement Award, the association's highest honor. … Penn State student and Myopia Hunt Club intern **Brian Seltzer** received the 2026 Allan MacCurrach Jr. Award, which recognizes an outstanding non-traditional student. He earned a degree in math and economics before switching to turf. … **Tizayi Sithole** won the 2026 Larry Powell Scholarship for students in underserved populations. Sithole, an assistant superintendent at the Country Club of New Canaan, is from Zimbabwe and wants to strengthen the industry throughout Africa. … *Golf Course Industry* senior writer **Lee Carr** is publishing a book, *From the First Tee to the Last Green: A Teen's Guide to Golf*, with architect **Andrew Green**. It's available from Back Nine Press. … Advanced Turf Solutions hired **Patrick Douglas** to join its sales team. He will be based in South Carolina. … Simplot Turf & Horticulture added **Kenton Gamache** as a turf advisor.

INDUSTRY BUZZ

Envu's Signature XTRA Stressgard Liquid fungicide, a new liquid formulation of fosetyl-Aluminum (fosetyl-Al), is now available. … In its 2025 Sustainability Report, SePRO Scientific said it restored and protected 637,000 acres and more than 693 billion gallons of water last year.

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COURSE NEWS

Baltusrol Golf Club will host four future USGA championships. The Springfield, New Jersey, classic will welcome the 2033 U.S. Mid-Amateur, the 2039 U.S. Amateur, the 2046 U.S. Open and a U.S. Women's Open at a date to be determined later. … Construction is underway on the new 18-hole, **Chris Wilczynski**-designed course at Taylor Morrison's Esplanade at Solaeris in Port St. Lucie, Florida. … Cornerstone Club in Montrose, Colorado, announced an expansion led by Reef Capital Partners. Work will include upgrading turfgrass, refining fairways, revitalizing bunkers, improving cart paths, and transforming the 12th and 18th holes. … Woodbridge Golf & Country Club in Woodbridge, California, started work to improve bunkers, green surrounds and cart paths on its River Nine. … Chhun On Golf Resort cut the ribbon on the Palm Course, a new 18-hole layout designed by **Brian Curley**, while also announcing a partnership with the PGA that will see the property be renamed Chhun On PGA National Cambodia and become home to the PGA National Golf Academy Cambodia. … Solmar Golf Links renewed its designation as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, reaffirming its sustainable golf course management and environmental stewardship in Los Cabos. … Niagara Park's Whirlpool Golf Course has also achieved designation as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. … The Walden Golf Group acquired Baytree National Golf Links, a semi-private facility in Melbourne, Florida. … Troon is now managing The Crosby Club, a private club in Rancho Santa Fe, California.

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Lauren Crownover

CASCADE HILLS COUNTRY CLUB

Lauren Crownover has accomplished a lot in her turf career. Currently, she's the lead assistant superintendent at Cascade Hills Country Club, a 27-hole private club in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She's been at the club in one capacity or another for 5½ years and an assistant superintendent since October 2022.

"I would say I'm 100 percent responsible for what happens on the golf course on any given day," she says. "The head superintendent [**Andy Gianino**] is more like the liaison between us and the members and then everything else that goes on on the golf course is my responsibility, essentially."

Crownover's official introduction to turf came as an undergrad at the University of Olivet (Michigan), where she helped maintain athletic facilities while earning a degree in exercise science. After college, Crownover held numerous jobs, including part-time employment at a golf course, working for a landscape company and even starting her own business.

"I fell into golf and I'm so happy I did," she says. "I'm not looking back at all."

Crownover, who appeared on the *Wonderful Women of Golf* podcast with host **Rick Woelfel**, appreciates the fact that her boss acknowledges her professionalism and trusts her judgment.

"I am fortunate that my boss trusts me," she says. "There are two other assistants at my course, so for him to put everything in my hands is definitely a big deal, and I don't take it lightly at all. We worked really well together from the start, a lot of communication. We're kind of always on the same page, so it works out."

Crownover is sometimes called upon to represent the turf department in meetings with the members.

"It's a lot different," she says. "It's kind of nerve-racking at first. It's inside. I like the outside. (But) it's a chance to see what's going on behind closed doors, the decisions they're making. And what they want to talk about is always interesting. Sometimes, it's just about where they want the bunker rakes placed. It can be as simple as that. Or, sometimes, it's a really big discussion about a master plan they're putting into place."

Crownover stresses the benefits of a line of communication between the crew and the membership.

"It's helpful when they do understand what we're doing," she says. "We provide them with a lot of data. I don't know how many superintendents do this, but we provide them with graphs from all the data collection we do: stimp readings, clipping yields and [explanations] of what all that stuff means, to try to get them to understand why we're doing what we're doing."

Crownover has been a member of the Michigan GCSA since 2022. She's been part of the association's assistant superintendent committee since 2023. This year she's serving as the committee's vice chair.

"We do education events, golf outings, things like that," she says. "One of the biggest struggles that we have is that assistants are not able to come to these events because they're taking care of the course. So, we're trying to raise awareness there, and trying to educate superintendents and tell them, 'Your assistants need to get out there or they'll never be able to go anywhere or do anything. They'll be stuck there all the time.'

"There's so much more to it other than work, work, work. I know work is super important, but there's a lot more going on out there and there are a lot of people that have no idea about these tournaments you can volunteer at"—Crownover has volunteered at a number of events, including the last two U.S. Women's Opens—"or anything going on with the GCSAA. There are so many leadership academies. And then the assistant certificates. We try to push that to the other assistants, just seeking them out and trying to get them more involved is our main goal."

Sometimes, it's just about where they want the bunker rakes placed. It can be as simple as that. Or, sometimes, it's a really big discussion about a master plan they're putting into place."

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3. E is for enzymes. ThatchZyme features laccase, a thoroughly researched thatch-degrading enzyme. Produced by specific fungi, laccase targets and degrades lignin, a tough, slow-to-decompose part of thatch.

4. From scientists to superintendents. Developed by Dr. Tad Huber, ThatchZyme formed through a collaboration leveraging scientific curiosity to solve turf problems. Huber, an experienced enzyme engineer, brought the idea of using enzymes to reduce thatch to his father-in-law, legendary superintendent Armen Suny. The duo then introduced ThatchZyme to superintendents.

5. Tried and tested. Extensive research has been conducted on golf courses in varied environments and test sites. Adopting OM 246 testing, controlled plot comparisons and trial expansions were elements of the research and development process.

6. Part of the routine. ThatchZyme is effectively used as part of a programmatic thatch-reduction approach, with at least three monthly applications recommended when turf is actively growing. Best results are obtained as part of a season-long spray program. Enzyme activity stops at freezing but resumes with thaw.

7. About those rates. ThatchZyme is applied at 0.4 ounces per 1,000 square feet in two gallons of water biweekly or 0.8 ounces per 1,000 square feet in two gallons of water monthly. It should be watered into the thatch layer following application.

8. Mix it up. ThatchZyme easily integrates into existing spray programs. It is tank-mix compatible with common liquid fertilizers, surfactants and soil sprays.

9. The big picture. ZymeCo, ThatchZyme's parent company, recently received significant funding to expand its production and research and development efforts. The investment will allow ZymeCo to further find practical and innovative solutions to help golf course superintendents and turfgrass managers.

10. Two more for your course. ZymeCo's portfolio of solutions to help golf course superintendents also includes AlgaeZyme and FulviZyme. AlgaeZyme is a proprietary enzyme formulation engineered to help accelerate the decomposition of organic material contributing to algal crusts. FulviZyme features plant-derived fulvic acid and beneficial enzymes to enhance plant nutrient uptake.

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Wisconsin wonder

Dretzka Golf Course is reclaiming the land and making room for native species to thrive.

Environmental initiatives at Dretzka Golf Course aren't just focused on the present day — the efforts are focused on the years ahead.

"The things we're doing now can leave a lasting legacy for the future," superintendent **Mike Stein** says.

Dretzka Golf Course is one of 13 courses in the Milwaukee County Parks system in Wisconsin's most populous city. Stein has been the superintendent at Dretzka for 13 years, working to maintain the 18-hole, 365-acre facility. The course is attached to a park, making conservation even more essential.

One of Stein's goals for the property is to position it for long-term success. "I'm trying to set it up so the next guys got it really easy, and it will forever just be in really good shape," he says. "I'm trying to leave my little fingerprint."

Trees are a major beneficiary of those fingerprints. Emerald ash borer, a nonnative beetle species that feeds on ash trees, was a big problem for the course in the 2000s. Since then, almost 4,000 ash trees have been removed from the property, causing the beetle population to plummet. Invasive buckthorn had also taken over many acres of the course. Part of Stein's job since he arrived in 2013 has been removing these invasive species and reclaiming the land. At one point, the course also hired goats to browse for buckthorn and other non-desirables.

A variety of native species now live in areas where trees and buckthorns were removed. Milkweed, Queen Anne's lace and black-eyed Susans are just a few of the now-thriving wildflowers across the property.

Water is a prevalent feature, flowing through 13 of 18 holes. Because of its heavy presence, Stein and his team must be cautious when applying inputs. The team utilizes large buffer zones, which appear to be helping. The course partners with Milwaukee Riverkeeper, a community-led nonprofit, to monitor water quality effects from the golf course.

"We're taking data on the front end and on the back end, and coming back with really good numbers, which is helping downstream from us," Stein says. "The better your water quality is, the more diverse wildlife you're going to be getting."

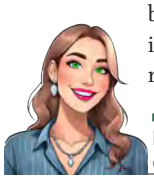
In recent years, a resident beaver has blocked the creek off downstream from the course and has since birthed multiple generations of kits. Now, more herons and cranes drop by along the water. River otters have been spotted too.

The course includes 17 bluebird houses where community members can participate in a bluebird walking trail. More than 40 honeybee hives maintained by a community member are also found on site. These features serve as both conservation efforts and as an education opportunity. Local student groups have visited the course, where the Dretzka team provides information on the importance of pollinators.

Native areas fill the space between primary roughs and fairways. Those areas are only mowed once a year. This space allows for a variety of wildlife species to reside on the course. Turkeys, deer, coyotes, skunks and numerous other species have found refuge at Dretzka.

Animals are thriving. The course is draining better and airflow has improved. Turf quality is stronger and golfers are happier. When you take care of Mother Nature, she takes notice.

"It just feels good to leave a lasting impression," Stein says. "Watching the sunrise, watching the golf course come alive, watching all the animals around the course. People are happy. My team's happy. Seeing the diversity, it makes you feel like you're doing the right thing, and you're able to do both — you're able to provide a really good quality golf course for patrons while you're able to provide a really good habitat for all these animals too."



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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MAKING A CASE TO INNOVATE

Leonardo da Vinci, **Thomas Edison**, **Nikola Tesla**, **Marie Curie**, **Steve Jobs**, **Tim Berners-Lee** ... insert your name here.

Don't think you belong in the same sentence as some of the world's foremost innovators? Maybe you're not thinking outside the box … challenging the status quo … stepping outside your comfort zone ... insert your favorite cliché here.

Before you write yourself off as an innovator, let's remind ourselves of the first rule of innovation: It's not a birthright. Innovative ideas that bring added efficiency to your facility, increased satisfaction to your golfers and improved conditions to your course are within reach of all of us, even those of us who don't consider ourselves creative … *if* we just alter our thinking a bit.

Here are three keys for innovating in a rapidly changing market:

Obsess over your golfers' wants, needs and satisfaction. Study your regulars first. Talk with them. Ask them why they play golf. Learn what they value about their days at your course. Ask them to describe their greatest day at your facility. Listen to their emotions and memories … that's the wellspring of their engagement with your golf course and you. Understand that what they will never forget is your innovation inspiration.

Be ready when opportunity arises. Put yourself and your team to work developing groundbreaking ideas and opportunities that address what your golfers genuinely value. When your efforts touch their hearts and connect with their emotions, you have found long-lived support to make your facility what you, and they, dream of it being. Make sure you include all your staff in this process — they will have great ideas too. Maybe different than yours — hopefully different than yours!

Remember the old-school basics. Balance the shiny and new with the hard-earned lessons all seasoned golf course superintendents know to be true:

- Greens must be as close to tournament conditions as you can make them … every day of the year.
- Water taking and management of irrigation tactics must be a top priority. Most golfers know little about irrigation systems and science, but they can see when your course is browning out.
- Fertility planning is as magical as **Calamity Jane** was for **Bobby Jones**.
- Arboreal care and upkeep are essential to healthy turf and golfers' enjoyment of your course. People love trees, except when their ball is behind one.

Here are a couple examples that will feed new energy into you and your team and enrich golfers' support of your work:

Kids Day with golf course maintenance. Make new and lifelong friends of your golfers' children and grandchildren, as well as the children and grandchildren of your crew. Introduce them to the wonderful world that you call your office. Invite them to visit your shop, take them on the course. Allow them to sit on the tractors and mowers. Tell them about your work and watch their eyes light up. And don't forget to take lots of photographs.

Scouts Day on the course. Invite local scout troops to visit and tour your facility. Show them what you do and how you do it. Let them see, hear and feel the equipment. Answer their questions. Teach them about environmental stewardship. Help them to earn a badge or two and to understand the value of what you and your staff do.

When did you last try something innovative? If your answer is that you can't remember, then you're falling behind your peers.

With new money coming into the business of golf and record numbers of rounds being played, golf is in a golden age, awash in new ideas, new money and boomlike new opportunities.

Old dogs cannot get by on the same tricks that have served them well these many years. Now is the time to consider your innovation management skills and capabilities.

While groundbreaking innovative ideas swirl about you, your imagination, experience, knowledge and intellectual agility are being tested. So, what is your plan of action that will keep your facility attractive and of immense value to your golfers?

> "Innovative ideas that bring added efficiency to your facility, increased satisfaction to your golfers and improved conditions to your course are within reach of all of us, even those of us who don't consider ourselves creative … if we just alter our thinking a bit."

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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Protecting the course where memories are made

Why a family-owned Connecticut facility explored an emerging solution to ensure ABW doesn't hinder charming experiences.

Near a river, in the middle of a pleasant section of Connecticut, surrounded by intertwined properties, sits Portland Golf Course.

The course is quaint in yardage and purpose. A par-71 layout measuring just 6,194 yards from the back tees, the owners, operators and greeters want patrons to post low scores.

"It's a golf course where you can go and shoot the best round of your life — and people really enjoy that," superintendent Jack Kelley says. "When you have the best round of your life, you remember where you did it."

Jack represents the third generation of Kelleys to play a major role in helping patrons play the best golf of their lives. His grandfather, John Joseph Kelley Sr., built and opened Portland Golf Course on a former cow farm less than 20 miles from Hartford in 1974. Jack's father, John Joseph Kelley Jr., now owns the course. Jack is John Joseph Kelley III. Family, friends and golfers call him Jack.

John Joseph Sr., who started his career in the landscape business after majoring in horticulture during the University of Connecticut's pre-turfgrass management era, also developed neighboring Portland West Golf Course and Quarry Ridge Golf Course. A par-60 layout, Portland West remains in the family. Jack's uncles, Shawn and Kevin Kelley, own Portland West, and his brother, James, is the superintendent.

© PORTLAND GOLF COURSE

The Kelleys relish spreading the joy of golf to others by providing affordable and connective recreational experiences. Jack personifies the folksy and noble business approach.

"What I really want to do is deliver the best conditions for the best value," he says. "I want people to come play golf here and not feel uptight. I want it to feel very welcoming, and that people are getting their money's worth. We want people to come out, have fun and keep it growing."

