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Cover photo: Roger Mastroianni

EDITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT:

Golf Course News reports on and analyzes the business of maintaining golf courses, as well as the broader business of golf course management. This includes three main areas: agronomy, business management and career development as it relates to golf course superintendents and those managers responsible for maintaining a golf course as an important asset. *Golf Course News* shows superintendents what's possible, helps them understand why it's important and tells them how to take the next step.

Before.



After.



After after.

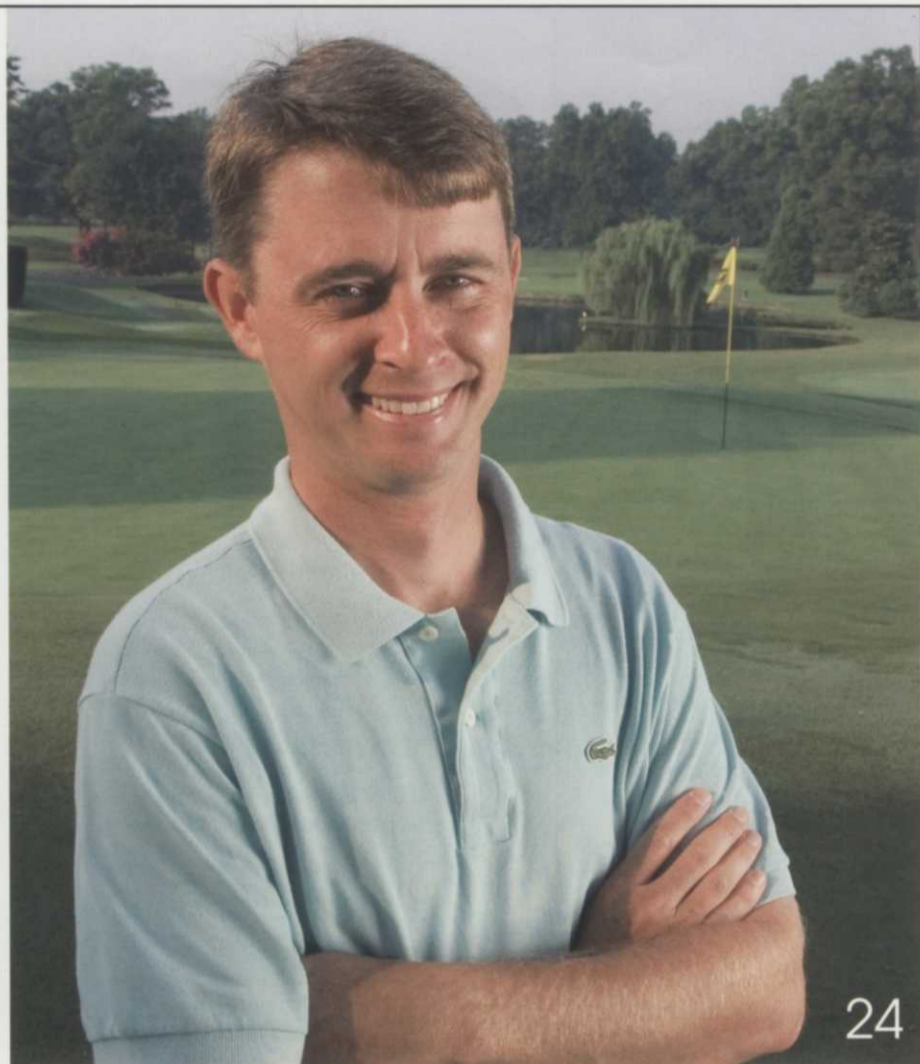


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Members of the golf course maintenance crew at Athens Country Club in Georgia share why so many of them have spent so many years working there.

HAVING A FIELD DAY

A summary of findings, including those about dollar spot and moss control, from The Ohio State University's turfgrass research field day.

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John Walsh
Editor

The next big thing

Only a handful of golf course superintendents in the United States currently are managing seashore paspalum, but that will change dramatically during the next 10 years.

