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## On the fence

IS INTERSEEDING A VIABLE TECHNIQUE OR JUST A PRACTICE DONE FOR PEACE OF MIND?

by  
KEVIN J.  
ROSS, CGCS

*Photos by Kevin J. Ross*

**F**or many years, golf course superintendents have been trying to manipulate existing stands of turfgrass, primarily greens, by interseeding. Interseeding can be defined as seeding into a live mature turfgrass stand with the goal of having the seeded cultivar become dominant within that turfgrass stand. Although this practice

has been used for many years, and is still a popular technique today, many in the golf course management industry question its effectiveness.

The limited research that has been conducted indicates the conversion of a turfgrass stand through interseeding is difficult, if not impossible. When a new turf stand is



Continual interseeding of greens can help develop a bentgrass seed bank that can compete with *Poa annua*.



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“You have to seed bentgrass during the aerification process, even if nothing germinates. It makes you feel you have performed the correct agronomic practice.” – JASON HABECK

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developed, new seedlings have no competition and can develop or mature rapidly. When interseeding turfgrass areas, seedlings have to overcome tremendous competition from the existing turfgrass stand. The new seedlings must wage a battle for water, nutrients and sunlight against the existing turf stand. In most researchers' minds, the existing turf usually wins the battle.

### Methods for success

For interseeding to be successful, most in the industry believe the management of the turfgrass stand must be manipulated to allow the competitive advantage to sway toward the seedlings or interseeding turf. This is accomplished by stressing the existing turf, which is usually accomplished by depletion of water or drought stress. Research shows stressing the existing turf, almost to the point of permanent turf loss, can favor the interseeded seedling dramatically. However, most golf courses can't afford to allow this to happen.

For those who interseed or want to interseed, there are three primary methods: broadcast seeding, slit seeding and spiking/aerification.

Broadcast seeding is the easiest and least disruptive to the surface. However, it's the most unsuccessful of the three.

Slit seeding can be accomplished by a slit seeding machine or a another method such as verticutting and broadcasting into the verticut lines.

Aerification/spiking might be the most popular and successful method. When the aerification method is used, a small core is removed from the existing turf, then it's back-filled with sand and seeded. The removal of the small, existing core is advantageous to the seedling turf within the core-hole area, where the competition is much less than

the surrounding turf stand. The core hole not only creates a void for the newly seeded turf, but also offers a prime germination microclimate. An aerification hole, made by a solid or hollow tine, offers a cool, moist, protected area for successful germination. It also offers protection for the crown of the plant during initial mowing, which can be extremely damaging to new seedlings.

### Peace of mind

Regardless of the success interseeding can bring, many golf course superintendents achieve peace of mind when interseeding.

For many years, interseeding has been a key part of an aerification program because the general consensus is putting bentgrass seed in the open aerification holes is better than no seed at all. Also, if no seed is pres-

ent, a great *Poa annua*-germinating void is the result generally.

“You have to seed bentgrass during the aerification process, even if nothing germinates,” says Jason Habeck, director of agronomy for Keystone Resorts golf courses in Colorado. “It makes you feel you have performed the correct agronomic practice. It gives you nice peace of mind.”

Habeck believes constant interseeding, no matter what the technique, produces results.

“Each time you seed, if you gain a little, then after a while it all adds up to increased bentgrass population, and that's what we all look for,” he says.

### Dormant interseeding

The best results for some golf course su-



Aerification holes can offer the best mode of success for interseeding results.





Dormant interseeding results from a late fall aerification can be excellent in the spring.

perintendents might be interseeding using a dormant seeding technique because it has been proven areas seeded during late fall are ready to germinate in the spring, about four to six weeks ahead of any area seeded during the spring. The dormant seeding technique happens primarily by the seed going through a priming process during this period. This is a great tool that gives bentgrass the jump over slower *Poa annua* in the spring. This jump-start in spring germination is what gives dormant-seeded turf such an advantage when interseeding.

"There is no question dormant interseeding is the way to go and provides the best results," Habeck says. "In the spring, the *Poa*

*annua* is so sluggish, that dormant-seeded bentgrass areas have a big jump on being competitive against *Poa annua*."

The same thought process is echoed by Chad Wilson, golf course superintendent of the Harvester Golf Club in Marshalltown, Iowa.

"This is the only time I really feel incorporating seed is worth the money," he says. "Dormant interseeding, even just broadcasting, works very well."