Producing solid conditions despite a tricky growing environment tests Jack's vast golf maintenance acumen. A UConn turfgrass management graduate, Jack started his post-college career as an assistant superintendent at annual PGA Tour venue TPC River Highlands, less than 10 miles from Portland Golf Course. But his industry destiny always pointed toward Portland Golf Course, where he's held the superintendent title for a decade. Jack is still just 32.

Proximity to the Connecticut River means a reliable water source, maintaining turf atop sand, gravel and bedrock, confounding precipitation patterns, and warmer temperatures compared with layouts more distant from the river. Consider it a hyperlocal growing environment for a hyperlocal business. **And one pest threatens turf** — and thus pleasant, low-scoring playing experiences — **more than any other: annual bluegrass weevil (ABW)**.

"In this river valley, if it's not under control, it's our No. 1 pest," Jack says. "**It could just wipe areas out**."

Reminders of ABW's wrath lurk in memories and mobile devices. "I was looking back at my phone of a video of our fifth fairway … and I was driving through the fairway, and every bit of *Poa* was eaten," Jack adds. "You could just see the patches of bluegrass and bentgrass, but it just absolutely wiped out the fairway."

Jack has fond memories of his childhood, because his friends worked and played at Portland Golf Course. Some childhood memories are more unique than others, like when he realized as a 16-year-old what ABW was and what it could do to the family playground.

"That's when I started to question my dad on stuff," says Jack, whose father preceded him as superintendent. "We had a little bit of damage on the 11th green, and he was looking at it, trying to figure it out. He did a little bit of digging and found larvae."

The early experiences ingrained in Jack the importance of scouting, adapting and studying every possible control tactic. **"Just to apply an insecticide without scouting and knowing what you have would just be wasteful,"** he says.

So, when a cutting-edge solution enters the market such as Atexzo® insecticide/miticide, Jack wields an open mind. Atexzo features the novel active ingredient PLINAZOLIN® technology with a mode of action that acts through **contact and ingestion** to control a myriad of pestering turfgrass insects, including ABW larvae and adults.

"I'm open to anything," Jack says. "**If a new product comes out, a lot of times it's formulations that are changed a little bit. But to have a totally new technology, I think it was crazy not to try it, especially given the fact that, all things considered, it's very affordable**."

Syngenta received registration for Atexzo late last year and it became available to superintendents earlier this year. Jack made his initial application this spring to target first-generation ABW larvae on Portland Golf Course's tees and collars, which comprise around five acres of short-cut turf. He left one tee untreated. "**We saw no damage whatsoever except for the one tee I left unsprayed**," he says.

Following the application, Jack and his assistant superintendent performed lemon soap washes on historically challenging spots along wood lines and pine straw and they didn't spot any

FINDING FLEXIBILITY

Portland Golf Course superintendent Jack Kelley lauds industry manufacturers for introducing several reliable new annual bluegrass weevil control solutions in recent years.

In the case of Atexzo® insecticide/miticide, he's enthused by its ability to control multiple stages of ABW.

"The application window with these newer products has really opened things up," he says. "We have a longer interval when we can apply a product and get some control. **Atexzo is impressive because you're getting control of both the adults and the larvae stages."**

A third-generation superintendent, Kelley realizes new tools must be used strategically to remain effective. Because it controls adults and larvae, Atexzo can further help Kelley and his peers avoid losing quality control options due to resistance.

"Going into early order, I'm 100 percent planning on using it next year for an entire application on greens, tees, collars and fairways, whether it be first or second generation. I know a lot of research has gone into it, and as a rotation product, it's really good for resistance purposes, which is great."

"If I went out and put it down for every generation all year for the next five years, it wouldn't be helping the case of resistance. To me, it's important to rotate it."

adults. He then called James and performed a soap rinse later in the day at Portland West. "And it was maybe 30 seconds later and we had about 15 ABW adults come up in like an 8-inch spot," Jack says. "That's when the light bulb went on, **'Wow, this stuff is really working if I can't find anything on my golf course.'"**

Jack made his second Atexzo application in early summer, targeting second-generation ABW on every green, fairway, tee and collar. The second Atexzo application wasn't part of Jack's initial 2026 plans, but the spring results observed on tees and collars convinced him a widespread application was worth the investment.

"This season my goal was to try to **keep unbelievable consistency throughout the year**," he says. **"This product has definitely helped me do that.** Typically, by this time of year, middle to early July, that second generation would be coming out.

"You think you have it under control, but there are all these different life cycles out there. And you go out one morning and your 12th fairway is starting to get eaten up. You can make it this far and then things just happen like that. **I can definitely say this product has helped make me look good**."

Neither purchases nor reputations are taken lightly at Portland Golf Course. On a morning following a storm earlier this year, Jack's father ran over a rake as he scurried to repair a washed-out bunker, causing his son to joke, "Dad, you know, if you picked up that rake, that's less money coming out of your pocket. With this being a family-owned business, we put as much back into it as we can, but every piece of equipment, every bag of fertilizer, every product that we try, is money coming out of our pocket."

Owning and operating a golf course is consuming. But Jack doesn't envision the familial vibe leaving Portland Golf Course. In addition to providing affordable daily recreation, local charities, organizations and sports teams use the course for fundraising outings.

It's way too personal to let a pest ruin somebody's mood.

"I plan to stay here and keep it going," Jack says. "We're trying to make it better every day, every week, every month, every year. I want our golf course to be known as being family-owned and family-operated. When you come and play golf here, you're going to see us, and you're going to get a wave and a hello."

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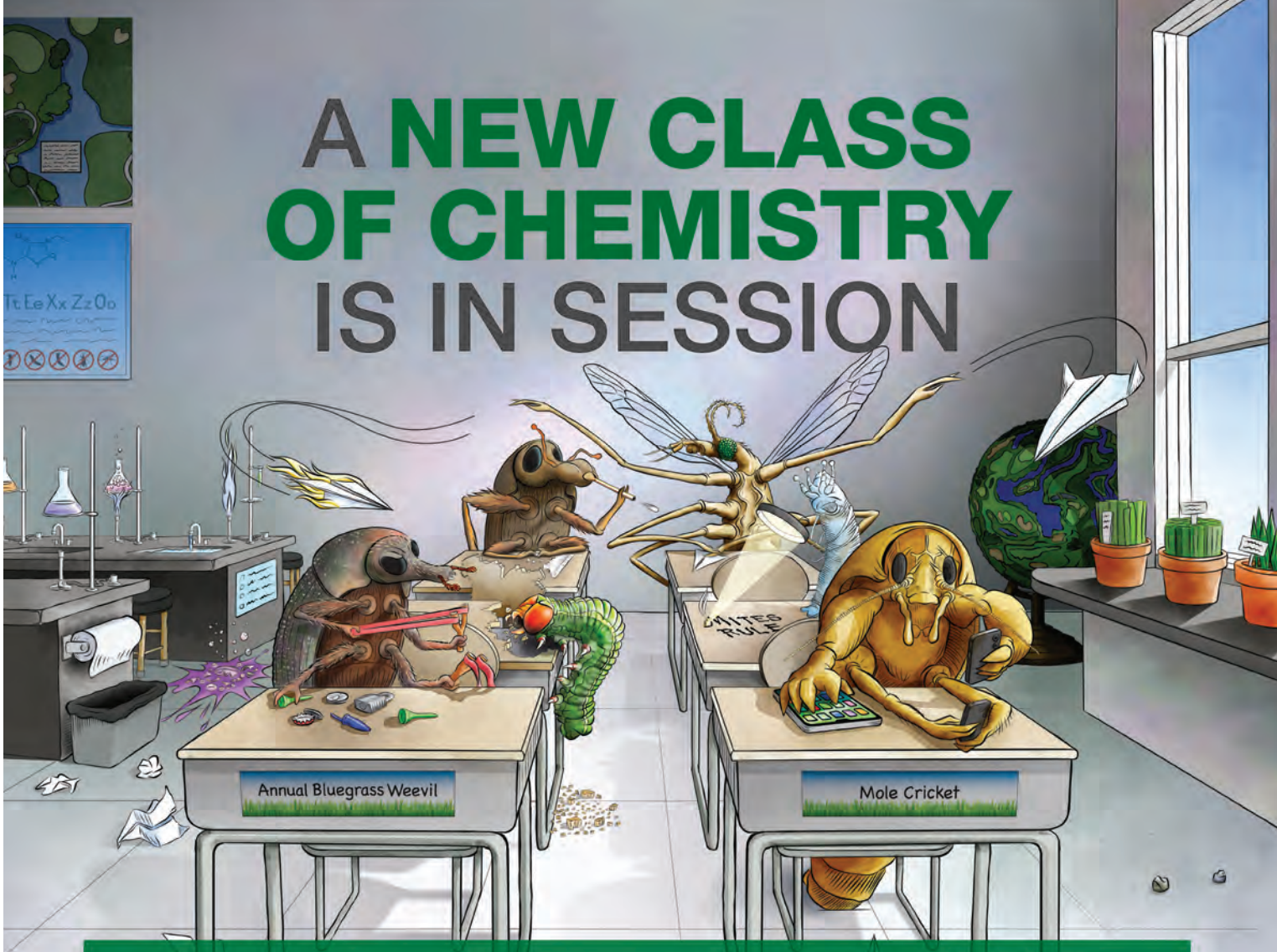

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100 YEARS

Grassroots to global

The GCSAA turns 100 this month. Its first century has been eventful and important in helping build an industry. Its next century might be even more critical.

By **David McPherson**

What a long, strange trip it's been.

From the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's inaugural leader — the "Little Colonel," **John Morley** from Ohio, a successful vegetable grower-turned-turfgrass guru — to its 89th president, **Paul L. Carter**, the first from Tennessee, the GCSAA has evolved over the past century from a grassroots collective to a unified global leader in golf course management. Today, the GCSAA is a respected industry voice with more than 21,000 members worldwide in 74 countries representing 93 chapters.

The National Association of Greenkeepers of America formed on Sept. 13, 1926, when 60 turfgrass leaders met at Sylvania Country Club in northwest Ohio. Upon its creation, Morley wrote: "The National Association of Greenkeepers of America will be founded upon justice, faithful brotherhood and generous benevolence." One hundred years on, his vision and raison d'être remain.

During his tenure as president from 1926 to 1932, Morley traveled to more than 200 golf clubs, selling the benefits of this new industry association and expanding its membership. Despite his diminutive size—Morley stood 5-foot-5—the Ohioan left a huge legacy; today, he is remembered through the GCSAA's highest honor: The Col. John Morley Award.

In 1938, the association changed its name from NAGA to the Greenkeeping Superintendents Association and finally to the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America in 1951. Initially, NAGA rented offices, usually where the president resided. Two of the earliest locales included St. Charles, Illinois, and Jacksonville, Florida. Following a study to determine the ideal spot for its permanent home, the GCSAA landed on Lawrence, Kansas. The grand opening of the 9,600 square-foot building on 1.9 acres within Alvamar Golf Club occurred Jan. 12, 1974. The original building was expanded several times before relocating in 1991 to its current 80,000-square foot corporate headquarters at 1421 Research Park Drive on 6.2 acres of parkland.

At the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show last February, attendees received a commemorative coin featuring the GCSAA's centennial logo on the face and Morley's words on the reverse: "No life is, or can be, self-existent. We depend upon each other." As current CEO **Rhett Evans** said during the GCSAA's annual meeting that week, the association is in good standing as it begins the next 100 years. "Nearly a century ago at our first annual meeting, Col. John Morley spoke about the importance of companionship and the simple truth that we depend on one another," said Evans, who will retire in September 2027 after close to two decades leading the association. "He believed this association would be stronger with a shared sense of purpose. That sense of shared success continues to define GCSAA."

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

As the superintendent's job evolved from grass grower to turfgrass management professional — a leader whose knowledge and skills run the gamut from budgeting and accounting to communications, government relations and agronomy — the role of the GCSAA has also evolved. The GCSAA, circa 2026, is a leading industry voice and an advocate on behalf

© GUY CIPRIANO

of its members for issues ranging from water management and pesticide use to labor relations and education, workforce development and recruitment.

"When I first got involved with the GCSAA, it was more about what could it do for me," says Carter, CGCS, who in addition to serving as the association's current president is also director of agronomy at The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay in Harrison, Tennessee. "Over the years, as I got more involved through my board and committee service, I realized the GCSAA does so much for everyone. It's the mom-and-pop courses all the way up to the high-end private clubs. They are the voice — and the guardian — of everybody's right to work and to ensure we have the right resources and tools."

Carter, who grew up in a small coal mining town in southwest Virginia and never stepped foot on a golf course until he was in college, feels the most pressing challenges where GCSAA can provide assistance and lobby the government now and in the future include issues surrounding water management and labor. One innovative and successful program that addresses the profession's future is First Green.

"Our First Green program has been a huge hit for the GCSAA," Carter says. "We're one state away from having the program in all 50 states. First Green brings high school, grade school and primary school kids to the golf course and introduces them to our profession. We have three or four learning labs, and the classes rotate through them. We'll show them cup cutters and moisture meters, let them take readings … and let them look for bugs and invertebrates in the water to see why we're so protective of cleaning that water and protecting it, because that's what we're using on the course."

CERTIFIABLE

Continuous education has always been integral to the GCSAA. But it wasn't until 1970 when the GCSAA board approved an association-wide professional certification program that it made the leap to formal instruction. Since its establishment in 1971, 3,530 GCSAA members have achieved certification. GCSAA now offers two certification programs: Certified Golf Course Superintendent and Certified Turf Equipment Manager, along with three certificate programs: the Assistant Superintendent Certificate Series, the Equipment Management Certificate and the entry-level Greenkeeper Certificate.

"One of the biggest changes I've noticed since joining GCSAA is the increase in educational and leadership opportunities for people who are just starting their careers," says **Nancy Cienfuegos**, assistant superintendent at McCall Municipal Golf Club in McCall, Idaho. "Programs like the Assistant Superintendent Certificate Series give young professionals valuable tools to continue learning and growing."

The association constantly revises and updates its certification programs to meet the changing needs and demands from members. "We revamped the certification program about three or four years ago to breathe new life into that program, going from 10 to 12 superintendents certified a year to 40 or 50," Carter says. "We also are seeing more and more people enrolling in the equipment management certificate and Turf Equipment certifications; they're such a vital part of our industry."

Students are an increasing membership segment, but equipment managers are the association's fastest growing. "With the resources and the education, the webinars, and the certificates, I believe they are seeing the value of membership, their employers are seeing the value in it," Carter says. "And they're a very tight group, so they talk to each other a lot, and they push each other, which is great."

FROM THE AIR FORCE TO A CAREER IN TURF

Kayla Kipp's story epitomizes how the GCSAA has evolved to meet the changing demographics and needs of its membership. The equipment manager at Ledges Golf Club in South Hadley, Massachusetts, she credits her father for instilling a love for fixing things in her from a young age to how she ended up in the turfgrass industry. "I looked up to my dad and he was a jack of all trades," Kipp says. "As a kid, I was always in our garage hanging out with him, or in the yard mowing with him — falling asleep on the mower."

Following high school, Kipp enlisted in the military, going on active duty in the U.S. Air Force from 2006 to 2012. "I tested really high in the mechanical and electrical areas, so they plugged me right into a heavy equipment maintenance role on the flight line," she says. "I worked on all-terrain tool carriers, aircraft loaders, lavatory service trucks, and snow brooms and plows. … If it had wheels on the flightline, I probably worked on it."

After leaving the Air Force in 2012, Kipp was adrift. As she contemplated her next path, a superintendent at a local job fair asked her if she could rake a bunker. She knew little about golf, but before that first summer working to maintain the sand traps on that course ended, Kipp's boss discovered her mechanical skills and created a new position, hiring her full-time as the club's inaugural equipment manager.