Most of the courses with paspalum are in Florida – about 15 or so – and several are in Naples. There are a few in South Carolina and a few in California and Arizona. Paspalum testing has been done as far north as Virginia Beach.

Salt injury to Bermudagrass is the primary factor driving paspalum to the forefront of the turfgrass arena. Currently, there are about 10 varieties, including one that's seeded, available in the market. More are in development.

After attending a meeting about seashore paspalum sponsored by Bayer Environmental Science and Environmental Turf, it's clear golfers and superintendents are fans of the grass. Golfers like it because of its dark-green color, playability and striping. Superintendents like it because of its deep root system, density, color retention and aggressiveness. Other attributes include: low mowing height tolerance, minimal morning dew, brackish water tolerance, plant growth regulator response and water-logging tolerance.

But, because there isn't a perfect grass, paspalum also has limitations. Those include: Few pesticides are labeled for it; it has minimal tree-shade tolerance; it's difficult to establish with saline water; it has slower green speeds; and its cold hardiness is similar to Bermudagrass.

Despite all that's known about the grass, there's a lot more to learn. Researchers and superintendents are doing just that, having fun discovering aspects of the grass' behavior that no one knows about yet.

During the next 10 years, we'll start to see paspalum move inland, away from shore, because it can tolerate effluent water better than other turfgrasses. However, it needs a lot of fresh water to establish; but after that, it can be maintained with water that's highly saline.

There's a debate among some superintendents whether it's worth it to switch from a Champion or TifEagle green to a paspalum one. Proponents of paspalum say putting green speed can equal that of a TifEagle or Champion green if the right variety is used. It just takes more work – brushing, grooming, double cutting and rolling.

Another debate is whether to have

paspalum wall-to-wall on a course or just on certain areas. The consensus that's developed: Avoid Bermudagrass greens with paspalum fairways and approaches because the paspalum is so aggressive it will contaminate the Bermudagrass greens easily.

Yet another debatable advantage is whether less water is used maintaining paspalum compared to Bermudagrass. In some instances, almost half the water is needed to maintain paspalum than Bermudagrass, but that's not the case in every situation. Nonetheless, it's enticing to maintain a turfgrass that requires less water.

There's much to think about. But consider this: Of all the superintendents Todd Lowe – a Green Section agronomist with the U.S. Golf Association who's based in Florida – has spoken with those who manage paspalum, not one said he would return to managing Bermudagrass. Pretty strong statement, huh?

Mostly high-end golf courses feature the grass because of its initial cost and the expense needed to maintain it at the level demanded by country clubbers. The key to the growth and popularity of seashore paspalum is how many mid- to low-budget courses will be able to plant and maintain the grass. Surely there will be a wider price range as more varieties enter the market.

Whether seashore paspalum becomes more popular than Bermudagrass won't be known for many years, but given the increasingly poor water courses are given to work with, it will surely give Bermudagrass a challenge for the most popular warm-season turfgrass on golf courses.

Owners, green chairmen and golf club boards drive many of the changes on the course. When they play on paspalum, they're probably going to want to switch. Whether you think the club at which you work will switch to paspalum or not, it's in your best interest to learn more about the grass because you'll be more prepared if the change comes. Talk to other superintendents who are managing the grass. Talk to researchers. Conduct some research on your own.

You might have paspalum under your feet sooner than you think. Then you can tell your peers up North how much fun they're missing. GCN

John Walsh

GOLF COURSE NEWS

Serving the Business of Golf Course Management

Vol. 19 No. 7

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Golf Course News is published 10 times per year by GIE Media, Inc., which also publishes: *Lawn & Landscape*, *Commercial Dealer*, *Interior Landscape Business*, *Snow Magazine*, *Pest Control Technology* and *Recycling Today* magazines. GIE Media is a leader in custom publishing, book publishing, database marketing, conferences and special events.