When Wilson aerifies his L-93 bentgrass greens in spring and fall, he believes his timing and agronomic practices allow for such a rapid recovery that interseeding isn't worth the money.



Germination from dormant interseeding can work well.

## Building a seed bank

As a management practice, many in the industry believe consistent interseeding – no matter what the method – will begin to build a bentgrass seed bank much like *Poa annua* does.

There are some who would argue consistent seeding throughout the season would be a waste of time and money. The primary argument is a seedbed needs to be created for good germination to occur. There's some credence to this, but *Poa annua* has been doing fine for more than 100 years on golf courses with no creation of any special seedbed. Others would argue the seed wouldn't remain viable in the soil long.

On the contrary, bentgrass can easily remain viable in the soil for as long as 10 to 15 years, according to Joseph Duich, Ph.D. That said, superintendents might be able to build a natural seed bank in the soil throughout time by interseeding.

## Species differences

Most interseeding is used for greens, however, the same technique applies to other areas of a golf course such as fairways. Some of the same problems associated with interseeding greens also are encountered with fairways, which is the competitiveness of *Poa annua*.

However, direct competitiveness factors among desirable turf species also have been found. For example, when looking at perennial ryegrass in fairway turf, it wasn't many years ago perennial ryegrass was the grass of choice on fairways. The success rate of converting fairways was extremely high because of the ryegrass' physiological competitiveness.

So, if one looks at the success of interseeding a species such a perennial ryegrass in a fairway, it could be rated very high. The opposite can be said for Kentucky bluegrass. A research study conducted by Colorado State University showed trying to convert perennial ryegrass fairways to the newer low-mow Kentucky bluegrasses through interseeding methods was unsuccessful. The general conclusions were Kentucky bluegrass, as a plant, couldn't compete with perennial ryegrass head to head.

Regardless of whether interseeding is a truly viable seeding technique or just done for peace of mind, many superintendents will continue interseeding to try to manipulate their turfgrass stands. GCN

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## The college connection

**GOLF FACILITIES FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL UNIVERSITIES TO ENHANCE THEIR REPUTATIONS AND GROW THE GAME OF GOLF**

by  
**DOUG  
SAUNDERS**

**T**here are many ways to solidify and increase business at golf facilities, and many facilities throughout the country have developed relationships with nearby colleges and universities to do that, as well as build solid reputations and grow the game. These relationships, which benefit both parties, take on many forms, from allowing golf teams to practice to hosting collegiate golf tournaments to creating fundraising opportunities for the institutions through charity tournaments.

In early May, 16 Division II college teams

gathered in Duncan, Okla., to compete in the NCAA Super Regional Golf Championships. The stakes were high. For the host venue, The Territory Golf & Country Club, it was an opportunity to lend support to collegiate golf and showcase its two-year-old track.

The 7,100-yard course, which was designed by Oklahoma native Randy Heckenkemper, tries to set itself apart from other golf courses in the area by distinctively fitting into the landscape rather than being a typical parkland golf course that features parallel fairways and few trees.

Since the inception of the private club, the owners have received input and suggestions from Jerry Hrniciar, former athletic director and veteran golf coach at nearby Cameron University. Hrniciar's input helped form a strong relationship between Cameron and the club and has helped the Territory secure competitive events to strengthen the course's reputation.

For the Territory, the close relationship with Cameron University has been a win-win situation in the eyes of Tim Johnson, director of golf.

"We feel our golf course is setting a new standard for the quality of golf in this area of Oklahoma, and by hosting events such as the NCAA Super Regional, more players can see what it is we have to offer," Johnson says. "At the same time, by allowing the Cameron golf team members a chance to use all of our practice facilities, we're helping to develop a new generation of players. We also offer this opportunity to the high school golf teams in the area for the same reason. We want to encourage these young players' interest in the game of golf because they will be the golf club members of the future."

Hosting an NCAA event can put added

pressure on the maintenance crew of the host course, but for Brad Babek, the golf course superintendent of the Territory Golf Course, the extra effort blends in well with his program.

"The event is held in the early part of our season, so we're just coming into our green-up time, which is a busy time for us anyway," he says. "We see this as a good chance to get the crew into gear for the season."