Kipp, a true trailblazer, joined the GCSAA a decade ago and immediately discovered the benefits of membership. After a few years, the equipment manager started to volunteer on several committees, including the inaugural Women's Task Group. She was part of a task force that helped develop the new turf equipment certification program, establishing safety and fire protection guidelines. And, in 2022, she became the first woman to achieve the title of Certified Turf Equipment Manager.

"The networking has always been the most important part to me because I have an entire network of mechanics now that have all kinds of equipment, and we can snowball ideas and just get the ball rolling in our heads about what's going on," Kipp says.

NO BORDERS

From the beginning, no borders existed between greenkeepers from Canada and the United States. Formed in 1924, two years before the NAGA, the Ontario Golf Superintendents Association is an affiliated regional chapter of the GCSAA. The two associations share resources and collaborate on industry outreach activities such as First Green. Greenkeeping evangelist **William Sansom**, the superintendent at The Toronto Golf Club from 1915 to 1936 was the OGSA's first president *and* the GCSAA's third president.

"As **Lee Trevino** once said, 'It's not the ball or the club that has evolved the game, the equipment and people that manage and maintain golf courses has had the greatest change in how the game is played today,'" says **Paul Scenna**, manager of golf course operations at The Toronto Golf Club and a 37-year GCSAA Class A member. "We have lived through the golden age of golf course management and GCSAA has played a huge role to provide education and networking opportunities."

WOMEN IN TURF

More women are pursuing a career in turfgrass management, changing the face of what was once a male-dominated industry. The GCSAA has responded to these changing demographics by offering courses and creating committees that address their unique needs.

"It used to be so overwhelming going to events, or to the annual trade show as a female because it felt so isolating," says **Alex Hills**, superintendent at Bay Hill Club in Orlando, Florida. "But now, with all the advancements to make everyone feel equal — and the push to have a bigger community wherever you go — it feels more like meeting up with people you already know or have already interacted with online."

Cienfuegos originally joined the GCSAA through her involvement with the Women in Turf thanks to the encouragement of **Shelia Finney**, the GCSAA's recently retired senior director of member programs.

"As I was deciding to pursue a degree in turfgrass management, I discovered the educational resources and scholarship opportunities available through GCSAA," Cienfuegos explains. "I applied for the Allan MacCurrach Jr. Award and was honored to receive it, which helped me continue my education. Since then, GCSAA has opened many doors for me. I've had the opportunity to participate in the Women's Leadership Academy, serve on the Women's Task Group and, most recently, complete the Assistant Superintendent Certificate Series.

"As a female member, I've also appreciated opportunities like the Women's Leadership Academy. It provides a place where women can connect, build professional relationships, share experiences, and support one another. Having that sense of community has been meaningful to me, and I hope those opportunities continue to grow for future generations."

A VETERAN VIEW

Bruce Williams, CGCS, was literally raised on a golf course. "My dad was the superintendent at The Beverly Country Club on the South Side of Chicago and my brother and I were born there," he says. "Our sandbox was a bunker behind our house, and we rode on our dad's Toro Bullet Tractor growing up."

Williams' earliest recollections of the GCSAA were when he was a youngster. His father, **Robert M. Williams**, was the association's president in 1958. "I remember going to two conferences: one in Chicago, and one in Washington, D.C., the year he served as president. There's a cover of *Golf Course Management* magazine from that conference with my dad and **Richard Nixon**. He was a guest speaker at the conference that year."

The veteran superintendent started volunteering and serving early in his career. He realized that if he wanted to succeed, emulating his dad was a good idea. "I laugh at it now, but growing up I thought everybody's dad was on the board of their local association, and became president of the GCSAA, and it was just a natural thing," Williams says. "I worked my way up through the ranks at the club I worked at, and I worked my way up through the ranks at the associations that I belonged to."

Along the way, Williams became president of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, the Chicagoland Association of Golf Course Superintendents, the Southern California Golf Course Superintendents Association, the California Golf Course Superintendents Association, and eventually president of

Networking has always been "the most important part" of GCSAA membership for Ledges Golf Club equipment manager Kayla Kipp, far left, and countless other turf pros.

© COURTESY OF KAYLA KIPP

the GCSAA in 1996. "It was in my blood to strive for leadership," he says. "It's probably the best thing that ever happened to me."

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Jon O'Donnell, president of Heritage Links, is also the current president of the Golf Course Builders Association of America. *Golf Course Industry* catches up with him in his hotel room in Akron, Ohio, where he is playing Firestone Country Club. He has already finished his morning stretching and a Peloton workout, and apologizes for his appearance. The Open is on the TV in the background.

O'Donnell is on the road at least once a week, visiting clubs in his role as GCBAA president, and he stresses the importance of superintendents.

"We work with superintendents every day, whether we're building a new green, installing a new irrigation system, putting sod down, putting sprigs down, putting seed down," says O'Donnell, a 42-year GCSAA member. "There's a collaboration between the golf course builder and the golf course superintendent as you renovate these golf courses, and the industry has been extremely busy the last five or six years."

O'Donnell interned at Augusta National Golf Club in 1986 while studying turfgrass management at Penn State University. "The [GCSAA] played a significant role in advancing the profession of golf course superintendents, and elevating the standard of golf courses," he adds. "Golf course superintendents today wear a tremendous amount of hats. They're fixing an irrigation leak, they're watching their

GCSAA
Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

About the GCSAA

Year established: **1926**

First president: **Col. John Morley**

Total membership: **21,357**

Professional members: **13,934** (superintendents and assistant superintendents)

Members living and working internationally: **1,035**

Chapters: **93**

Countries: **74**

All-time certifications: **3,530**

Current president: **Paul Carter**

water consumption, they're making sure their fertilizer programs are working, and they're making sure that 'Mrs. Smith' is not complaining that the greens are too, too fast. It is such a valued profession and I'm so grateful to be involved in such a great industry."

AHEAD BY A CENTURY: THE NEXT 100 YEARS

According to everyone interviewed, the two biggest challenges facing the turfgrass management industry in the coming century are labor-related issues and water management, along with the need to constantly communicate—and sell—the value of turfgrass professionals to the public and to the broader golf industry ecosystem.

"We've done a great job through campaigns like the Thank a Superintendent program, National Golf Day and Rounds for Research," Carter says. "We're out there advocating that we're not just a bunch of grass growers down in the barn. We are turfgrass professionals and we are essential to the game of golf."

In June, the GCSAA Foundation Board of Trustees met during the U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in Southhampton, New York. The GCSAA sat at the table with the USGA, the PGA of America and the PGA Tour. "Everybody talked about what we're doing independently and what we're doing together," Carter says. "We're all singing from the same songbook and staying in our own lanes, but everybody is doing what's best for the game."

In recent decades, the superintendent has evolved from an unsung hero to a professional leader, whose voice is critical to the advancement of the game. Somewhere up there, Morley is smiling at just how far greenkeepers have come and how that meeting he led on Sept. 13, 1926, spawned a vibrant and vital turfgrass industry association that continues to change and advocate for its members' needs.

"The Golf Course Superintendents Association didn't just improve golf courses. It has transformed an occupation into a respected industry and a respected position through education, and research," O'Donnell says. "A golf course superintendent's position is there to protect one of the most valuable assets that the golf industry has, and that's the course."

David McPherson is a Waterloo, Ontario-based author and regular Golf Course Industry contributor.

OPENING THE DOORS

BRIAN RIZZO PRESENTS A REASONED CASE FOR WHOM THE GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE COMMUNITY SHOULD EMBRACE AS A WORLD GOLF HALL OF FAME NOMINEE.

Are there really no greenkeepers in the World Golf Hall of Fame?

Well, there is one superintendent, **Old Tom Morris**.

In a 2021 *Golf Course Industry* column, **Tim Moraghan** wrote that he thinks the reason superintendents are "overlooked" lies in the GCSAA's Old Tom Morris Award. But to be perfectly honest, Old Tom was also a player, teaching professional, club and ball maker, and course designer. So, why hasn't a "modern" superintendent been inducted? Moraghan asks, "We must have someone who meets the criteria. No?"

Since 1983, only six superintendents have won the Old Tom Morris Award:

- **Bill Powell** and **Larry Powell**, 2019: The father-son duo at Clearview Golf Club—America's Course—who received the award along with the rest of their legendary family, including Bill's wife, **Marcella**, and their daughter, former LPGA pro **Renee Powell**.
- **Paul R. Latshaw**, 2017: The modern-day "marquee" superintendent and the only superintendent to have hosted all three U.S. major championships.
- **Col. John Morley**, 2009: The English immigrant who founded the GCSAA and pushed to professionalize the "greenkeeper."
- **Walter Woods**, 2002: Oversaw the Old Course, and helped advance the turfgrass management industry in Europe.
- **Sherwood Moore**, 1990: An educated and "professional" superintendent, a GCSAA board member and 1962 president, who also served as president of the New Jersey GCSA (1953-54) and the Metropolitan GCSA (1965-66).

There are two ways an individual can gain induction into the World Golf Hall of Fame: as a player or as a "contributor." Golf course superintendents qualify in the contributor category defined as someone who has "impacted the game in areas outside of competitive play."

I've come up with a list of superintendents who have won both the GCSAA Col. John Morley/Distinguished Service Award and the USGA Green Section Award, a version of an industry double. In addition, I included any GCSAA Old Tom Morris Award and USGA Piper and Oakley Award winners if they were not on the pre-

vious list of industry double winners. This elimination process excludes such notable superintendents as **Dick Bator**, **Warren Bidwell**, **Terry Bonar**, **Melvin Lucas** and **Gordon Witteveen**.

The final list includes 18 superintendents I consider eligible candidates for WGHOF deliberation, including deceased superintendents **Chester Mendenhall**, Moore, Morley, Bill Powell, **Arthur Snyder**, **Eb Steiniger**, **Joe Valentine, Bob Williams** and Woods; retired superintendents **Frank Dobie**, **Ted Horton**, Latshaw, **Dennis Lyon**, **Palmer Maples, Monroe Miller** and **George Thompson**; and active superintendents **Bob Farren** and Larry Powell. Morley (two GCSAA DSA), Woods, Latshaw (USGA Green Section) and the Powells qualified by receiving the GCSAA Old Tom Morris Award.

I believe this is an objective narrowing of the list. Unfortunately, politics enter into the selection process when individuals make choices based on personal bias. The LPGA's Hall of Fame selection process is one exception and eliminates "politics" with its 27-point rule. Even **Lydia Ko** had to wait until she got that last point.

All 18 deserve consideration, but in the end only four will be recommended to the selection committee and four others deemed deserving of honorable mention status. To trim the list, each candidate will be assessed on four criteria: industry leadership, industry recognition, industry contribution and peer recognition.

Moraghan listed some accomplishments he would consider: excellence as a turf manager and upgrading levels of conditioning; being a mentor; preparing a course for a major event or tournament; educating people about turfgrass management in person and/or in research and articles; participating in research and/or creating a device that makes playing surfaces better; contributing to the national or state-level golf course superintendent associations; considering the environment regarding turfgrass preparation, practices and education; and growing the game. According to Moraghan, "A worthy candidate would demonstrate a healthy mix" of the above.

INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP

Contributed to national or state golf course superintendent associations

Six candidates mentioned above are past GCSAA presidents: Morley, Mendenhall, Williams, Moore, Maples and Lyon. Woods was chairman of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA).

Four were president at the regional or state level: Miller (Wisconsin GCSA), Steiniger (Philadelphia Association of Golf Course Superintendents), Maples (Carolinas GCSA) and Lyon (Colorado Golf Association). Morley was president of the old Cleveland District Association of Greenkeepers.

Some were officers of various industry organizations. Dobie was president of The Musser International Turfgrass Foundation, while Steiniger served as president of the Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council, director of Penn State's Musser International Turfgrass Foundation and O.J. Noer Turf Research Council, and chairman of the Joseph Valentine Research Center. Larry Powell sits on the GCSAA Diversity Committee and the Ohio State Agricultural Technical Institute advisory board. Lyon is an emeritus member of the Colorado Golf Association Board of Directors and Snyder has served as president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) and is an ASGCA Fellow.

INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTION

Educating people about turfgrass management, in person and/or in research and articles, preparing a course for a major event or tournament

Miller was an unpaid editor of *The Grass Roots*, the official publication of the Wisconsin GCSA, and was a longtime monthly columnist for *Golf Course Industry*.

Witteveen, Moore, Horton and Lyon have all received the GCSAA Leo Feser Award for the best superintendent-written article published in *Golf Course Management*, the association's flagship publication.

Morley and Mendenhall, while president of the National Association of Greenkeepers of America, the forerunner of the GCSAA, published a monthly newsletter once called *The National Greenkeeper* and later the *Greenkeeper's Reporter*. Morley also contributed to other trade publications.

Moore, Horton, Williams, Latshaw, Dobie and Maples published articles and were frequently quoted in articles. Woods wrote articles in a variety of industry journals, including *Greenkeeper International*, *The Golf Superintendent*, *Greenmaster, Golf Greenkeeping* and *Course Maintenance*. Industry pioneers Steiniger and Valentine published articles on turfgrass research and course maintenance, pushed to professionalize the golf course superintendent and both discovered a new strain of grass — Valentine's Merion Kentucky Bluegrass and Steiniger's Cohansey-7 creeping bentgrass.

Valentine and others formed the Turfgrass Research Advisory Committee, which Valentine chaired until 1955, when the present-day Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council was established. Steiniger was crucial to the development of modern equipment, encouraging inventors like **Tom Mascaro** to test prototypes which became the aerifier and verticutter at Pine Valley, directly influencing modern maintenance practices.

Both Valentine and Steiniger represented the transition of the superintendent from a "greenkeeper" to a "turfgrass scientist/manager," prioritizing education, networking with researchers (like those at Penn State and the USGA), and pushing for

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innovation to improve course quality.

Farren is active in networking and education events for assistant superintendents like Green Start Academy and providing education and mentorship for golf course maintenance workers through the USGA's Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Program. Lyon was long committed to promoting public golf and the public golfer, and served as chairman for the 2008 U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship. Thompson pioneered the use of ryegrass fairway varieties in the Middle Atlantic Region, provided turfgrass researchers "living laboratories" and helped identify new bentgrass varieties.

Larry Powell's interest in turfgrass is evidenced by his membership in the American Phytopathological Society, supporting the scientific study of plant diseases caused by pathogens and environmental conditions. His own research discovered an innovative way to increase green speeds by planting virgin grasses into already established grasses (*Golf Course Management*, August 2024).

Bill Powell built, owned and operated Clearview Golf Club in Canton, Ohio, which is recognized as America's first integrated course and has been nicknamed America's Course. This was diversity, equity and inclusion 75 years ago. This was also the first "First Tee" initiative. Bill Powell labored hard to keep the course in playable conditions without a proper irrigation system. He dragged hoses and even used a barrel to get water to the greens in the early days. His course would be inclusive, where he lived his motto daily that, "the only color that matters is the color of the greens." Bill Powell used the game of golf and his course to bring people together.

COURSE PREPARATION

Latshaw hosted nine majors: one PGA Championship, two U.S. Opens, four Masters and two U.S. Senior Opens. Farren has hosted 12 USGA championships at Pinehurst. Horton hosted 26 PGA Tour events, two U.S. Opens, one U.S. Women's Open Championship and a U.S. Amateur Championship. Valentine hosted four USGA Amateur Championships, the USGA Women's Amateur, two U.S. Opens and a Curtis Cup. Moore hosted two U.S. Opens and a U.S. Senior Open. Snyder transformed Oakmont for two championships — the '51 PGA and the '53 U.S. Open. Steiniger hosted the 1936 USGA Walker Cup at Pine Valley and the annual Crump Cup, a premier mid-amateur event.