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Personal Web sites

Jim McLoughlin's writing presents unique perspectives and unconventional thinking. Based on these observations, I decided to attend his seminar at the Golf Industry Show in Atlanta this winter. I wasn't disappointed. His seminar was powerful and the impetus for changing the way I approach job searches. It was the best four hours I've invested in a GC-SAA educational opportunity. I walked out of the room that day wishing I had taken his seminar years ago.

I completely buy into the concept of a personal Web site. I've conversed with a friend who has an IT background and designs and maintains Web sites on the side. We've talked conceptually of a home page with six subpages that feature a detailed resume; photos and descriptions of projects completed; tournaments hosted; my philosophy about golf course management; historical budget performance; and bios of key staff, former interns and assistants (where they're working now). I've been quoted a figure of \$760 to set up this type of site, including the writing of code to prevent my site from being indexed by club members or others using a search engine. Is this a reasonable fee, and are you aware of superintendent Web sites that I could obtain some content ideas from?

Mark Gagne
Golf course superintendent
Walpole (Mass.) Country Club

McLoughlin's response:

Thank you for your kind words. The proposed fee of \$760 is a gift – fair for what you will be getting. I like the suggested layout of your Web site and might add one more: Ken Benoit has added a unique link to his Web site as a marketing tool to attract better crew members.

Adjusting tees

Jeff Brauer's article ["Is your course too long," May, page 18] is music to our ears. My wife, Jann Leeming, and I bought a golf course on the Maine/New Hampshire border out of bankruptcy in 1996. It was in such terrible shape we almost completely rebuilt it during the time we owned it. It was a labor of love. We sold the course last year.

During the rebuilding process, we came to many of the conclusions Brauer did in his article. As a result, we rebuilt

just about all our tees, which were placed at 4,169; 4,935; 5,904 and 6,277 yards from the green. They were placed for players who drive the ball less than 150 yards, 150 to 175 yards, 175 to 200 yards and farther than 200 yards. We also paid a lot of attention to the angles at which the tees were placed. If we had enough land, we would have had a set of tees between 6,500 and 6,600 yards from the green. Last year, we placed temporary tees 2,000 yards from the green for juniors and beginners. We based our thoughts on:

1. Bill Amick's study, which Alice Dye recommended;
2. Our own observations and measurements;
3. Placing temporary tees first and seeing if they worked; and
4. The length of the tees related to one another, not just their yardages individually.

Our philosophy is:

1. Tees should be placed so players with different abilities playing the correct set of tees would have about the same shots toward the greens and be able to get there in regulation.

2. Players would be able to use all their clubs in a round.

The results, among other things, were:

- Rounds were 15 to 20 minutes shorter, even on our busiest days;
- Senior men moved forward one set of tees and loved to be able to have fun and make some pars again;
- Family play increased;
- Junior play increased from 1.5 percent to 7.5 percent in four years;
- Mixed events became more popular because shorter hitters could participate instead of being dragged along; and
- Golf For Women magazine named us No. 37 in the country and No. 1 in New England for women based on design fairness primarily.

Course set up has become a passion for us. We'd love to reach a wider audience primarily consisting of golf course owners, designers, superintendents and others who have an effect on how people think about making the game more enjoyable for more players. Brauer's article is a tremendous step in that direction. We hope it has a profound effect.

Arthur Little
Former co-owner
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Parsonsfield, Maine