### Gracious hosts

The relationship between the Territory and Cameron isn't unique. The Territory took a page from Sunriver Resort's operations book. Sunriver, located in Bend, Ore., hosted the 2006 NCAA Division I Men's Championship in late May. It's the fourth NCAA event the resort has hosted during the past 10 years. Sunriver, which features three golf courses, continues to host prestigious events like the NCAA Division I Men's Championship because the facility is perfect for such events, according to Mike Sizemore, director of golf at Sunriver Resort.

"One of the things we can offer college players is the opportunity to stay on site during the week of the event," Sizemore says. "The players also can use all of the facilities we have, including the swimming pools, bike paths and practice facilities."

"We first hosted the Women's NCAA Championship back in 2000 and have hosted the NCAA Championships twice since," he adds. "The feedback from the players helped us secure the bid for the men's event this year."

Sizemore views hosting events such as collegiate championships as a way to establish a reputation and a legacy for Sunriver. At the

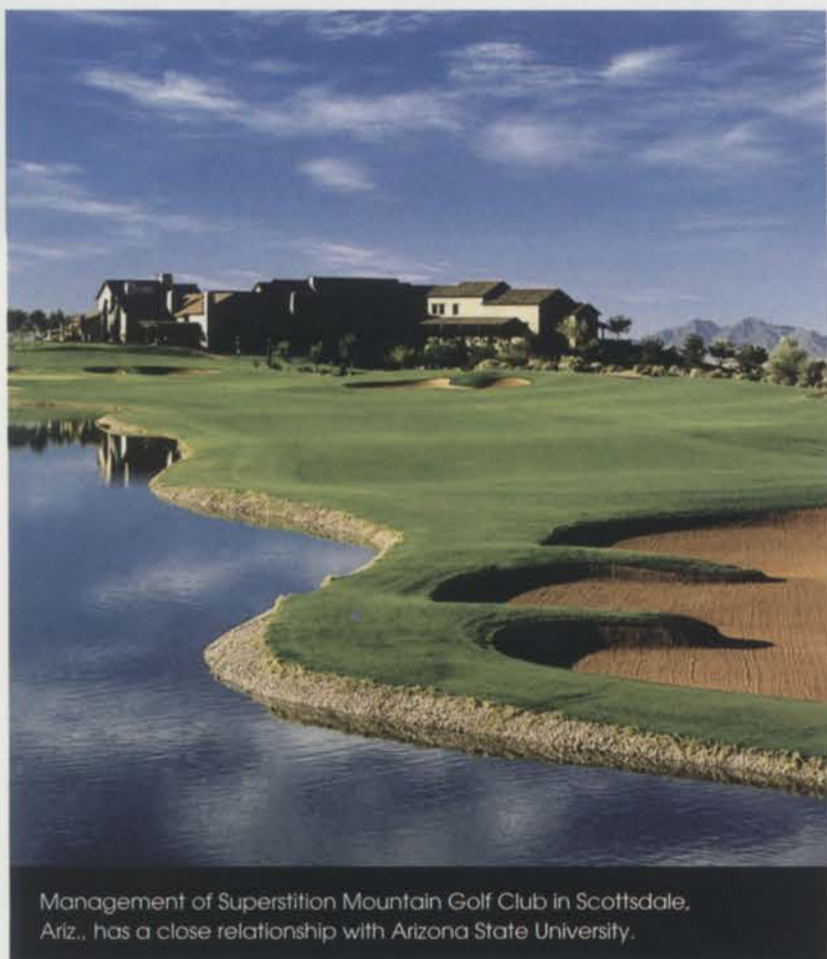


Photo: Superstition Mountain Golf Club

Management of Superstition Mountain Golf Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., has a close relationship with Arizona State University.



same time, it's a way for the associates who work at the various golf courses to develop a sense of pride about where they work.

"The collegiate championships are events that become unforgettable experiences for the players who compete in them," he says. "We want the players to have Sunriver as part of those memories. By hosting prestigious events, our employees also develop a sense of pride for what we offer to the competitors. This carries over during the summer to the service that we offer our guests. This makes all of the effort we put into hosting the NCAA Championships worth it."

Another type of collegiate relationship has been established at Superstition Mountain Golf Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., with Arizona State University. Superstition Mountain allows ASU players to hone their skills by practicing and playing on its two Jack Nicklaus-designed courses. Beyond that, Superstition Mountain sees an added value

of drawing from the university's Professional Golf Management program that develops credentialed PGA professionals.