INDUSTRY AWARDS

GCSAA Col. John Morley Award

The Pinnacle Award for GCSAA members. Since 1932, the Col. John Morley Award is presented annually as a singular award to an individual or group who has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of the golf course superintendent's profession.

USGA Green Section Award

Presented annually since 1961, the USGA Green Section Award recognizes an individual's distinguished service to the game of golf through his or her work with turfgrass, including research.

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GCSAA Old Tom Morris Award

The GCSAA's top award represents individuals outside of the GCSAA membership who have significantly boosted golf. Prior to 2021, GCSAA members were eligible.

The USGA Piper and Oakley Award

Since 1998, the Piper and Oakley Award periodically recognizes individuals who have so generously contributed to the programs and activities of the USGA Green Section and the game of golf as a volunteer.

To date, only Steiniger and Moore have captured three of these four awards. Both were awarded the USGA Green Section and GCSAA Col. John Morley award but split the other two: Moore won the Old Tom Morris Award in 1990, while Steiniger claimed the Piper and Oakley Award in 2000. Morley also has three awards, but he received the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award twice, as well as the Old Tom Morris Award.

Dobie, Farren, Horton, Lyon, Maples, Mendenhall, Miller, Snyder, Thompson, Valentine and Williams each won the industry double: the Morley/DSA and Green Section awards. Latshaw is one of six superintendents to win the more competitive Old Tom Morris Award (2017) before capturing the 2026 Green Section Award. Woods hasn't won either the Morley/DSA or USGA Green Section awards.

To commemorate a legacy, organizations will name an award or a building in a person's honor. Penn State University created legacies for Steiniger (the Mascaro-Steiniger Turfgrass Museum) and Valentine (the Joseph Valentine Turfgrass Research Center). In 1987, the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association created the Sherwood A. Moore Award, its highest honor, to recognize superintendents who have advanced the professional image, status and reputation of the profession. In 2022, the Philadelphia Association of Golf Course Superintendents created its highest honor, the Eb Steiniger Award. The California Golf Course Owners Association established the Ted Horton Distinguished Service Award. In 2022, the GCSAA renamed its Distinguished Service Award the Col. John Morley Distinguished Service Award. In 2018, Penn State University established the Paul R. Latshaw Turfgrass Graduate Fellowship. And the GCSAA created the Larry Powell Scholarship, which recognizes students in underserved populations seeking a career in golf course and turfgrass management.

Another means to recognize one's career achievements is a hall of fame induction. Nine candidates were inducted into state or regional halls of fame: Dobie (Northern Ohio Golf Association, 2011), Farren (Carolinas Golf HOF, 2018), Lyon (Colorado Golf Association HOF, 2005), Maples (Georgia HOF, 2002), Mendenhall (Kansas Golf HOF, 1996), Miller (Wisconsin Golf HOF, 2005), Snyder (Arizona Golf HOF, 2002), Thompson (Carolinas Golf HOF, 2006) and Williams (Illinois Golf HOF, 1990).

Other recognition includes Moore being inducted into the Metropolitan Golf Association Hall of Merit in 2024, Steininger serving as a member of the Rutgers University Turfgrass Advisory Board, Woods receiving the British Empire Medal in 2019, and Bill and Larry Powell both being inducted into the National Black Golfers Hall of Fame. Bill Powell is also a PGA Life Member. Lyon was awarded the Colorado Golf Hall of Fame Lifetime Achievement Award 2011. Maples was Georgia superintendent of the year in 1971. Snyder is an ASGCA Lifetime Achievement Award winner and GCSAA Class AA Life Member.

Miller, Moore, Lucas and Lyon are also recipients of the USGA's Ike Grainger Award, presented annually to those who have served 25 years with the USGA as a volunteer.

PEER RECOGNITION

Moore was the most influential active/retired superintendent of the 1900s,

"In the end, four superintendents should be recommended to the selection committee, with four others deemed deserving of honorable mention. To trim the list from 18, each will be assessed on industry leadership, industry recognition, industry contribution and peer recognition."

followed by Steiniger, according to a 2000 *Golf Course News* survey of past GCSAA presidents, former Canadian Golf Superintendents Association presidents and then-current GCSAA chapter presidents. Morley and Mendenhall tied for second behind Bidwell in the deceased category. Woods, Witteveen, Williams, Valentine, Snyder, Maples, Lucas, Latshaw and Horton also received votes.

WHO'S IN, WHO'S OUT?

Selection should be based on impact to the industry and the game. Entry into the World Golf Hall of Fame should be someone who broke the mold and is one of a kind.

Steiniger, Latshaw, Bill Powell and Woods are the four names I would forward to the selection as eligible candidates. Morley, Valentine, Moore and Larry Powell are my honorable mention candidates. When I started this research, I was sure Moore would be on the short list.

Steiniger is a pioneer in professionalizing the golf course superintendent. He was responsible for maintaining the consensus top-ranked course in the United States, Pine Valley Golf Club, for more than 50 years before formal rankings validated the "Valley" as the perennial No. 1 course.

Latshaw is the only superintendent to host all three American majors. He was instrumental in ushering in the "firm and fast" era of championship-level golf course management. Plus, the legion of Latshaw disciples who became superintendents is vast.

Woods maintained the same grounds as Old Tom, the Old Course at St Andrews, where he hosted four Open Championships. Woods was certainly influenced by Old Tom. After retiring as a greenkeeper, Woods became a consultant to the European Tour and was instrumental in the formation of BIGGA.

Bill Powell wanted golf to be inclusive. In 1950s America, the odds were stacked against him, but he prevailed. In 1946, he built and operated the 9-hole Clearview. He did the grow-in himself by hand. He maintained the course, mowing the grass and dragging hoses to water the greens, then went to work as a security guard. He believed what he was doing was more than running a golf course or growing grass. He expanded Clearview to 18 holes in 1978.

Morley is credited with founding the GCSAA and starting to professionalize the industry. Had Morley been at Merion, Pine Valley or another iconic Northeast club, his stature in the industry would be even greater.

Valentine was instrumental in professionalizing turfgrass research and education at Penn State, the gold standard for aspiring golf course superintendents. He also mentored Steiniger.

Moore is the consummate professional superintendent. If I were to build the perfect superintendent, he would be my prototype: a "marquee" superintendent and industry leader. I consider Moore a bridge between the Steiniger/Valentine era and the modern professional superintendent.

Larry Powell started mowing his dad's course when he was 8 years old. He has been a GCSAA member for 52 years. Larry is conducting research regarding turfgrass management. He's also carrying on the legacy of inclusion through golf and, with his sister, Renee, continues to support and grow the game.

These are my top "super" superintendents. Interestingly, six of my eight selections received the Old Tom Morris Award. In the end, without purposely doing so, I validated Moraghan's connecting the Old Tom Morris Award with the World Golf Hall of Fame. Are superintendents awarded the Old Tom Morris Award before 2022 in a special class of "mavericks," the likes of which we might never see again? Are post-2022 Morley Award winners now members of a de facto Superintendents Hall of Fame sans fanfare? Steiniger and Valentine are the two left off that Old Tom Morris list, but they might have been the most influential in professionalizing the golf course superintendent.

Whether a GCSAA Hall of Fame is necessary is debatable. I would continue lobbying the powers that be that today's golf course superintendent is an integral part of the game of golf all over the world and should no longer be the "forgotten" man or woman.

Brian J. Rizzo, Ph.D., a retired NYPD sergeant and Westfield State University professor of criminal justice, is a member of Olde Kinderhook Golf Club in Valatie, New York. He wrote about Eb Steiniger in the December 2025 issue.

WHAT DO YOU WANT: A JOB? OR A CAREER?

Years ago, I was at a crossroads. I had a job I liked, in a place I loved, and a reasonable chance to move ahead with a management company if I stayed the course. The work was familiar. The people were good. Life was comfortable. There was no obvious reason to leave.

Then came an opportunity to work for the USGA at its New Jersey headquarters. Taking it would mean moving north from Florida and taking a significant pay cut.

I'd never had to make a work decision like that before. It made me question what I really valued: comfort or challenge, security or possibility, the known or the new, and the chance to build something significant over time.

I weighed the pros and cons — basically the money and the move versus the opportunity. I consulted my father, whose guidance had served me well my whole life and who was my best sounding board. He (and other mentors) urged me, wisely, that I go for the career rather than stay in the job. I followed their advice and never regretted it.

It's a question every superintendent and assistant should ask themselves: Do you want a job? Or a career? There is no wrong answer, but there is a difference.

A job offers stability, routine, a paycheck and a life that works. For many people, it's perfect. A superintendent who values predictability, roots in one community and a healthy balance between work and family might find real satisfaction in doing excellent work at the same facility year after year. There's nothing wrong with staying on this course.

A career opportunity — perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime move — forces you to think beyond the next mowing schedule, irrigation repair, budget meeting or club tournament. It asks where you want to be in five, 10, 20 years. It asks whether you want a seat at the table to influence decisions to be made about resources, staffing, capital improvements, environmental stewardship and future direction. A career decision involves the willingness to move, to start over and to take on new responsibilities in new places.

A career can be an exciting journey, leading to larger facilities, higher-profile clubs, new responsibilities, mentoring opportunities and even having more influence within the profession. But a career comes with costs. Advancement might require relocation. It might mean leaving a course you love, a community your family enjoys, a staff you helped build … and helped build you. It might mean more pressure, longer hours and an unpredictability that doesn't fit neatly into the life you imagined.

Which is why I advise thinking about what you want and what suits you best, before an opportunity arises. If you wait until an offer is on the table, emotion can take over. The title sounds good; the club looks impressive; the money is probably better. Or, as in my case, the long-term potential and prestige look great. You need to know what you want — and what you are willing to give up — to get it.

I was lucky: Having never given it any thought before, I chose right — for me — and have never regretted the decision.

The real mistake isn't choosing one path over the other; it's not choosing and just drifting. It's waking up years later regretting the opportunity you didn't take or realizing that you chased advancement when what you really wanted was stability, family time and the satisfaction that comes from maintaining a well-conditioned golf course.

Job or career? Either can be honorable or rewarding. One is not necessarily better than the other. The key is honesty. Know yourself, your priorities and those of your loved ones, consider what tradeoffs you can live with — and which will wear on you over time.

If you want a career, invest in it. Build relationships beyond your own property. Learn more about the business side of the operation. Understand budgets, boards, committees, communication, agronomy, labor, technology and environmental expectations. Find mentors. Raise your hand when service opportunities appear and be prepared before the next door opens.

If you want a job, respect your choice and make the best of it. Do the work well, lead your crew with pride and protect your course. Go home knowing you gave the facility your best without letting ambition define every decision.

The time to decide what kind of professional life you want is not when someone calls with an opportunity. It is now, while you can think clearly about your family, finances, priorities and personal definition of success.

Job or career? Only you know the answer.

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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At Home at Southward Ho

Leading the maintenance efforts of an unassuming club in a gaudy Long Island golf neighborhood proved to be the ideal fit for **Jim Stewart**.

By **Rick Woelfel**

Situated on the South Shore of Long Island, Southward Ho Country Club flies below the radar. It shares Long Island with the likes of Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, the National Golf Links of America and Bethpage Black, and is often overshadowed as a result.

Southward Ho, though, boasts an **A.W. Tillinghast** design that dates to 1923. It's a link to the game's history; the sort of golf course one would show a visitor from afar who had never laid eyes on one before.

Jim Stewart is the head superintendent. For nearly two decades, Southward Ho has been his home, professionally and literally. Stewart and his family reside on the property. His low-key, understated approach to his job is in keeping with the club's atmosphere, which he plays a significant role in maintaining.

Tom Draycott has been a member at Southward Ho for 45 years. He was originally a tennis devotee before switching to golf at the encouragement of his son. Today, he serves as the club's historian and demonstrates wittiness with words. Draycott calls Stewart "an invisible magician."

"I could be wrong on this, but I think if you polled the membership, the majority of those people would not know who Jim is if they saw him," Draycott says. "They might recognize the name, but they're very familiar

with his work and his results."

Stewart notes that Southward Ho's members are more than happy to fly below the radar.

"They're comfortable being who they are," he says. "They know where they sit. They're a very good club, they draw from a big area as far as their members go, they just don't think they're trying to be something they're not."

FROM NEW JERSEY TO LONG ISLAND

A native of Sussex County in Northern New Jersey, Stewart grew up spending much of his time outdoors. "I hunted, I fished, I just enjoyed the outdoors," he says. "I skied all winter. My work in the summers was pressure washing and a little bit of outdoor painting. I just enjoyed being outside."

After high school, Stewart enrolled at what was then the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey (now Stockton University) near Atlantic City. He earned a business degree while juggling a golf maintenance job at nearby Galloway National Golf Club, where assistant superintendent **Dwight Van Vorst** introduced Stewart to the subtleties of golf course maintenance and turf science.

"He showed me the ins and outs, the science behind these things," Stewart says. "It wasn't, 'Go grab a hose and water.' It was explaining the intricacies of water, plant health and what was happening. He took the time to explain that to me, which gave me an understanding that there was a little more to it than just a basic job. That kind of got me interested in it."

Galloway National named Stewart an assistant superintendent in 2001. With the encouragement of his boss, **Scott McBane**, Stewart enrolled in the two-year program at Rutgers. It turned out to be a life-changing experience.

"I can remember the first year of school learning the different grasses and just being so enamored with it all," Stewart said. "It was a passion that I hadn't felt before."

Galloway National supported Stewart's educational efforts with the stipulation that he remain at the club for two years. He graduated in 2003 with high honors and stayed at the club until March 2004, when he moved to Pine Valley Golf Club as a senior assistant also responsible for overseeing the maintenance of the revered southern New Jersey club's short course.

Southward Ho hired Stewart as superintendent in January 2007. His responsibilities include maintaining a 150-acre property with 85 acres of managed turf featuring bentgrass/*Poa annua* greens, bentgrass tees and fairways, and rough overseeded with bluegrass. His agronomic philosophy hinges on looking ahead and seeing the big picture.

"I think it's a combination," he says. "Obviously, drawing on my experiences from Galloway National and Pine Valley, but it's also a time where things are changing so quickly from a maintenance standpoint that you just kind of have to be sure you're constantly looking ahead and [thinking about] how could you make things different, how could you make things better?

"A big part of that, too, is evolving with the members' expectations. You know they're out there playing other courses, or their own ideas of what a golf course should be are changing, and you have to be willing to kind of meet with them on those expectations. I feel like that's kind of how I've evolved over the years as well, understanding what their expectations are."

MANAGING A MICROCLIMATE — AND PEOPLE

Over time, Stewart developed methods for dealing with the property's unique microclimate. Simply put, the climate on the South Shore of Long Island often differs significantly from conditions just a few miles away, particularly in the spring green-up period.

"I could drive 10 minutes north on the island and see such a world of difference in the early spring with the leaves coming out on trees, and flowering plants," Stewart says. "It's drastically different being on the South Shore. The cool air coming off the water definitely slows our progression in the spring relative to everybody else. It takes us a little bit longer to green up."

Stewart's crew numbers around 20. His team includes assistant superintendents **Aaron Reid** and **John Dale**, plus an irrigation technician and a mechanic. The crew works year-round, with snow removal consuming chunks of winter. Reid and Dale also live on the property.

Reid worked with Stewart at Pine Valley and started at Southward Ho just a month after him. He's responsible for setting the crew's daily schedule. Dale, who has been at the club since 2019, also worked with Stewart at Pine Valley before spending 14 years at Ledgerock Golf Club, a private club in eastern Pennsylvania.

Both assistants laud the on-the-job work environment cultivated by Stewart.