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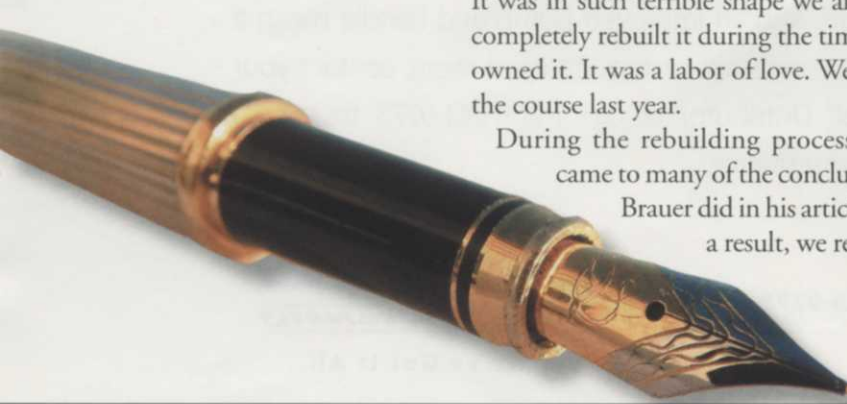
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Assistant superintendents create more opportunities for themselves

by John Walsh

Visit the Golf Course News Web site, www.golfcoursenews.com, for daily news updates about golf course developments and renovations, people, suppliers, associations and industry events.



Three years ago, the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents made a pioneering move to help assistant golf course superintendents. And it might be catching on elsewhere.

That move was the formation of the Class C Advisory Committee, solely comprised of assistant superintendents. The purpose of the committee, which has eight members, is to help assistants further their professional development through education and networking and aid their ascension to the superintendent level.

"We wanted to understand assistants' plights and concerns," says Gary Hearn, golf course superintendent of Salt Creek Golf Club in Wood Dale, Ill., and president of the Midwest Association. "We wanted to bring them on the board so they could see how things operate, and so when they become superintendents they will want to join the board because of the exposure they received when they were assistants. Some assistants think there's a wall there at the board level and things are going on behind closed doors, but there really isn't.

"We felt we would have better communication with them," he adds. "We're big on committees because everybody gets involved then, and they bring concerns to the board so they can be addressed."

There are 35 to 40 assistants that regularly attend the Class C Advisory Committee meetings, but Hearn and the rest of the board are hoping for more attendance. He says the board is e-mailing as many as it can to make sure everyone is contacted. There are between 650 and 700 members of the Midwest Association, and a little more than 100 of them are assistants, according to John Ekstrom, assistant golf course superintendent at Hinsdale Golf Club in Clarendon Hills, Ill.

In November 2005, Hearn appointed Ekstrom head of the committee. Ekstrom is serving a two-year term and replaced Chad Kempf, former assistant



Ekstrom



Assistant golf course superintendents are creating more opportunities for themselves by serving on their local chapter associations' boards, albeit as nonvoting members.

superintendent at Hinsdale. Kempf now is an account manager and turf expert for EPIC Creative Communications in Wisconsin.

The committee hosts workshops that feature guest speakers, informal shop talks and roundtables in which assistants discuss their careers and the golf business. The committee also contributes to *On Course*, the association's magazine, and helps with scholarships. The committee also has started a quarterly newsletter.

"We're trying to boost camaraderie," Ekstrom says. "We just had an informal dinner meeting. It's mid-summer, and we're looking at the home stretch for the year. We want to exchange ideas and have more educational opportunities. We wouldn't have had the exposure to certain speakers without this committee."

Ekstrom says the association has received positive feedback from assistants.

"Being an assistant, we're not on the level of superintendents, but there could be more effort trying to organize assistants more," he says. "Most superintendents that I know and talk to are

very supportive of their assistants. They know the assistants are the future of the industry and are all for promoting the assistants to the best they can be."

Going forward, the Midwest Association's board will accept recommendations and ultimately select future chairmen of the Class C committee.

"I want jobs to come first and this to come second, third or fourth," Hearn says. "I want to make sure they have the time. We do a good screening of who's out there, and we have a good feel of who wants it and who can handle it."

Connection with other associations would be great, Ekstrom says. Assistants in other regions, after seeing this committee, might start with a group with their associations.

And that could be the Iowa Golf Course Superintendents Association, which has 532 active members, 94 of whom are assistant superintendents. Dan Schuknecht, assistant golf course superintendent at Talons of Tuscany in Ankeny, Iowa, wants to form a committee in the Iowa GCSA that is comprised solely of assistants.

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