"The PGM program is one that was developed while I was on the board of directors of the PGA of America," says Mark Kizziar, president of Superstition Mountain. "This four-year B.S. program prepares students in all phases of golf course operations and leads towards securing a PGA Class A card. ASU is one of nine colleges nationwide that offers this type of program. This program offers an excellent source for new employees to our club's needs."

### Big course on campus

Along with the many private golf courses that deal closely with local universities, many of the nation's top universities – Yale, Cornell, Rutgers, Ohio State, Michigan and Purdue – have their own golf courses on campus. The trend began during the

early part of the 20th century when golf's popularity increased, and it has continued as more institutions have added golf courses to their campuses recently.

An example of this trend is the Walker Golf Course near the campus of Clemson University in Clemson, S.C. The course was built eight years ago on a 140-acre, leased plot of land just south of the main campus. Because the university is public, no state funds could be used to build a golf course. Instead, the Clemson University Alumni Foundation acted as a private entity and secured a lease for the property. The foundation is carrying the entire debt load and the management of the golf course until the debt is paid off. At that time, the foundation will donate the golf course to the university.

The Walker Golf Course, which generates more than 30,000 rounds annually, also is a practice facility for the men's golf team,

The Territory Golf & Country Club in Duncan, Okla., has been able to host collegiate events and strengthen its reputation thanks to management's relationship with nearby Cameron University's golf coach.  
Photo: The Territory Golf & Country Club