"That's extremely important," Reid says. "It's exhausting if every day is, 'Why did you do this? Why did you do that?' Jim's very lenient. If he wants something specific, he lets us know, and we just try to make it happen."

Dale adds: "Jim doesn't put a leash on you. He knows what you can do, and he lets you go and do it. That's very important to me. I don't want to have somebody always looking over my shoulder doubting that I or anybody else can do their jobs. You kind of feel like you're not [utilizing] all the experience you have."

Andy Malick spent four years as an assistant at Southward Ho before moving on to Metedeconk National Golf Club, a private club in Jackson Township, New Jersey, located between New York City and Philadelphia. In his role as Mete-

deconk's superintendent, Malick demonstrates a managerial style he gleaned from Stewart.

"Southward Ho Is a pretty small property, so I think that allowed him to be a little bit more comfortable giving us freedom to take on tasks or schedule assignments," Malick says. "[Metedeconk National] is probably about three times the size of Southward Ho. It's helped me in that regard, to step back and let people do what they're capable of doing … or prove themselves … or learn."

Stewart favors a traditional approach to communicating with members. He connects with them through his club president or greens chair rather than utilizing social media.

"I don't mind sending something out on my own, but [working through club officers] tends to be the channel of communication here," he says. "I think that's partly in an attempt to protect certain departments and everything, including mine, but also just kind of creating an organized approach to member feedback, member expectations and communication between department heads and the membership in general.

"I think it also allows us to kind of breathe before we say something. It allows you to just kind of say, 'All right, put something together, send it to the greens chair, send it to the GM. How does this look before it goes out?'"

Brian Curtin is in his seventh season as Southward Ho's general manager. Curtin, who started his career in food and beverage, has spent more than two decades in the golf industry. He describes Stewart as "incredibly easy to work with."

"There are superintendents that take so much pride in ownership of their product that they're *not* easy to work with," Curtin adds. "But anything that's asked of Jim, his answer always is, 'We can do that,' and then he'll provide the pros and cons. The best part of working with a guy like Jim is I know what I don't know, and he knows everything about agronomy.

"He's been very good to me in educating me on certain issues that he has and really that's my role, providing a layer of support for him between boards and committees and himself and getting him and his staff the things they need to do their jobs."

PRESERVATIONIST MINDSET, WITH EYES ON THE FUTURE

Five years ago, Stewart and the club, with assistance from an outside contractor, took on the task of restoring Tillinghast's original bunkering. Stewart was committed to preserving the Tillinghast legacy, an endeavor he takes seriously.

"Any project we've had in the past has been done with that same mentality," Stewart says. "This is a Tillinghast design, Tillinghast's vision. It's our job just to kind of preserve it, not reinvent it and not think we know better than him. A big part of that was maintaining his bunkering."

The centerpiece of the bunker project was the restoration of

INFORMATION GALORE

Jim Stewart has seen the turf industry grow and evolve. One of the biggest changes he's observed is the ease with which he and his peers can access information and the quality of that information.

"I think the information we have available to us now is just head and shoulders above what we started with," he says. "And the ease with which you can get that information nowadays. Publications, but also online education, online resources, whether it's chemicals, whether it's disease, any of those things, just the ease with which you can get your hands on information. I think the way we go about things, the way we manage our courses, the way we even explain to members what they're experiencing, that's been the biggest change."

In previous eras, superintendents would customarily exchange information at in-person meetings. Now that information is readily available online.

"I can sit here in the wintertime and attend all these online seminars and educational events," Stewart says. "Yeah, it's nice to be able to go out and meet your local peers and be a part of those things, but as far as getting as much information at once and staying on top of all relevant information, the ease with which you can get your hands on it now, I think is great."

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Brian Curtin

Tom Draycott

Southward Ho's version of Hell's Half Acre, otherwise known as The Great Sahara on the par-5 11th. It was created in the image of the seventh hole at Pine Valley, but it was removed at one point. The restoration process included studying aerial images and other photos taken by longtime members.

"Part of why we did that was for maintenance reasons, and part of that was for the flow of golf," Stewart says. "But a big part of this was getting it back on the golf course, getting it back to the original design. We wanted to make sure everything we did with that whole acre there we did with a lot of research to make sure what went back was what was intended to be there."

Jim Stewart

LeeAnn Lewis is a longtime member at Southward Ho. She served as greens chair for a time and later as the club president. In those roles, she vigorously supported Stewart's efforts to restore and preserve Tillinghast's work.

"I was on the search committee to hire Jim years ago," Lewis says. "He was the only candidate who had a degree in turf and business. When I was the greens chair, any question I asked he had an answer with thorough details and a fact-based answer. He would always say, 'I can do whatever you want,' and when I replied with, 'What do you recommend?' his answer was always logical and responsible.

"He is always aware of cost effectiveness. He is able and willing to do any job that his staff does. He is a true gentleman and professional."

It has been 28 years since Stewart first worked on a golf course as part of the crew at Galloway National. Despite his abundance of responsibilities, he still prioritizes spending time on the golf course, particularly in the summer months.

"That's when I'm most involved, in the summertime," he says. "Just another hose, another set of hands out there. Just getting dirty and making sure that we're keeping things alive."

His zest for the profession remains. He expresses optimism about the industry's future, and he's especially intrigued by technological advances.

"We're just starting to dabble in autonomous mowers," he says. "We have some on order and they're going to be out here soon. That's exciting to me, … what's coming with all that stuff with autonomous mowers and GPS sprayers and things of that nature. It's going to be interesting to see. It's evolving, I think, in a very interesting way, and I'm excited for it."

Like any high achiever, Stewart notices trends capable of impeding progress, most notably the scarcity of young people pursuing turf careers and finding ways to continue to provide members with quality conditions while adhering to government regulations.

"When I went to school, classes were full," he says. "Programs were thriving. It seemed like every school had a turf program. And then shortly after, it all dried up and turf programs were closing down. It seems like since I've been here, we've struggled to get even high school kids interested in doing what we do."

Apart from being able to earn a living outdoors, Stewart derives the most satisfaction from the feedback he receives from members.

"Somebody told me the other day, 'The place is great and every year it just gets better and better,'" he says. "And I think that's the biggest compliment, just knowing that the work and effort we put in is noted and it's continually improving. We're not complacent. We're continually trying to improve and get better than the previous year."

Rick Woelfel is a Philadelphia-based writer and senior Golf Course Industry contributor.

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TURF REPORTS GREENS

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WHERE CONFIDENCE, SAVINGS AND INNOVATION CONVERGE

This Turf Report, in collaboration with *Golf Course Industry*, puts numbers behind what superintendents experience every day: the intensity, precision and resources required to deliver exceptional putting surfaces. **Nearly 20% of respondents devote 100 or more crew labor hours each week** to greens maintenance.[1] With high expectations for greens, confidence in the tools and products selected is essential.

This report also reflects strong interest in new solutions: **90% of respondents** said they are **very/somewhat likely to purchase a product with a new active ingredient** from a trusted manufacturer when it offers benefits not currently in their program.[1] This demand for new solutions is met with the addition of Atexzo® insecticide/miticide and Trefinti® nematicide/fungicide to GreenTrust® 365.

90% of respondents said **they are very/somewhat likely to purchase** a product with a new active ingredient

Atexzo brings a new class of chemistry and broad-spectrum insect control to turf programs, including annual bluegrass weevil (ABW), mole crickets and bermudagrass mites. Its activity across ABW life stages also provides additional application flexibility. **Ben McGraw, Ph.D.,** has said it's "**exactly the kind of flexibility superintendents are looking for during a busy spring window**."[2]

Trefinti brings a cutting-edge solution for managing nematode pressure and difficult soilborne diseases. **Billy Crow, Ph.D.,** called it "**really impressive**" in trials, "**controlling nematodes we've struggled with for decades.**" He also noted it provides lance nematode control "**at a level we just haven't seen before**."[3]

This report also underscores the importance of value: **73% of respondents rated a yearlong rebate as extremely/very valuable**.[1] As the industry's *ONLY* yearlong rebate program, GreenTrust 365 is where confidence, savings and innovation converge—giving superintendents flexibility to plan purchases, bring new solutions into their programs and earn savings during and beyond the Early Order Period.

Syngenta is proud to support superintendents with research, innovation and programs designed for the performance greens demand.

Stephanie Schwenke
Turf Marketing Manager

[1]Source: Signet Research, Inc. Turf Report Greens Maintenance conducted for Golf Course Industry Magazine, n=194. 2 June – 1 July. 2026.

[2]Source: McGraw, Ben. "Atexzo performance in 2026 trials." 22 June. 2026. WeevilTrak℠ Plus blog.

[3]Source: Crow, Billy, and Tredway, Lane. "Uncover the Hidden Threats: Nematode Management in Turf" GCSAA Webinar. 15 Oct. 2025.

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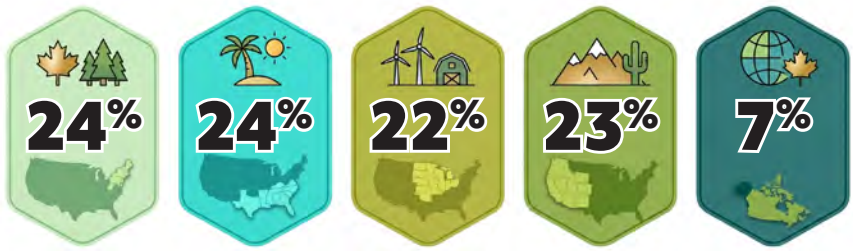
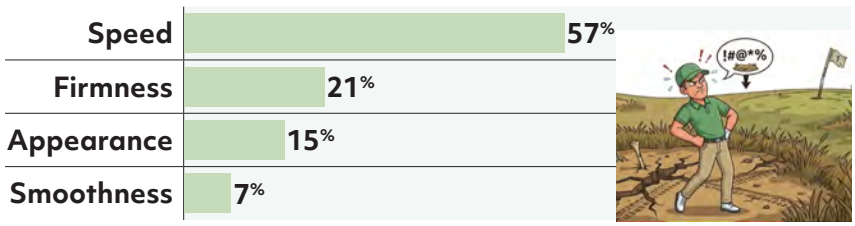
WHERE IS YOUR COURSE LOCATED?



Northeast | Southeast | Central | West | Canada and elsewhere

BIGGEST SOURCE OF CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ABOUT YOUR GREENS



CONCERN ABOUT THE FOLLOWING SIGNIFICANTLY HURTING THE PLAYABILITY AND REPUTATION OF YOUR GREENS

	1 (Not concerned at all)	2	3	4	5 (extremely concerned)
Anthracnose	37%	20%	21%	14%	8%
Annual bluegrass weevil	50%	18%	12%	10%	10%
Brown patch	23%	32%	26%	15%	4%
Crabgrass	38%	21%	18%	14%	9%
Dollar spot	21%	24%	20%	19%	16%
Goosegrass	39%	18%	18%	12%	13%
Nematodes	31%	21%	16%	13%	19%
Mole crickets	62%	16%	9%	6%	7%
Poa annua	24%	15%	18%	22%	21%
Pythium	13%	15%	22%	23%	27%
Summer patch	16%	26%	28%	17%	13%
Take-all root rot	18%	21%	23%	21%	17%
Winter injury	17%	19%	21%	18%	25%

DOMINANT TURFGRASS SPECIES ON YOUR GREENS

Bentgrass

Cool-season turfgrass

Bentgrass	30%
Bentgrass/*Poa annua*	30%
Poa annua	9%

Bermudagrass

Warm-season turfgrass

Bermudagrass	27%
Zoysiagrass	2%
Paspalum	2%

ABOUT THIS REPORT: For the third straight year, *Golf Course Industry* and Syngenta partnered to produce this "Turf Reports" section about greens maintenance. Results are based on 194 responses at a confidence level of 95 percent and sampling tolerance of approximately +/- 7 percent to a 20-question survey distributed to a list of directors of agronomy, superintendents and assistants. *Golf Course Industry* collaborated with Signet Research, a New Jersey-based research firm, to conduct the survey.

A good plan and plenty of time

At the end of every performance of the hit musical "Hamilton," **Eliza Hamilton** sings to the memory of her late husband, **Alexander** — the first Treasury Secretary, still present in our wallets on the face of every $10 bill — telling him, "You could have done so much more if you only had time."

Like Hamilton, so many golf course superintendents could do so much more if they only had time. **Scott Chastain** has more time than most of his peers, and he puts it to good use.

Currently in his first season at Turtle Creek Club in Tequesta, Florida, after a long run at The Yacht & Country Club in nearby Stuart, Chastain approaches both of the club's three-week summer closures with a thorough greens plan.

"First, I go in and heavily verticut, .125" below the height of cut with whatever the triplex can get," Chastain says. "I circle verticut them and try to chop 'em up pretty good and clean 'em up. And then we come from behind and five-eighths them on a two-and-a-half-inch spacing with five-eighths coring tines. Just bury 'em in sand after that. Seven to 10 days later, we come in with a DryJect. We do that in June and follow it up with the same thing in August.

"This place likes greens as fast as you can get 'em. We got PGA golfers here that play quite a bit and some very low-handicap amateurs, so we try to keep 'em pretty quick year-round."

Turtle Creek and its TifEagle greens, regrassed in 2016, are busy by South Florida private club standards, supporting about 125 rounds throughout summer weekends, and Chastain is working wherever and whenever he can. He and the team — 20 full-timers, including nine women — roll greens "pretty much every day." The exception is Mondays, when the course is closed and maintenance includes topdressing with a roll brush. "If we have enough people here, we walk mow," he says. "My height of cut is .105" right now. Haven't double-cut yet — haven't needed to — but single-cut and roll Tuesday through Sunday if labor's here. I inherited a good crew. So far, we haven't skipped a beat."

And even in the summer heat of the Sunshine State, diseases on the greens have been sparse. "Right now, fairy ring is about it," Chastain says. "I haven't had any issues with anything else. I'll start setting myself up for the season after August and start spraying a preventative. If you can control your water and spoon-feed your greens, if you don't go real high on the N, you don't get too many diseases on Bermuda other than leaf spot. Maybe if the weather goes bad, you might get some root rot, *Pythium* root dysfunction … but when the weather dictates, you spray preventatively."

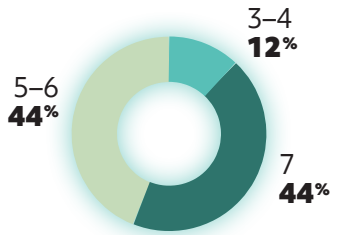
Chastain has worked in Florida for more than two decades. Despite this being his first season at Turtle Creek, he's familiar with the challenges of the region, and he has learned plenty.

"If you can control the water, you're light years above on the disease management," Chastain says. "Bermudagrass doesn't require too much water. You can pretty much get away with hand watering on the greens if you've got the staff."

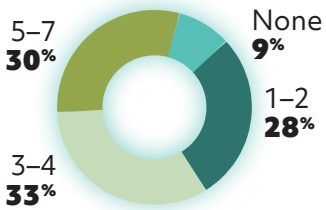
And just enough time.

