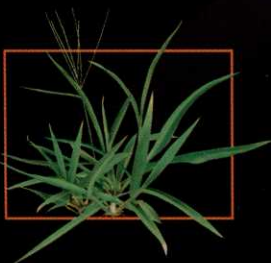


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CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT

“Our Caterpillar skid steer had fixed front and rear wheels,” Girardi says. “To steer it, you had to skid – that’s why they call it a skid steer – and it really dug up our turf. The A300 options were far superior. It’s steerable, which means the tires rotate, versus a typical skid steer in which the tires are locked in one position.”

Girardi decided to purchase the Bobcat skid steer and mini excavator, which were funded by the club’s \$200,000 capital expenditure budget. Bobcat of Connecticut sold Girardi the A300 and the 435 for a bundle price and allowed him to trade in his Caterpillar skid steer for an additional discount. The dealer did a wonderful job of working with Rockrimmon to come up with a competitive price, Girardi says. He couldn’t be happier about the return value of his investments.

“The A300 and 435 have been wonderful machines and operate flawlessly for us,” he says. “Because we’re a golf course upgrading our property constantly, these pieces of equip-

ment are used daily. They’re used every time we do construction, literally. It’s taken so much of the burden off one John Deere 210 backhoe. We hardly even use the backhoe now.”

Girardi plans to replace his backhoe in the coming year, but his two Bobcat machines have bought him time.

“We have just the right amount of equipment,” he says. “I use my Bobcat machines for general golf course construction, mainly little projects. We’re not doing heavy-duty, earth-moving stuff with it. We use it for drainage work, to haul material and load trucks and for attachment work – stump grinding, trench work and carpath maintenance repair.”

Construction at Rockrimmon hasn’t taken a major toll on play in years past. Girardi has tried to minimize course disturbance by beginning renovations as late as possible in the fall and completing them by early spring.

“We’ve been fortunate to have an acquiescent membership,” he says. “They know their

patience is worth the payoff.”

While Girardi is pleased with the success of his past construction projects, he’s not one to rest on his laurels. In three of the past four years, the club has been rebuilding its greens slowly to USGA specs. At his next membership meeting, Girardi plans to propose to regrass the remainder of his *Poa annua*/bentgrass greens in one fell swoop, commencing mid-September 2009. He hopes to complete the job by late May 2010 and will reciprocate membership in the early season with six to eight clubs in the area.

And that’s not the only buildathon Girardi has up his sleeve. He’s also planning a complete renovation of Rockrimmon’s creeks and ponds, including banks, bridges and culverts – a multimillion-dollar renovation that will be contracted out.

For Girardi and Rockrimmon, the quest for perfection, it seems, will continue for years to come. **GCI**

To maximize his maintenance budget, Tony Girardi, CGCS, outsources major construction projects and focuses on daily course maintenance with his staff. Photo: Rockrimmon Country Club



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Tim Moraghan is principal of Aspire Golf Consulting in Long Valley, N.J. He can be reached at tmoraghan11@comcast.net or 908-635-7978.

MOWING-PATTERN APPEAL

Q I watched February's Pebble Beach event on television and noticed the fairway mowing appeared to produce a diamond-cutting pattern pointing to the putting surface. Is this done by request? Is this the regular pattern? How does the superintendent plan for this practice?

A The PGA Tour doesn't require fairways to be mowed in a certain way. However, it prefers no mower stripes be aligned with a player's shot. The resulting light and dark stripes can produce a "grain" issue of a favorable or detrimental golf shot in the minds of players. Chris Dalhamer, CGCS, and long-time assistant Jack Holt check the television camera angles from the television towers to prevent mower stripes from running into a television shot, including the overhead blimp camera shots. This eliminates any aesthetic issues regarding quality of cut, height of cut, scalping, mower-pass overlap and wheel tracks.

For ball-roll consistency, Dalhamer prefers his first cut to begin in the middle of the fairway – which is perennial ryegrass – angling from 4 o'clock to 10 o'clock and the second cut angling from 8 o'clock to 2 o'clock, which will produce the diamond image desired.

The most difficult mower pass is the first pass on a sharp dogleg. In this case, Holt will stand at the back of the putting green and guide the mower stripes based on the design of the golf hole. However, a sharp dogleg can produce a silly stripe with an unusual bend to it.

Beginning three weeks before the event, to enhance the stripe patterns, Dalhamer will monitor fertility to peak the week of the event, use brushes on the back of the mower reels to highlight the stripe, set his height of cut, apply Primo, double-cut daily and monitor mower overlap to produce a full stripe for each pass.

Q I've always mowed my square teeing grounds front to back, or 6 o'clock to 12

o'clock, to set the line of cut to the middle of the fairway. However, watching the recent professional event at Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, Calif., teeing grounds were cut left to right. Why?