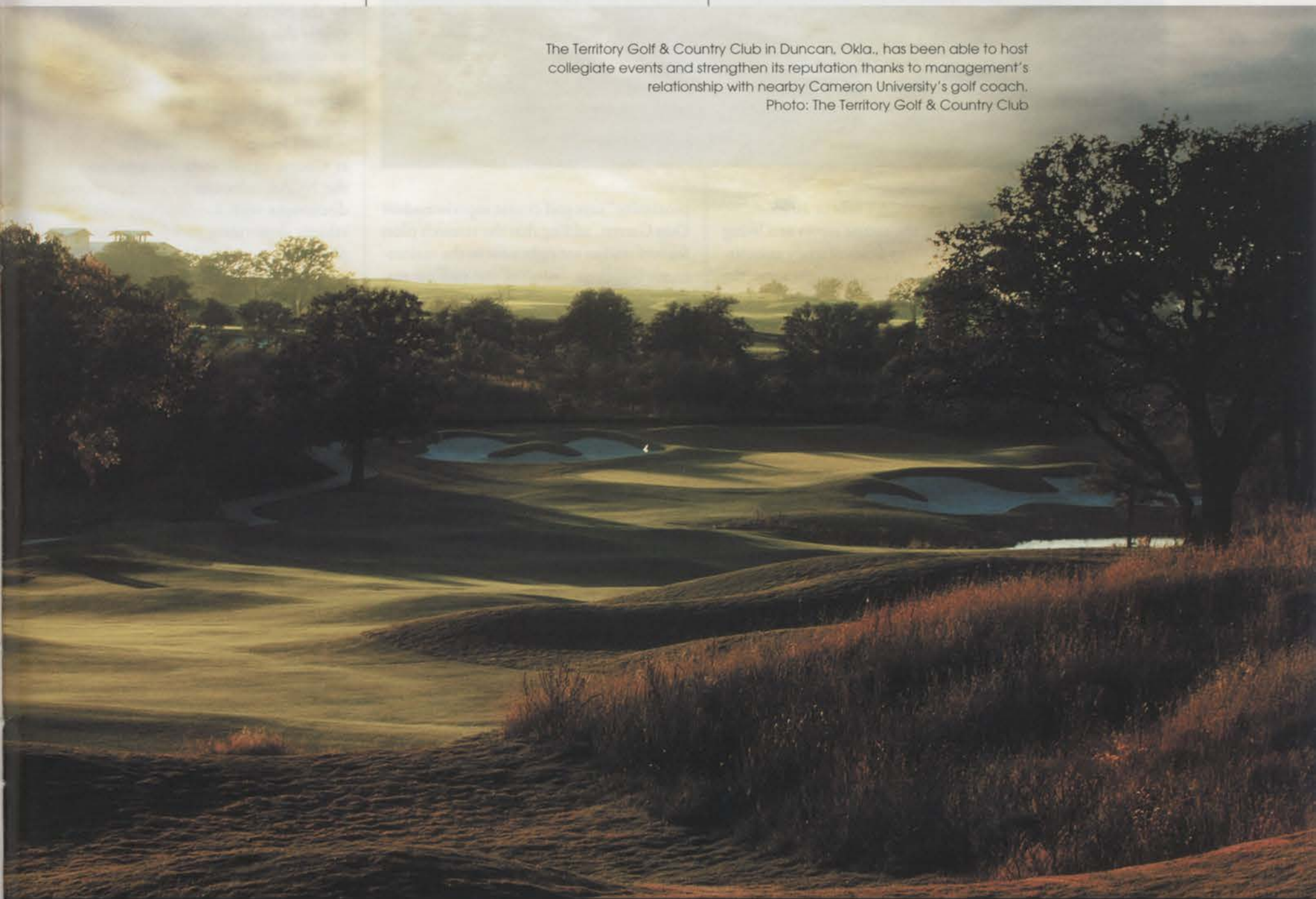






Photo: Superstition Mountain Golf Club

Arizona State University's Professional Golf Management program is a source of new employees for Superstition Mountain Golf Club.

which won the NCAA title in 2003.

Additionally, the course serves as a living laboratory for many fields of study associated with Clemson. It's located right across the street from the research labs and classrooms for the nationally acclaimed turf school and can be used to field-test new ideas, theories, discoveries and products.

"We offer a marvelous opportunity for the turf school students because of our close

proximity," says golf course superintendent Don Garrett, adding that the research plots for turf studies are right next to the maintenance buildings. "Most of our staff are students. We even have a few graduate students who work on the course while they're also working on their research projects."

In addition to Garrett's duties at the golf course, he teaches an introductory course for turf school and professional golf manage-

ment students.

"My lab gives students the hands-on experience with different pieces of equipment and practical application of everything from mowing a green to raking a bunker," he says.

Garrett also allows students in the entomology, botany, environmental sciences and civil engineering departments to use the course for research.

## Precautions

Although relationships between golf facilities and universities are beneficial to both, they should be dealt with carefully. While golf courses can be used for fund-raising and alumni functions, any golf manager still must understand that when dealing with collegiate athletics the potential for an inappropriate relationship with student athletes could develop.

"There are very specific rules dealing with student athletes that are strictly governed by the NCAA," Sizemore says. "Any golf course that wants to help out junior players or collegiate players needs to be aware of them. You want to be supportive to student athletes in a proper way and not jeopardize their future."

Brent Jessup, director of golf at the Walker Course agrees with Sizemore and says the NCAA rules can be clarified through discussions with a college's or university's athletic department and through the compliance office.

"Properly researching into potential pitfalls can save an embarrassing incident later on," Jessup says. *GCN*

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The Walker Golf Course near the campus of Clemson University serves as a living laboratory for many fields of study associated with the school. Photo: Clemson University



# Working together

MANAGEMENT COMPANIES PURSUE 'ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE' OPERATING EFFICIENCIES AMONG CLUBS

by  
JOHN  
WALSH

Operating golf facilities as efficiently as possible is a common goal for owners and managers. It's part of the equation for running a profitable business. Multiple golf facilities that are managed by the same company and are in close proximity can take advantage of numerous synergies to help them do that. This equates to spending money and using resources wisely.

An example of this concept is The Clubs of Kingwood in Texas. The Clubs of Kingwood consist of three golf clubs owned by ClubCorp: Kingwood Country Club, Deerwood Club and Atascocita Country Club, all within five miles of each other in a market of 130,000 residents. The three clubs feature 117 holes of golf, 34 tennis courts, three clubhouses and a private water park for members and invited guests. Kingwood and Atascocita offer golf and tennis. Deerwood offers golf only. Ten years ago, the clubs were completely separate.

Andy Miller, regional vice president and general manager of The Clubs of Kingwood, says there are many centralized systems within the three clubs, however, they maintain separate golf course maintenance operations, food-and-beverage operations and club managers, who address the specific needs of each club. Because Kingwood Country Club's clubhouse is the largest among the three clubs, most of the events and gatherings are held there.

Even though the majority of members wanted social and dining privileges at all three clubs, members are usually most loyal to where they predominantly play golf or tennis, according to Miller.

From a corporate standpoint, ClubCorp is trying to be a better steward of the members' investment in the clubs and better serve their needs by grouping the three facilities together, according to Miller.

"We have fiduciary responsibilities to members," he says.