— Matt LaWell

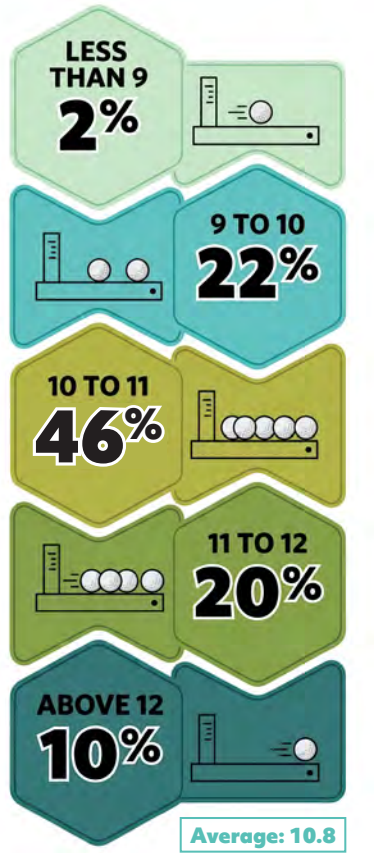
DAYS PER WEEK MOWING GREENS DURING PEAK SEASON



DAYS PER WEEK ROLLING GREENS DURING PEAK SEASON



TARGETED GREEN SPEED ON STIMPMETER DURING THE PEAK SEASON



Different sort of theater

The first time **Zach Weeks** landed at Ohio University, tucked in the southeast corner of the state, in the heart of Appalachia, he was focused on earning a master's degree in theater design and technology.

The second time he landed at Ohio University, more than a decade later, he had switched professional gears and went to work at the school's 9-hole golf course as its superintendent.

"I spent about 10 years doing TV, concerts, touring, a little bit of theater — off-Broadway, off-off-Broadway," Weeks says. "Got as high as Carnegie Hall." Shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic started to ravage New York, he and his wife — an ER nurse who "was basically annihilated" during the crush of 2020 — returned to Ohio. An intense run of shows at the Schottenstein Center in Columbus burned him out on production. He needed an even bigger change.

Before studying theater, Weeks earned his bachelor's degree in agronomy and worked for five years at a pair of golf courses. "This job opened up, and I was like, let's see what happens if I go back into turf," he says. "I fell back in love with it. All the chemistry, the agronomy, all that jazz. I'm dialed in now."

Good thing. When Weeks started at the course ahead of the 2023 season, the bentgrass greens "were in pretty rough shape," he says. "They were about half-dead. Same with fairways and tee boxes. Very poor nutrition-wise in terms of soil. I don't know exactly what all happened before I got there, but I think they had just been pounding nitrogen into them, trying to get them back to somewhat of a playing surface. It left these massive dead areas everywhere."

His second season, he focused on further improving turf health, "so they could withstand disease and the amount of play we have" — about 30,000 rounds per year, almost all of it in March, April, August, September, October and early November. And last season, Weeks introduced and dialed in an organic approach, turning to composted chicken manure, emulsified fish and molasses, among other natural products. He wanted to improve course optics — the nine holes are bisected by a heavily trafficked bike path and hug both the Hocking River and a handful of dorms — and stay ahead of any potential product bans. Beyond that, the turf has responded well to the new lineup.

"You just watched the life of those greens bounce back," Weeks says. "They perked up — the color, the vigor, the leaf texture. Everything worked really well for us.

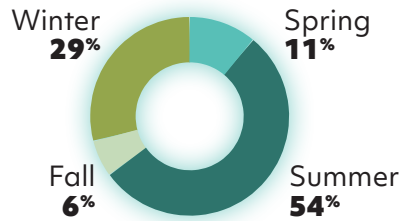
"Thankfully, I have the support of management on this, to take that risk a little bit."

If only he had a little more support from some of the tens of thousands of student rounds every spring and fall. "I wish there was some sort of education for them, because they don't know etiquette," Weeks says with a laugh. "They're out there learning. They'll drive right up onto tee boxes. They'll drive right up onto greens. How do you approach that?"

Weeks has managed to train six to eight non-turf students every year to work with him on the course. After that challenge, keeping a few more off the greens seems easy enough.

— Matt LaWell

TIME OF YEAR PRESENTING THE BIGGEST HEALTH THREAT TO YOUR GREENS

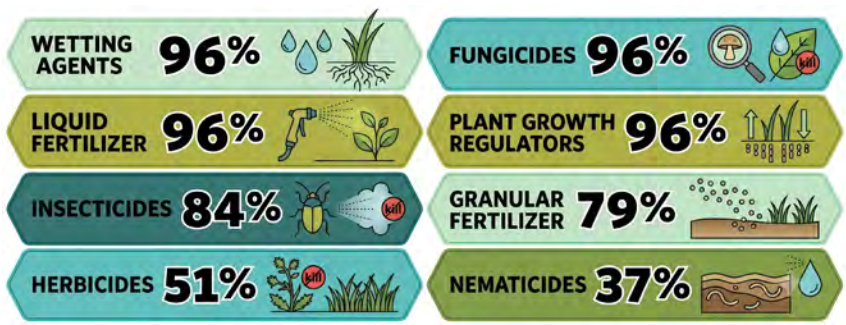


LABOR HOURS PER WEEK DEVOTED TO MAINTAINING GREENS

1 to 19	6%
20 to 39	32%
40 to 59	21%
60 to 79	14%
80 to 99	8%
100 hours or more	19%

Average: 62.7 hours per week

PRODUCTS APPLIED TO GREENS TO IMPROVE PLANT HEALTH AND PLAYABILITY



Busy by the Bay

Want some anecdotal evidence that the current golf boom probably isn't stopping any time soon? When **Tim Powers** arrived almost a decade ago at Poplar Creek Golf Course in San Mateo, California, less than 15 miles south of San Francisco, the municipal 18 was averaging about 62,000 rounds per year. After the pandemic surge of 2020, the average jumped to about 69,000.

This year, the course is on pace for more than 83,000 rounds.

"And we don't let play start till 6," Powers says. "They'd go out earlier if I let 'em."

Powers arrives most mornings by 3:30 and is normally on the course by 4. The rest of the maintenance team starts at 4:45.

"We've always started in the dark, just to try to get out in front of them," Powers says. "We're all mowing in the dark, we spray in the dark. We get it done." Mornings and afternoons are as busy as ever, Powers adds. The difference now is there is never any break.

The frenetic tee sheet results in schedule tweaks beyond those early starts. "It takes me a month just to spray fairways, tees and rough," Powers says. "I can do one or two tanks a day and then I've got too much play."

Powers is able to handle the greens, a blend of bentgrass and *Poa*, a little more traditionally. He aerifies twice each season, first the week before the Masters, then again two weeks before Labor Day, when play slows just enough around the last wave of family summer vacations. He seeds the greens "only after I punch holes." He normally overseeds about two weeks after that, "because I don't want the seed too deep." He and the team — five full-timers and five full-time equivalents who work between eight and 20 hours a week — mow greens every day and roll "maybe" once or twice a month. "I don't want 'em to be too fast," Powers says. "I got to look at the clientele. This is a muni. You don't want 'em three- and four-putting."

Powers hand waters and changes cups, of course. Once or twice every month, he also sprays what longtime Preakness Hills Country Club leader and past GCSAA president **John O'Keefe** describes as "a bomb."

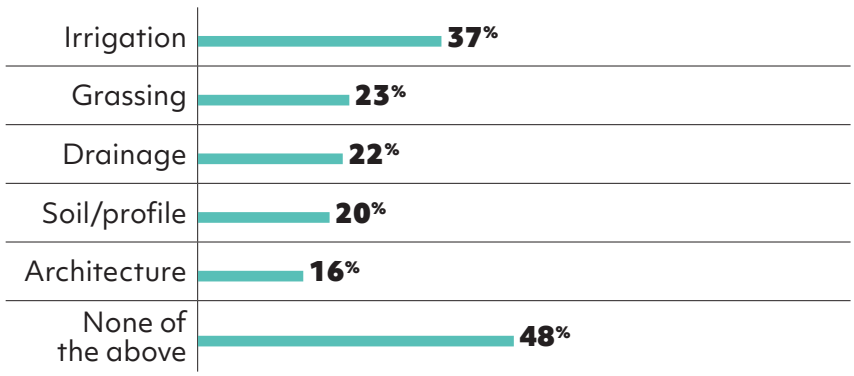
"It's throwing a whole bunch of stuff in the tank, as long as they all mix together well," Powers says. "I don't have much time. They're catching me as it is. I could have 10 things in a tank. I know there are people who put in more than me. Yeah, it'd be great if you could put in less, but then you're spraying a lot more, and if you got play, it's hard."

And Bay Area golfers have proved again and again they will play the beloved 93-year-old muni no matter the agronomic situation.

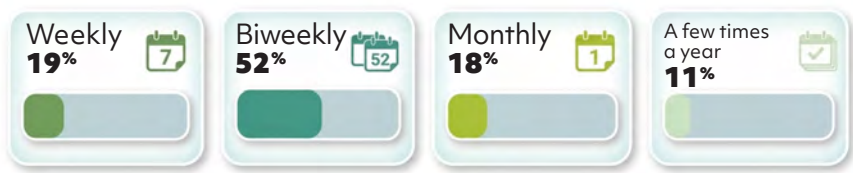
"About four or five years ago, we punched on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning, and we did 296 players on Friday," Powers says. "Tell me that hurts our revenue. They don't even give a discount anymore!"

— Matt LaWell

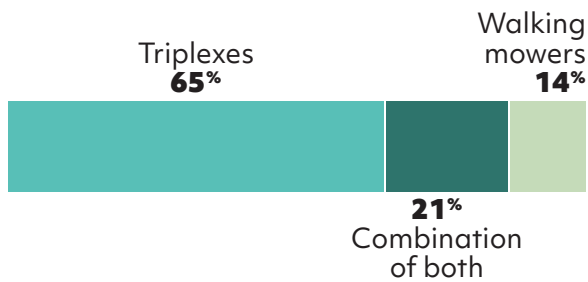
AREAS OF YOUR GREENS ADDRESSED THROUGH CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS



FREQUENCY OF PEAK-SEASON FUNGICIDE APPLICATIONS ON GREENS



MOWERS USED ON YOUR COURSE'S GREENS



Slow down

Across the Northeast, and especially in the corridor connecting the New York City Metropolitan and Philadelphia golf meccas, too many private clubs aim for daily green speeds of 12 or 13.

So says **Chris Boyle**, who is currently in his 30th season as superintendent at Mendham Golf & Tennis Club, in Mendham Township, New Jersey, about 40 miles west of the Big Apple and 80 miles northeast of the City of Brotherly Love.

"Which I don't understand. I don't buy into it." says Boyle, adding that he aims for 10 or 11. "I hate to say it, but I think the superintendents are doing it, maybe because they're scared that's what their membership wants."

Boyle jokes that he's "not a great golfer, but I'm a decent golfer. And I don't understand how these members don't revolt against it. I guess if you're playing greens that are rolling that fast regularly, maybe you get used to it. But there's enough research out there now that says it's really bad for pace of play, for scoring, for maintenance budgets. I don't know if that's the case in the rest of the country, because I don't travel a lot, but, gosh, if people came here and played the private clubs around here, they would be shocked at how fast the greens are. That's my opinion."

Boyle has locked in his approach to green speeds and greens maintenance over the last decade. He rolls the 50-plus-year-old bent/*Poa* mix, "seeded way before I got there," six days a week and mows four days a week. He introduced that decision on research that indicated lightweight rolling does not increase compaction. He has maintained it because he has seen that "skipping rolling has a much bigger variation on day-to-day green speeds than rolling every day."

He also sprays every week—the first week on greens and collars, normally including biostimulants, special fertilizers, maybe a root Pythium spray, the second week on greens, collars, approaches and chipping areas. He normally mixes six to eight products in the tank, including fungicides and wetting agents. And thanks to a "healthy" budget for those products, he hasn't spotted any disease on greens in years. Annual bluegrass weevil is popping up this season on three greens, "so that's something new," Boyle says. "I'm not used to treating my greens for them, and I'm going to have to start."

Boyle also vents greens "maybe" three times a year with three-eighths-inch solid tines. He has occasionally used half-inch or five-eighths-inch solid tines, filling them with sand, "but I haven't pulled a core in 10 years." He follows research from **Dr. Roch Gaussoin**, who retired last year after 33 years at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln "that shows that if your organic matters are at the right level, you don't need to pull a core, you solid tine and topdress throughout the year." Boyle topdresses every two to three weeks.

Through it all, he keeps the greens rolling at 10 to 11—or maybe 10½ to 11½, if assistant superintendent **Mike Grillo** is reading the Stimpmeter. "I think he raises it a little too fast, because his readings are always a half a foot higher than mine," Boyle says with a laugh. "I'm very meticulous and just as that ball releases, I let it go. The greens are always faster when I'm not there."

—Matt LaWell

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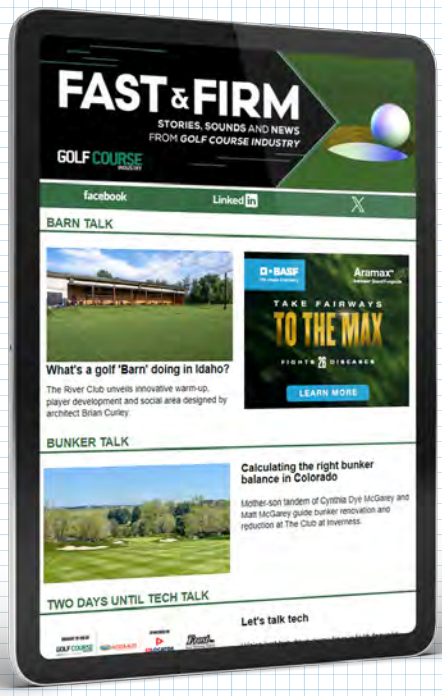

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GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

GOLF COURSE PHOTOGRAPHY 101

I once played a round of golf with a well-meaning, if determined, fellow, who insisted on taking photos of every hole — at least half a dozen snaps, maybe as many as 10 — of all 18 holes. From the back tee, middle tee, forward tee, fairway start, mid-fairway, green front and then from behind looking back.

He is well-traveled and possesses (I am told, by his friends) one of the largest collections of golf course imagery in the world. But I was not at all surprised when, weeks later, out of morbid curiosity, I asked him to send me a sample of the photos he took that day. They were a disaster. They showed nothing of what I remembered of the golf course — or of any of its holes.

For all his intrepid eagerness, he violated four of the most basic rules in golf course photography:

- Don't take photos during midday, when there is no shadow effect to work with and everything gets bleached out by the sun.
- Avoid mid-level symmetrical shots that have no obvious angle.
- Don't take images from zero-elevation, but get at least a little lift, and ideally from a bit of a side angle.
- Don't take course photos where players and golf carts are in view, invariably in positions you cannot control.

That's a start to the art of what might be called Golf Course Photography 101. For better or worse, the high quality of iPhone and Android cameras these days has given every golf enthusiast and card-carrying rater the confidence that they qualify as the next **Ansel Adams** of the links. Drone technology has even further empowered golf architecture aficionados into thinking they could have a new career as an aerial artisan.

Not so simple, as it turns out. Recent experience sorting through hundreds of so-called high-quality images of classic **Donald Ross** courses has convinced me that the fine art of golf course photography requires some thinking through. That's because I have become acutely aware of the difference between showing a golf hole and making a golf hole come alive.

It takes a certain instinctive understanding of landscape, light and texture to capture what is going on with a golf course. They are the most differentiated and widely varied of all sports playing fields, and they deserve an imaginative approach if they are to be properly conveyed visually.

Professional golf course photographers are armed with a few things that most of us don't possess. They usually have a ladder, they have a camera whose aperture, depth of field and width they can adjust, and they have the patience to sit and wait through five hours of clouds or bleached sky for the seven-minute opening that makes the image seem epic — maybe even biblical. Such professionals also know that even when they are required to capture all 18 holes on assignment, it's just a few magical shots of a hole or two that the public will see that can make the reputation of a golf course.

With drones, a whole new element has been added to the equation, and here, too, I've seen amateur photographers misuse the technology. An extreme vertical lookdown from above might produce a record of the ground features, but it can also bleach out the texture of elevation changes to the point where the hole becomes unrecognizable.