A Riviera, which is a George Thomas design, has a classic, subtle look. Golf course superintendent Matt Morton would prefer to accentuate Rivera's design qualities rather than overstripe the golf course with a more modern look. He mows the tees left to right, matching the cut in the fairways. When a player looks down the hole from the teeing ground, the side-to-side cut ensures he won't see a distracting, busy-looking golf hole.

Like it or not, a great first impression ... stems from intricate mowing designs ...

Being an older course, Rivera's many teeing grounds aren't lined up perfectly to the middle of the fairway and don't match up as far as back-to-front alignment to the golf hole. This off-line, varying tee-shot option has a 6-o'clock-to-12-o'clock stripe pointing the player toward the proposed landing zone; the stripe is off-center to prevent the course from looking crooked.

Professionals are always checking with their caddies or each other during practice rounds to confirm they're aligning with their target. Consider this issue when cutting your teeing grounds. To test the best, you might wish to cut side to side, as Morton does, to get the competitors thinking about something other than their next shot.

Q While attending the LPGA's match play event at Hamilton Farm Golf Club in Long Valley, N.J., I was curious. Are there different set-up requirements for women compared to their male counterparts?

A Not for this championship. Golf course superintendent Paul Ramina met with LPGA staff and outlined a plan acceptable to the organization for this format. Addressing mowing patterns, Ramina reviewed each hole to decide what mowing pattern would best highlight the course's architecture. He considered how his mowing pattern would be seen through the eyes of competitors and wanted to highlight the design by pursuing the less-is-better option and reducing the busy look.

When it came to mowing, Ramina implemented two practices. First, a 3-o'clock-to-9 o'clock, cross-cut pattern eliminated the "grain" issues affecting the players' shots and eased the pressure on the volunteer fairway mowers when it came to scalping the edges in the intermediate rough cut. Also, two triplex clean-up passes around the perimeter of the fairways allowed his volunteers room to maneuver. This helped avoid any miss cuttings in the intermediate cut, decreased the time required to mow and reduced tire tracks on the turfgrass within the primary rough.

Q Our big club invitational is approaching, and I want to give our golf course a tournament look for our members and guests. When deciding whether to stripe or not, what options should be considered?

A Follow the advice of Bob DiRico, golf course superintendent at Brae Burn Country Club in West Newton, Mass. Though Brae Burn is a Donald Ross classic, DiRico believes the great design is best shown off with no striping. But during a big event, DiRico realizes members want to impress their guests. The "wow" factor becomes important to give a great first impression of the golf course to those who haven't been to Brae Burn before.

Like it or not, a great first impression usually stems from intricate mowing designs, stripes and diamond cuts. In many instances, the "wow" factor can aid a club in retaining current members while attracting new ones, especially during an invitational. **GCI**



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Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 38-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at terrybuchen@earthlink.net.



Travels With Terry

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

Snug as a bug

John Deere trailers are used commonly for transporting one or two John Deere walk-behind greensmowers at a time. Norman A. Furtado, golf course superintendent at The Mid Ocean Club in Hamilton, Bermuda, replaced the hard, plastic interior sides of the trailers after they wore out. The interior sides, along with 8-inch-by-8-inch wood beams that run the full length of the trailer's interior, hold the mowers in place. A $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-diameter wood bit was used to make four $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-deep notches into the wood beams so the transport wheel shafts could be placed into the notches on both sides. Each wooden beam is held in place with two $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-diameter lag bolts. The end of each wooden beam closest to the tailgate is cut at a 45-degree angle to help guide the outside edge of the transport drive roller into place.

For added traction for the mower's large, smooth transport drive rollers, a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick piece of rubber matting about 18 inches wide was placed down the center of the trailer and tailgate. The matting is held in place with $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-diameter pop rivets spaced 12 inches apart on both sides.

The wood beams cost about \$35, and each rubber mat and set of pop rivets costs about \$15. The labor involved was less than three hours.



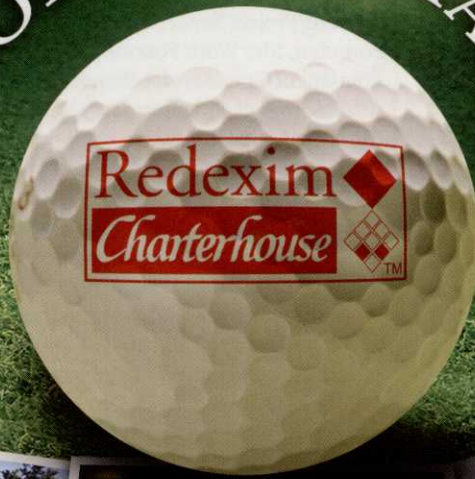
Lift and cut

Norman A. Furtado, golf course superintendent at The Mid Ocean Club in Hamilton, Bermuda, uses John Deere Model 220A, walk-behind greensmowers on the greens and collars. John Cabral, head mechanic, installed small brushes from a Toro 3100 greensmower behind the solid front rollers, right in front of the reel and bedknife. The small brushes do a great job of lifting any surface runners on the TifEagle Bermudagrass greens cut off by the cutting unit, Furtado says. The small brushes are bolted to the solid front roller shafts by drilling $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch-diameter holes on both ends.