Additionally, management companies can use their size to save golf facilities money

when it comes to purchasing, according to Brian O'Hare, regional vice president, Northeast for Billy Casper Golf, a golf course management company.

"As a company, we leverage our size to develop long relationships with those who provide us with national accounts pricing," he says. "We pass that savings on to owners so they can improve the course."

## People swap

Staffing is another area in which management companies can be more efficient operating golf facilities. At The Clubs of Kingwood, all three clubs share one accounting department. Also, taking advantage of the synergies of employees in each of the food-and-beverage operations saves money. Sharing staff among clubs has another advantage.

"The merger of the three clubs has opened up opportunities for employees to have a better chance to move up to management," Miller says.

Billy Casper Golf shares staff among the clubs it manages, too. For example, Grover Alexander, the golf course superintendent at Hudson Hills Golf Course in Ossining, N.Y., also serves as a regional superintendent who helps consult with the other BCG-managed properties in Westchester County, New York.

BCG also shares maintenance staff. For example, Maple Moor Golf Course in White Plains, N.Y., is in a flood plain, and when there's a flood, a tremendous amount of cleanup is needed.

"We send some of the Hudson Hill staff to Maple Moor Golf Course to help for a couple days," O'Hare says. "We help the

Photo: Billy Casper Golf



The staff at Hudson Hills Golf Course sometimes helps out at neighboring Maple Moor Golf Course in Westchester County, New York. The two staffs also share equipment.



superintendent get up to speed on mowing as long as the help doesn't come at the expense of the other course.

"When we get into large capital projects, we use other resources and people to manage that," he adds.

## Share your toys

Interclub relationships also involve sharing equipment, according to O'Hare. For example, for Hudson Hills and Maple Moor Golf, both in Westchester County, N.Y., share staff and equipment. The 18-hole facilities are about 20 minutes away from each other. One mechanic services the equipment at both facilities, and the courses share equipment that's not used regularly, such as aerators, verticutters, wood chippers and grinders.

Sharing resources is part of being part of a large company such as Billy Casper Golf, O'Hare says.

"There might be one large facility that has more equipment than a smaller one, and it shares resources with the smaller course," he

says. "Besides, superintendents like to help each other out and share ideas."

The value of not needing to purchase certain equipment can save a course \$20,000 to \$40,000 annually, according to O'Hare.

Even though the three golf course maintenance staffs at The Clubs of Kingwood are separate, they share some equipment such as aerifiers.

## The best way to do it

Aside from using the same resources, sharing best practices is prevalent throughout Billy Casper Golf. It starts with superintendents telling regional vice presidents and the word spreads via conference calls or meetings, O'Hare says.

"The key is that it's not a formality but an open line of communication," he says. "We have some new golf courses in the area with bentgrass, and the superintendents are fighting take-all patch. They were getting around to look at how take-all patch was controlled by different chemicals."

Best practices help shape standards for ball

washers, rotating cups, heights of cut, etc.

"We also share best practices by consulting with Saxon Woods Golf Course in Scarsdale, N.Y.," O'Hare says. "Each [BCG-managed] facility benefits from all the resources we have. We need to communicate best practices throughout the portfolio."

Billy Casper golf recently won the management contract for Saxon Woods.

## Promos

Another area in which clubs can take advantage of synergies is marketing. The Clubs of Kingwood have been marketed as such for about five years. However, Miller says there's a delicate balance of marketing the three clubs together. A pricing strategy determines a member's golfing privileges. For example, a "masters" membership allows access to all three courses and a "championship" membership includes everything but Deerwood.

O'Hare says Billy Casper Golf has several marketing programs in place.

"We have the Buffalo Golf Trail and promoted them together," he says. "In Chicago, we have a frequency awards program to build affinity. In Connecticut, we're looking at reciprocal benefits, such as discounts on merchandising and green fees and benefits with tee times."

The Buffalo Golf Trail is a BCG program marketed in regions throughout the country where the company has clusters of courses. For example, in Cincinnati there are seven courses, and in Chicago there are 10 properties.

BCG also links its managed facilities that are further apart. Because there are many people who travel from Westchester County to Cape Cod, Mass., the company markets the Falmouth Country Club on Cape Cod to the New York metropolitan region.

## A common thread

As far as a trend, Miller says multicourse owners are aggressively pursuing the synergies among golf facilities, but he doesn't know if any independent owners are doing it.