At the other extreme is a style of imagery I would describe as creativity run amok — the use of the camera to create an off-kilter construct that is not intended to represent the golf hole but to show off the ability of the photographer to create something new. It might be an angle looking perpendicularly across the site or inverting the normal perspective by looking backwards or sideways. Drones are useful for such imaginative work, but the effect on the viewer tends also to be less of an enhancement in understanding the course than simple confusion at what one is looking at. My own view, as something of an aesthetic realist when it comes to such matters, is to avoid this kind of imagery.

The larger point is that golf course photography is an art form that entails some consideration into intended effect. As a mode of representation, the imagery has come a very long way from what was standard operating procedure just a generation or two ago. A quick look through older golf course books or industry magazines from that era and before will attest to how far golf course photography has come.

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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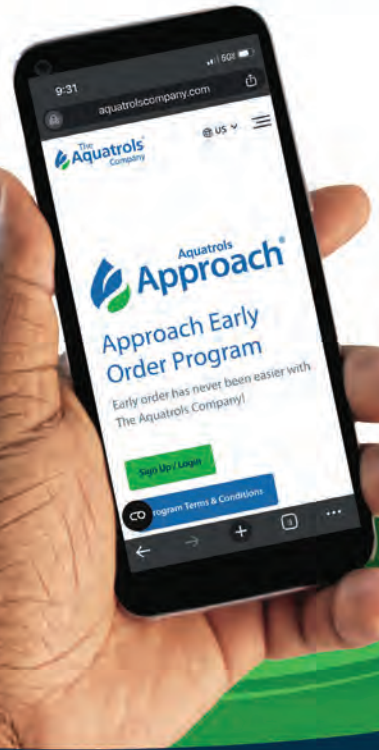

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Cookouts, work apparel, Dilly bars, 'Wingy Wednesdays' and the simple act of listening. A trio of Illinois superintendents makes the case for developing concerted employee appreciation habits.

By **Kelsie Horner**

© BRIAN TRIFILIO (RIGHT)

A superintendent is only one person. They can try to do it all themselves, but without their maintenance team, they will fail.

Northbrook Park District superintendent of grounds and golf maintenance **Bill Meyer** sums it up: "I can't be successful in my job unless they're there to support me."

That is why Meyer invests time and money into showing appreciation for his team. "They're the ones that are making things happen," Meyer adds. "The least I can do is support them."

Meyer oversees 36 holes across two facilities, plus an additional 23 parks and 24 softball and baseball fields. The golf courses include the par 3 Anetsberger Golf Course and Heritage Oaks Golf Club, both in Northbrook, Illinois, a Chicago suburb. He carries a team of more than 40 people between golf course maintenance staff and parks employees. When it comes to showing crew gratitude, Meyer utilizes two categories: appreciation through food and appreciation through clothing.

Four times throughout the eight-month growing season, Meyer treats his full team to a meal. Early in the season, he orders pizza and subs. This year, Meyer brought in a taco truck, which he says will become a staple for years to come. In October, when temperatures begin to drop, Meyer takes the team out for breakfast. "It's pretty entertaining to see 15 plates of waffles coming out," Meyer laughs. And once a year, Meyer gets behind the grill himself. He cooks chicken, hot dogs, burgers and sausages as an act of appreciation for his crew.

Outside of the big cookouts and shared meals, Meyer often hands out Gatorade, popsicles and Dairy Queen Dilly Bars to his team. He plans ahead for all of these expenses in the yearly budget.

"It's just the little things, like, Hey, we care. And I feel like food is one of those things that everybody can appreciate," Meyer says.

In addition to obvious acts of thanks, Meyer also invests in his team's attire. "When I got here, we didn't really give our staff much in terms of apparel or stuff for uniforms, and it wasn't super high quality," he says. Previously, staff were only given short-sleeved shirts.

Now, the park district provides the maintenance team with short-sleeved shirts, long-sleeved shirts, sun shirts, hoodies and hats. Staff have high-quality options for work, fit for multiple climates. In turn, the facility is investing in uniforms that Meyer doesn't have to "hassle" his employees to wear.

Thanks to Meyer's acts of appreciation — both big and small — the Northbrook Park District is maintaining employees. Internal staff are recommending friends and family for open positions, and Meyer doesn't have to stress about filling his crew.

ACTS OF APPRECIATION

don't have to be big. If renting a taco truck isn't in the budget, there are other ways to show your staff that you see them and appreciate them. Glendale Lakes Golf Club superintendent **Brian Trifilio** still opens the grill for the classic cookout with his staff several times a year. But what has really boosted team morale and camaraderie are "Wingy Wednesdays."

Nearly every Wednesday, even in the winter, the Glendale Lakes maintenance team meets at a local restaurant to enjoy a meal and drinks together. Staff get off at 11 a.m. because early leave on Wednesdays fits well with the overall weekly schedule. Glendale Lakes is an 18-hole public facility in Glendale Heights, Illinois, about 30 miles west of downtown Chicago.

This tradition started in 2018, when a beloved staffer named **Larry Morton** chose to retire. Nicknamed "Uncle Larry," Morton worked on the maintenance team as a day job after retirement. He was on staff for nearly 15 years before stepping back. Despite ending his golf maintenance career, Uncle Larry and the maintenance team were close and didn't want that friendship to end.

The Glendale Lakes Golf Club staff at a recent retirement breakfast.

Uncle Larry had recently discovered a dive bar with good wings and cheap beers. He extended an invitation, and it stuck.

"So, 11 o'clock on Wednesdays, we started going to meet up with Uncle Larry at this place," Trifilio recalls. "It is a dive bar. It stinks. I am sorry, but it was a dive bar hole in the wall. But Larry was right — the wings were great and they were cheap. They had drink specials. Everybody was happy."

That dive bar soon closed, and Trifilio says the hungry maintenance team was "homeless" for a period. "We were doing a tour of the town trying to find who has wings on Wednesday because we couldn't do Taco Tuesday. That wouldn't work for our schedule."

The team eventually found a new location — oddly enough, at another golf course with a restaurant. But that soon closed too.

For the last year and a half, the team has celebrated Wingy Wednesday at Chrissy's Gaming Bar & Grill, a local restaurant not far from the maintenance building. And the event has evolved from wings and drinks to wings, drinks and a dart tournament.

The Wednesday event breaks up the week and provides an opportunity for staff to bond outside of the workplace.

Because of the team camaraderie, employees stick around. "They keep coming back," Trifilio says. "And there are other jobs out there that pay more. And every one of them will tell you, 'Well, yeah, I could go and get paid more for pushing carts at Menards, but I'd rather be here.'"

SUGAR CREEK GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT KEVIN GOSS focuses on a different side of staff appreciation. Goss oversees a 9-hole facility in Villa Park, Illinois, with 10 people on staff. Finding time for big events can be difficult when operating with a smaller team.

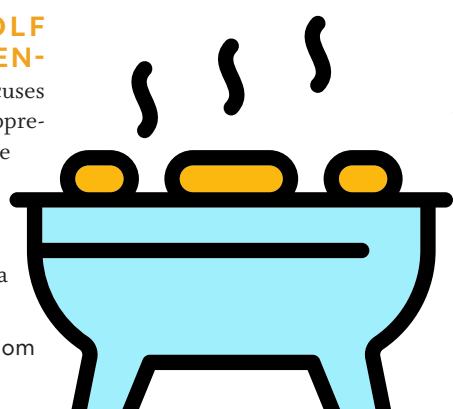
> "It's just as important as going out and checking moisture meters or checking your chem program. It's just as integral as the rest of that."
>
> **— Bill Meyer**

Instead, Goss focuses on the basics: being flexible, saying thank you and building relationships.

"They just want to be treated well and it's more of the day-to-day interaction," Goss says.

Because of the facility's size, Goss creates personalized schedules that are the best fit for each employee and their preferences. Even though this might mean some employees work fewer hours, the course has seen an improvement in employee retention.

Goss also tries to find what each employee is good at. He does his best to implement those skills into daily tasks to keep employees engaged.



"If you can, find a situation that works for them," Goss says. "If you can make it easier for them to get to work and put them on the days they want, people are generally much happier. It's a little more complicated for scheduling purposes and for me, but they tend to come back every year."

Goss understands that his maintenance team has a life outside the golf course. Some are in school; others work second jobs. By being flexible with the schedule, his team is capable of doing their jobs well while maintaining a balance.

Furthermore, Goss focuses on building relationships with his team. He makes an effort to check in with each employee every day, about both work and life. Many of Goss' employees are also golf maintenance novices, so the superintendent tries to be out in the field and available for questions. "Getting out there and working with them once in a while works really well for me," he says.

Showing appreciation to your maintenance team doesn't have to be costly. Acts both big and small can go a long way in retaining employees and building a positive workplace culture. Meyer believes staff appreciation rivals the relevance of any job-related effort.

"It's just as important as going out and checking moisture meters or checking your chem program," Meyer says. "It's just as integral as the rest of that."

Some superintendents struggle to say thank you or prefer not to get personal. Trifilio advises those people to do their best and be a part of the team. "I just think that staying humble, being part of your crew — not just being in charge of it — is the best advice I can give somebody."

Kelsie Horner is Golf Course Industry's digital editor.

© BILL MEYER

PEOPLE BEHIND THE PRODUCTS

How the deep relationship between Toro and a west-central Wisconsin community supports the operations of golf courses everywhere.

By **Guy Cipriano**

© COURTESY OF TORO (2)

The average golf green in the United States comprises around 5,500 square feet.

On a late-July Wednesday morning, Josh Pavlak guides a walk-and-talk through an indoor space large enough to hold 83 regulation greens plus a solid practice surface.

Pavlak is the director of operations of The Toro Company's Tomah manufacturing facility. In golf geographic terms, Tomah, a west-central Wisconsin community of 9,570 residents, is equidistant from major-championship puncher Whistling Straits and The Minikahda Club, the site of Toro's golf origins.

No facility in the world manufactures more equipment responsible for maintaining greens — or any other playing surface. Pavlak oversees a team of more than 600 employees responsible for manufacturing 900 finished products. The Tomah warehouse stores over 31,000 unique components used to build those machines. The facility bustles with activity in late July, as products move on and off over 15 assembly lines.

Many of you reading this article own or lease equipment made in Tomah.

TriFlexes. Walking greens mowers. Utility vehicles. Sprayers. Fairway mowers. Roughs and grounds units. Mechanical bunker rakes. Dingo . . . after Dingo . . . after Dingo. Reels. Aerators. Topdressers.

Pavlak sees all of it move from warehousing to welding, to painting, to assembly, to loading. A golf enthusiast who relishes morning play, Pavlak has observed

almost every unit his team manufactures in action with one significant exception. "I've seen plenty of videos of topdressers running," he says. "But I *really* want to go out and see a green coring and a topdressing operation."

Less than two miles from the manufacturing facility, aerators and topdressers fit snugly in wooden crates, stacked three, four or five high, waiting to leave a 350,000-foot-square-foot distribution center. Hundreds of traction units await a similar fate. Everything here will eventually be packed into 18-wheelers emblazoned with the Toro "Count On It" moniker. Loaded trucks then turn left onto U.S. Highway 12, a four-lane artery connecting the distribution center with Interstate 90. Wisconsin's interstate system divides in Tomah; Interstate 94 also runs through the city.

A tiny airfield rests between the manufacturing facility and the distribution center. But the journey of manufacturing and transporting Toro equipment to golf courses across the world is a grounded endeavor.

Tomah occupies a leading role in producing the equipment responsible for preserving and advancing golf playing surfaces — even if dedicated employees don't always see *all* the equipment working in concert.

"We're a flagship of The Toro Company," line supervisor Bette Stone says. "What happens in here is very important. People are depending on us … the company is depending on us."

Stone is in her 47th year at the Tomah facility. Only welder Randy Meyer, a 50-year Toro veteran, boasts a longer tenure. Toro opened the Tomah facility in 1975. The operation's evolution mirrors the golf industry's advancement.

Golf course maintenance has become more complex as golf's physical and fiscal footprints expand. To meet enormous expectations, courses lower mowing heights, precisely treat turf with plant protectants, intricately groom bunkers, and aggressively punch and fill those holes Pavlak desperately wants to witness being simultaneously aerated and topdressed.

Customers expect more from golf maintenance equipment because their stakeholders demand more from them, especially in a post-pandemic golf market where course usage and revenue are setting annual records. Reliable equipment allows courses to satisfy enormous golf demand.

Once a facility where a completed string trimmer flowed off assembly lines every 15 seconds, Tomah is the manufacturing epicenter of Toro's commercial and golf manufacturing efforts. The American golf course supply has increased by nearly a third since Toro arrived in Tomah.

"A lot of stuff we built back in the '80s was more geared toward homeowners, rather than the golf course industry," says distribution center supervisor Jon Murray. "But the golf industry has just gotten bigger … and bigger … and bigger."

Murray joined Toro following his organized basketball and baseball career at Western Technical College. He has worked for Toro the last 44 years, moving to the distribution center 4½ years ago after handling a variety of roles in the manufacturing facility. His career started on the string trimmer and electric power shovel assembly line.

"At that time, we were building, like, 6,000 trimmers a day in Tomah, because we had three assembly lines building them," Murray says. "We've built just about everything here over the years."

Toro's first Tomah roster included around 50 workers. Many of those employees have relatives and friends working at the facility today. "A lot of the people I started working with here are gone," Stone says, "but now their children work here. And now their children's children work here." Stone's husband, Steve, holds a maintenance position in the distribution center, where he works alongside Murray, whose brothers spent time at Toro.

"We have a tremendous amount of

folks here that have been here 20 years and 30 years, and a couple have been here 40 years," Pavlak says. "Many of them are at the point where they don't have to keep working, but they want to keep working. They enjoy what they do, they enjoy the products, and they enjoy the people."

Asked what motivates her, Stone, who started her Toro career as a weld supervisor despite possessing no experience, references a theme from the 1980s action-television series "The A-Team." "I love it when a plan comes together," she says. Executing a plan requires deep mechanical and human bonds.

Stone was raised in agrarian surroundings outside Tomah, where cool temperatures, wetlands and sandy, acidic soils make cranberry harvesting viable. Driving through neighboring communities offers idyllic glimpses of farms with slightly rolling terrain, sturdy cows and golden vegetative hues.

Tomah is a main-street community. Superior Avenue features a brick post office and police station, a memorial honoring veterans, and a mix of revitalized businesses and shuttered storefronts. On the first and third Wednesdays of every June, July and August, there's live music in Gillett Park, a square-shaped public green space on the fringes of downtown. The park also hosts a biweekly farmers market from May through October.

Toro purchased 25 acres inside the Tomah Industrial Park in the early 1970s. A street was named in honor of the Minnesota-based company, although the manufacturing facility has a Sime Avenue mailing address. Apparel with vibrant Toro red is omnipresent inside the facility and around town.

"It's not just a paycheck," Pavlak says. "Whole livelihoods and lineages are connected to this plant coming to this community."

Pavlak jokes that changing the facility's mailing address to Toro Avenue is a transformation he hasn't been able to implement since returning to his native state in late 2023 to oversee the Tomah facility. Switching mailing addresses is less complex than the situation Pavlak encountered.

Toro expanded the Tomah facility by 190,000 square feet in 2019. The enlarged area includes 44-foot ceilings, additional space to warehouse more parts, and advanced welding and paint operations. The welding operation, coincidentally, includes 18 robot cells and red protective draping. Pavlak says the expansion, the largest in the facility's history, was designed to increase production capabilities.