The small brushes and hardware cost about \$100 each, and it took about one hour to install them. **GCI**



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*Chris Whittle, Course Manager
Royal Birkdale Golf Club*

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Pat Jones is president of Flagstick LLC, a consulting firm that provides sales and marketing intelligence to green industry businesses. He can be reached at psjhawk@cox.net or 440-478-4763.

A TALE OF TWO C.E.O.S

It was with much pomp and fanfare the GCSAA announced the selection of a new c.e.o. – Mark Woodward – a few weeks ago. And, on almost the same day – in a few terse sentences – it announced the passing of one of Woodward’s predecessors. Both of these occurrences merit further discussion, and neither is as simple as it seems. Let’s start with the present before we delve into the past.

Woodward is a great guy. He’s done it all professionally and is about to host the U.S. Open before he completely assumes the reins of the GCSAA. As a top-flight municipal golf manager, he brings a different perspective to the historically club-centric association. He also might help stir more interest in West Coast issues within a staff that’s always had a bit of an East Coast/Midwest bias. He knows the politics of the board and chapter delegate system intimately. Unlike previous executives, he doesn’t face a steep learning curve about agronomy and the business of golf. He has the potential to be a very effective lobbyist because he can speak credibly and realistically about practices and products. He’s an excellent choice for many reasons.

But (and you knew there was a “but” coming, didn’t you?), as uniquely qualified as he might be for the job, he’s also uniquely challenged. Here’s a mix of my concerns and those of superintendents I’ve talked with:

- From volunteer leader to chief executive, he’s now a staff member serving at the pleasure of a board that still has several members over whom he once presided. Everyone who presides over a board will have personal baggage with other board members, chapter delegates, influential members and maybe even key staff. Will that political baggage hinder his effectiveness for the next four or five years?

- You don’t advance to the top of the political pyramid without having strong opinions about what’s right and wrong for the association. However, the role of the c.e.o. is to manage the process and gently guide

the board. Woodward won’t be a member anymore. Now, he’ll work for the members. Will he be able to resist the temptation to say, “I used to be your president, and here’s what we should do”?

- Steve Mona came in as a golf administrator already known and admired by other national golf association executives. Woodward comes in as a ... well, as a superintendent. I have to wonder if other allied leaders are shaking their heads in puzzlement at this choice. Mona’s biggest contribution to the association was the credibility he gave the greenkeepers in the larger golf industry. Some members I’ve talked with believe this is a step backwards.

John ... died unmourned and unappreciated by the very group he was instrumental in building.

Honestly, I wish Mark the best. His biggest assets are a first-rate staff, a highly profitable trade show and a good policy infrastructure with plenty of standard operating procedures. But (there’s that word again), the GCSAA needs a strong administrator if it wants to progress to a new level within the industry. Can any former superintendent and past president do that? We shall see.

Now, let us turn to John M. Schilling.

There are probably younger readers who’ve never heard his name before. But even among older readers, Schilling and his time running the association largely have been forgotten – and intentionally redacted by the association. Read the association’s official history. There’s a big, gray, decade-long hole before Mona arrived to save the day. So I guess I’m writing this for posterity because the GCSAA sure as hell won’t.

John was a passionate, funny, intense man who worked his ass off for the association. He started as a photographer (back when cameras had film, and film had to be developed) in the ’70s. He worked his way up through public relations and magazine roles (at a time when there were only 15 or 20 people on staff). When he assumed the “executive director” title in 1983, the association was bankrupt almost, faced a chaotic legal situation and was on the verge of collapse.

In 10 years, Schilling and a relatively small group of staff built the trade show into one of the nation’s largest; established an education program that’s the envy of associations everywhere; developed programs in PR, lobbying, scholarship and research; and grew overall revenue and membership by percentages that would boggle your mind.

I worked for John from 1987 to 1993, so I’m not unbiased. Let me just say this: His biggest strength was personal loyalty to people who were loyal to him. But that was also his biggest weakness. He remained too loyal to a few individuals among the staff, and it was his downfall.

It was an insular culture of hard work and hard play. We drank, smoked and played politics. It was a cowboy era, and, like the Old West, the rules were different. After a decade of fun, fighting, late nights and risky business, Schilling left because he felt his friends were being mistreated. It was a difficult exit for a good man.

I bumped into him a few times after that. He kept busy in various businesses and enjoyed his semiretirement and family. He honestly held no rancor toward the association for the way he’d been treated at the end. He was at peace with himself and his time at the GCSAA.

I’d always hoped the GCSAA leadership would thaw its frosty stance toward him and officially recognize that his contributions vastly outweighed the speed bumps at the end of his tenure. Unfortunately, John didn’t live to see that day and he died unmourned and unappreciated by the very group he was instrumental in building. What a pity – and a cautionary tale for our new c.e.o. **GCI**