No matter what type of course Billy Casper Golf manages, the quality of the staff, attitude of staff, attention to detail, cleanliness are aspects of course operations that shouldn't change, O'Hare says.

"The common thread with the staff is attitude and commitment to provide a better-than-expected customer experience," he says. "We work hard to make each other successful, and we need to work to maintain the open lines of communication. It's difficult as you get bigger. I don't have all the answers, but as a group we can get them." GCN

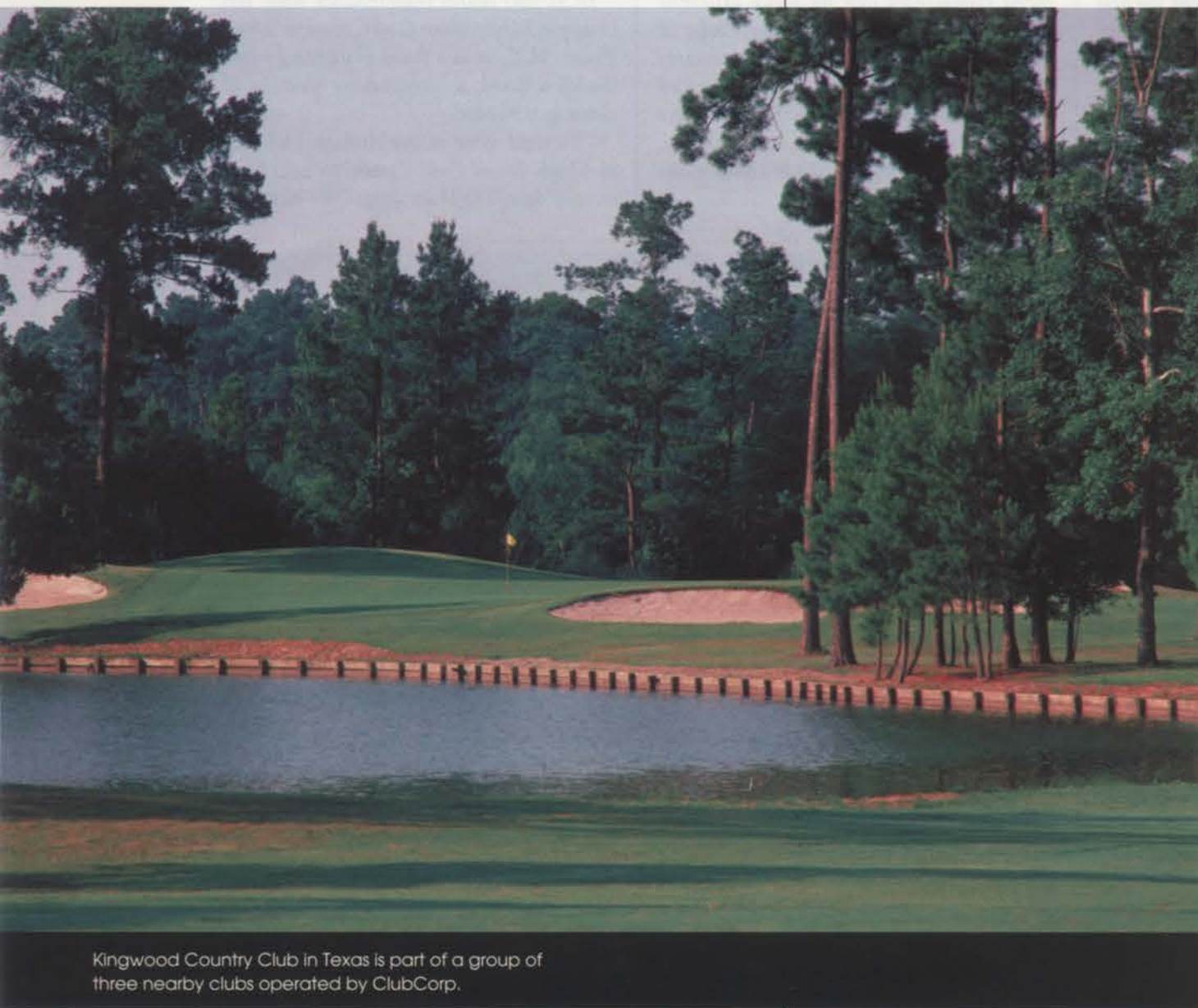


Photo: ClubCorp

Kingwood Country Club in Texas is part of a group of three nearby clubs operated by ClubCorp.