The pandemic complicated the plan. Like other manufacturers, Toro waded through the uncertainty of 2020 and 2021 before encountering supply-chain issues causing production and distribution lags. Pavlak, an operational savant whose pre-Toro achievements included helping establish the Spartanburg, South Carolina, plant responsible for manufacturing new United States Postal Service trucks, arrived in Tomah with a succinct directive: bolster quality and availability.

Accomplishing those goals required a kaizen (the Japanese term for continuous improvement) mindset. A sign between multiple assembly lines reiterates kaizen principles adopted by Toro. Following the late-July tour, Pavlak discusses manufacturing principles in the "Bunker" conference room outside the shop floor. Toro recently moved production of its Sand Pro mechanical bunker rake series to Tomah. Equipment to maintain every imaginable playing surface is now made in Tomah.

"Most of our kaizens are focused on process improvement, so there's not an issue," Pavlak says. "And when we mean not an issue, we don't mean not an issue for the first year you own it. We mean not an issue when you own it. That's a really big starting point.

"And then what we saw in COVID was availability. So, if we figure out how to get two more greens mowers off the line that are of premium quality, that's awesome because it means the distribution center now has product. And that means when the distributor orders it, they can get it. And that means the end customer who's waiting on a greens mower can get one."

Improving quality and availability required connecting with the Tomah workforce, a group that faced and endured long hours to replenish Toro's equipment supply. Connecting with workers entailed everything from listening to employee-generated ideas emanating from workstations to adding vivid lighting and symbolic color schemes throughout the facility.

"I like to do a physical change in the plant because the process change you might not feel every day," Pavlak says. "We put the red stripe on the walls and said, 'Red runs through us, like Toro runs through us.' People feel that change because they walk into the building and it feels different. And then you're like, 'We also made 15 process improvements here.'"

At its rudimentary level, manufacturing is a people-driven endeavor.

"Manufacturing on the surface is very simple; we break things down into very simple steps," Pavlak says. "The trick is we need to do those steps thousands of times without error, but almost everything we do is no more than four or five steps. An operator might have 20 sets of four or five steps to get through, and then we need to do that same operation 20 times a day."

The late-July distribution center scene illustrates how the improvements affect customers. Hundreds of units pointed toward loading docks are neatly arranged on spotless floors. Calm permeates the building as Murray describes what the center stores, where everything is headed and his personal Toro journey.

Everything feels OK, because everything is now OK. The people of Tomah embraced and adapted to a challenge. Trucks of assembled equipment arrive on time. Filled trucks headed to distributors leave on time. Anywhere from 15 to 20 loaded trucks head toward the interstate on a "normal" day, according to Murray. The pace of trucks arriving and departing gives Murray little time to reflect on the progress.

"You're always getting ready for the next one," he says.

Delayed admiration

Northern Michigan's Treetops Resort unveiled a par-3 course in 1992. Major champions, television, patience and unyielding love from a crew foreman eventually transformed Threetops into a replicated attraction.

By **Guy Cipriano**

Commissioned by an auto parts magnate, designed by a swing guru and made famous by television, Threetops provides the ancestral lineage of the modern short courses dotting American golf resorts. For **Steve Cappell**, the par-3 layout meandering steep terrain amid thousands of northern Michigan firs, pines and spruces provides steady, scenic and meaningful work.

Cappell is a foreman at Treetops Resort, an 81-hole haven in Gaylord, a community self-marketed as a summer "Golf Mecca." Threetops makes a strong case for the Mecca's most memorable layout. The debate about who has the biggest personal connection with the course features less nuance. A Treetops stalwart since 2002, Cappell oversees the regular maintenance of Threetops, tries to play the 9-hole course daily and represents its most knowledgeable ambassador.

"I'll ride through it, and sometimes he'll kick me off — which I don't have a problem with," jokes Treetops director of recreation **Doug Hoeh**, who leads the resort's golf maintenance efforts. "It's special to have a guy like Steve, not only on the crew, but to care for that golf course as much as he has and with that type of longevity."

A vision of **Harry Melling**, a Michigander who expanded the family automotive business, owned a NASCAR team and transformed quaint Sylvan Knob Ski Area into a golf-centric resort, Threetops opened in 1992, four years before Big Cedar Lodge unveiled Top of the Rock and 25 years before Pinehurst Resorts added The Cradle. Dozens of other resorts have entered the short-course business over the past decade. "That par-3 course was way ahead of its time," Hoeh says.

Rick Smith, an instructor for multiple PGA Tour players, designed a course with dramatic dips through calming surroundings. "I don't

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know how somebody could picture that in their brain and make it happen," Cappell says. But Threetops experienced delayed appreciation. "When it was built, it wasn't very popular for two reasons: it wasn't 18 holes and it was all par 3s," Hoeh says.

Before social media and streaming, courses used television to generate buzz. Melling and Smith leveraged their business connections to convince a quartet of big-name tour pros to visit Threetops for an annual Par-3 Shootout televised on ESPN. The event lasted from 1999 through 2006. Fourteen players who won a combined 53 majors participated in the eight shootouts.

Jack Nicklaus, **Raymond Floyd**, **Phil Mickelson** and **Lee Janzen** comprised the inaugural shootout field. A plaque on the seventh tee honors **Lee Trevino**'s 2001 ace, believed to be golf's first $1 million shot. Trevino returned in 2021 for the 20th anniversary of the milestone, the only hole-in-one in shootout history. Cappell watched in admiration as Trevino attempted the same shot on the course he maintains. "We had it all set up with bleachers, and we had a good turnout," Cappell says. "Super nice guy."

The event changed the trajectory of Threetops. Hoeh arrived in 2008, but Cappell helped prepare Threetops for the final five shootouts. Cappell recalls being involved with building new tees on the second, third and sixth holes, plus the introduction of a pond fronting the sixth green. Seeing professionals play a course you maintain makes the job even more personal, and expectations established for the shootouts exist two decades later.

"I always get goosebumps when I'm walking out there," Hoeh says. "All these guys were standing on the same tees and looking at the same views that we have the opportunity to see every day. Not too many people can say that."

Hoeh inherited notes from his predecessors documenting practices crews still perform today, including building a robust fertility program and mowing defined stripes between tees and greens. Stripes achieve more than dazzling golfers. They inject pride into the crew. "It's just awesome," Cappell says. "When you get done with it, you get on top of a hill, look back, see the nice crisscross and go, 'Damn, I did that.'"

Threetops isn't a flat, walkable plot with an abundance of scoring opportunities. Instead, it occupies a severe site on the 1,500-acre north campus, which supports three of the resort's four regulation courses. The third hole descends 145 feet from tee to green. The seventh hole plunges 90 feet.

Hoeh has found only two equipment models capable of mowing Threetops's slopes. And maneuvering equipment around those slopes isn't for everybody, so Threetops requires a specialized crew. "It's probably a good season before we're comfortable with cutting somebody loose out there," Hoeh says.

The oversight intensifies once an operator is assigned to Threetops. The job of keeping the crew coordinated and cohesive falls on Cappell, whose mornings typically begin with course setup before he shifts to mowing, irrigating and anything else required to make Threetops sparkle. "It could take somebody a long time to meet my standards out here," he says.

The increased popularity — rounds played now approach 300 on busy days — exerts turf that must flourish during the short, yet intense, peak northern Michigan golf season. Penncross bentgrass greens consume just 1½ acres and trees surround seven putting surfaces on three sides. Traffic and challenging growing environments result in light and targeted biweekly liquid fertility applications on greens. Tees are treated with similar diligence.

"If we're not up on fertility on the greens and tees, we're not going to have any grass left come late June and early July," Hoeh says. "So, fertility is something we really push. We don't overdo it. We just want to keep turf healthy and healed from all the play."

The course has 28 bunkers, many of which rest in low-lying areas near greens. Because of the severity of slopes throughout the layout, sand replenishment requires parking utility vehicles on paths and hauling five-gallon buckets into bunkers. The daily bunker maintenance regimen involves abundant handwork in and around the hazards.

Winters can be rugged. Treetops, after all, resides near the top of Michigan's mitt. Cappell is part of the team that works year-round. Winter work ranges from snow and ice removal (on roads *and* turf) to tree work.

Arduous tree clearing interweaves Threetops with the bordering Smith-designed Signature course. The tree management program opened a view from the fourth green of the Signature's par-5 15th hole, which includes a fascinating narrow green surrounded by towering mounds. The view is especially mesmerizing at sunset. Despite the change on No. 4, Cappell doesn't budget when describing his favorite view: "No. 3. I never get tired of looking at it," he says of the most elevated view on an elevated course. "And it's the same way now with 4 because we opened that green up down to 15. It's like a whole new shot."

Hoeh anticipates revealing more inspiring views as Threetops matures. "People aren't coming here to look at trees when they can see that on any other golf course," he says. "They're coming here for the views."

Intuition allows Cappell to process golfer memories forged on Threetops. Besides studying turf and his crew's movement, Cappell scours garbage containers during his morning routine. He's noticing more empty bottles and cans than ever, which means more work for his crew.

But that's OK with him. Cappell adores the course's popularity — and its spot in short-course history.

"When somebody copies you, that means you're doing something right," he says. "When we get people out there, playing it and you ask them how they like it … they just can't shut up about it."

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NAMES

Ansel Adams Richard Bator **Bob Becker** Tim Berners-Lee **Warren Bidwell** Terry Bonar **Chris Boyle** Ashley Byham **Steve Cappell** Lee Carr **Paul L. Carter** Scott Chastain **Nancy Cienfuegos** Dr. Billy Crow **Lauren Crownover** Marie Curie **Brian Curley** Brian Curtin **John Dale** Mark Daniels **Frank Dobie** Patrick Douglas **Tom Draycott** Thomas Edison **Bob Farren** Shelia Finney **Raymond Floyd** Steve Forrest **Edric C. Funk** Ron Furlong **Kenton Gamache** Dr. Roch Gaussoin **Andy Gianino** Kevin Goss **Andrew Green** Tyler Green **Mike Grillo** Alexander Hamilton **Eliza Hamilton** Alex Hills **Arthur Hills** Doug Hoeh **Joel Hornickel** Ted Horton **Steve Hoveln** Calamity Jane **Lee Janzen** Steve Jobs **Bobby Jones** Jack Kelley **John Joseph Kelley** John Joseph Kelley Jr. **Kevin Kelley** Shawn Kelley **Lydia Ko** Paul R. Latshaw **LeeAnn Lewis** Leonardo da Vinci **Melvin Lucas** Dennis Lyon **Andy Malick** Palmer Maples **Tom Mascaro** Scott McBane **Dr. Ben McGraw** Harry Melling **Chester Mendenhall** Bill Meyer **Randy Meyer** Phil Mickelson **Monroe Miller** Sherwood Moore **Tim Moraghan** Col. John Morley **Old Tom Morris** Taylor Morrison **Larry Morton** Jon Murray **Chris Neff** Jack Nicklaus **Richard Nixon** Jon O'Donnell **John O'Keefe** Richard M. Olson **Josh Pavlak** Bill Powell **Larry Powell** Marcella Powell **Renee Powell** Tim Powers **Aaron Reid** Brian Rizzo **Drew Rogers** Jim Roney **Donald Ross** William Sansom **Paul Scenna** Brian Seltzer **Tizayi Sithole** Rick Smith **Arthur Snyder** Annika Sörenstam **Mike Stein** Eb Steiniger **Jim Stewart** Bette Stone **Steve Stone** Nikola Tesla **George Thompson** A.W. Tillinghast **Dr. Lane Tredway** Lee Trevino **Brian Trifilio** Joe Valentine **Paul Van Buren** Stephanie Van Buren **Dwight Van Vorst** Dennis Walters **Kevin Wasilewski** George Waters **Zach Weeks** Chris Wilczynski **Bob Williams** Bruce Williams **Robert M. Williams** Nick Wilson **Gordon Witteveen** Rick Woelfel **Walker Woods**

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Complacency rarely arrives with a warning. It doesn't show up one morning and announce itself. Instead, it quietly slips into an operation, one small compromise at a time. It convinces us that skipping one detail won't matter. That a fungicide application can wait until tomorrow. That members probably won't notice. Before long, those exceptions become habits, and habits become standards. That's how good operations slowly become average ones.

The danger is that complacency disguises itself as practicality. We tell ourselves we're simply prioritizing our time. Sometimes that's true. Every superintendent must make difficult decisions about where to allocate limited resources. The challenge is recognizing the difference between setting priorities and lowering standards.

The best superintendents we've had the privilege to work alongside aren't necessarily blessed with the largest budgets or the newest equipment. They simply refuse to let their standards drift. They understand that excellence isn't built through one perfect tournament week or a single capital project. It's built through thousands of small decisions made every day.

One characteristic they all share is an unwillingness to become comfortable. They celebrate success for a moment, then immediately begin asking, "How can we make it better?" They know the moment they stop questioning, stop learning or stop challenging themselves is the moment complacency begins to take hold. Complacency doesn't begin with poor conditions. It begins with satisfied minds. They understand that excellence compounds. Unfortunately, complacency compounds even faster.

Many of these superintendents earn the reputation of being demanding. They demand excellence from themselves before they ever demand it from anyone else, and they expect the same commitment from their teams. To some, that can seem excessive. To those who understand what it takes to consistently produce exceptional conditions, it is simply leadership.

There is an important distinction between being demanding and being unreasonable. Great leaders don't demand perfection because they expect people to be flawless; they demand commitment because they know complacency is contagious. The moment a leader begins accepting "good enough," that mindset filters through the entire operation.

Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of complacency is that it never stays with one person. It spreads. A superintendent who begins accepting "good enough" unknowingly gives permission for assistants to do the same. Assistants influence equipment managers. Equipment managers influence technicians. Crew leaders influence seasonal employees. Before long, an entire maintenance operation begins accepting standards that would have been unacceptable only a few years earlier.

As leaders, our staff rarely listens to what we say as closely as they watch what we tolerate. If we overlook details, they'll overlook details. If we cut corners, they'll cut corners. Our expectations become their expectations.

The reality is that no golf course will ever be perfect. Mother Nature won't allow it. Budgets won't allow it. Staffing certainly won't allow it. Chasing perfection isn't the goal. The goal is to build a culture where excellence becomes the expectation and complacency is never accepted.

Every superintendent should periodically ask themselves a few uncomfortable questions. *Am I still looking for ways to improve, or simply trying to make it through another week? Have I accepted conditions today that I wouldn't have accepted earlier in my career?* Most importantly, *What am I teaching my team through the standards I demonstrate every day?* The answers can be revealing.

Golf course maintenance has never been more demanding than it is today. Expectations continue to rise while resources often move in the opposite direction. That reality isn't likely to change. What can remain unchanged is your commitment to excellence.

Complacency is a silent killer because it doesn't announce its arrival. It asks for tiny compromises that seem harmless in the moment. Left unchecked, those compromises become the new normal. Guard against it every day. Because once "good enough" becomes acceptable, excellence quietly walks out the door.

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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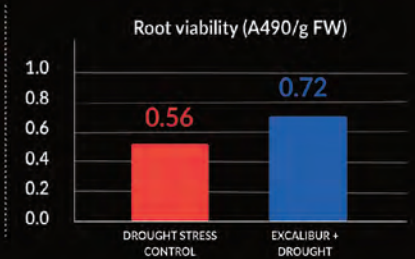

Plant Physiology Research, Zhang, Virginia Tech, Study 2, 2022

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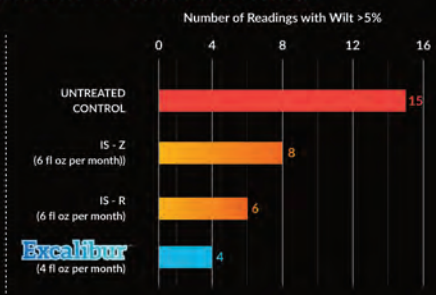

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