

2012 GREENS INSTALLATIONS PERFORMED BY CHAMPION TURF FARMS

Ansley Golf Club at Settdown Creek – Roswell, GA

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Atlantis Country Club – Atlantis, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Barefoot Resort - Dye Course – North Myrtle Beach, SC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Barefoot Resort - Love Course – North Myrtle Beach, SC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Barnsley Gardens Resort - The General – Adairsville, GA

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Birchwood Country Club – Nashville, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Bonita Fairways Golf Course – Bonita Springs, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Breckenridge Country Club – Breckenridge, TX

-Course renovation, greens planted with EMERALD

Brier Creek Country Club – Raleigh, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Buckhorn Springs Golf and Country Club – Valrico, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Charleston Country Club – Charleston, MO

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Colonial Country Club North Course – Cordova, TN

-Course renovation, greens planted with EMERALD

Country Club of North Carolina – Pinehurst, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Cypress Woods Golf & Country Club – Naples, FL

-Course renovation, greens planted with CHAMPION

Desert Pines Golf Course – Fort Stockton, TX

-Greens renovation from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Emerald Greens Golf Resort & Country Club – Tampa, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Fields Ferry Golf Club – Calhoun, GA

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

First Tee of Central Arkansas – Little Rock, AR

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Fort Bend Country Club – Richmond, TX

-Greens renovation from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Goldsboro Municipal Golf Course – Goldsboro, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Grande Dunes Resort Club – Myrtle Beach, SC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Greenville Country Club – Greenville, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Griffin Bell Golf Course – Americus, GA

-Greens renovation from Tifgreen to CHAMPION

Griffin Golf Course – Griffin, GA

-No-Till conversion from Tifgreen to CHAMPION

High Point Country Club - Willow Creek – High Point, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Hillandale Golf Club – Durham, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Inverrary Country Club - West Course – Lauderhill, FL

-Greens renovation from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Lady Bird Johnson Golf Course – Fredericksburg, TX

-Greens renovation from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Lake Hickory Town Club Executive Course – Hickory, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Lansbrook Golf Club – Palm Harbor, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Lely Resort - Classics Course – Naples, FL

-Greens renovation using CHAMPION

Lely Resort - Flamingo Course – Naples, FL

-Greens renovation using CHAMPION

Magellan Golf Course – Hot Springs Village, AR

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

MBN - King's North Course – Myrtle Beach, SC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Moss Creek Golf Club - Devil's Elbow South – HHI, SC

-Course renovation, greens planted with CHAMPION

Mystic Creek Golf Course - El Dorado, AR

-Newly constructed course using CHAMPION greens

North Shore Country Club – Sneads Ferry, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Occoneechee Golf Club – Hillsborough, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Orange County National Crooked Cat – Wintergarden, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Old Chatham Golf Club – Durham, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Olde Liberty Golf Course – Youngsville, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Page Belcher - Stone Creek – Tulsa, OK

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Palm Beach Country Club – Palm Beach, FL

-No-Till conversion from Miniverde to CHAMPION

Paul Walker Golf Course – Bowling Green, KY

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Pine Forest CC Green & Gold Courses – Houston, TX

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

River Hills Country Club – Lake Wylie, SC

-Greens renovation using CHAMPION

River Run Country Club – Davidson, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

RTJ Trail Hampton Cove Short Course - Owens Crossroads, AL

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Sedgefield Country Club – Greensboro, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Sherbrooke Golf & Country Club – Lake Worth, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

The Challenge at Oak Forest – Longview, TX

-Greens renovation from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

The Club at Olde Cypress – Naples, FL

-Course renovation, greens planted with CHAMPION

The Club at The Strand – Naples, FL

-Course renovation, greens planted with CHAMPION

The Country Club of Coral Springs – Coral Springs, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

The Course at Eagle Mountain – Batesville, AR

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

The Golden Bear Club – Windermere, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Golf Club at Bradshaw Farm Red & White – Woodstock, GA

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

The Peninsula Club – Cornelius, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

The Rustic Golf Course – Rockport, IN

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Ventura Country Club – Orlando, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifdwarf to CHAMPION

Verdict Ridge Golf & Country Club – Denver, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

Wekiva Golf Club – Longwood, FL

-No-Till conversion from Tifeagle to CHAMPION

Wilshire Golf Club – Winston Salem, NC

-No-Till conversion from Bentgrass to CHAMPION

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THE TIME IS NOW

The 2013 U.S. Open throws Merion Golf Club into the national spotlight. GCI's Bruce Williams shadows Matt Shaffer for a behind-the-scenes look at prepping for golf's big event.

by Bruce Williams, photos by John Kaminski

The 113th US Open is upon us.

While the early years of the competition drew few spectators, it has since become one of golf's most watched events and is considered to be a major along with The Masters and The PGA championship. A lot has changed since the turn of the last century, and today it takes years to build the infrastructure, let alone the course, that becomes the venue for each year's venue.

Planning begins years in advance. The USGA dispatches its staff members to work with clubs like Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa., just outside of Philadelphia, to help prepare for what must ensue. While the course is the venue's most important feature, there are so many more things that comprise this city of sorts, which is built from the ground up.

Recently I spent some time with Matt Shaffer, director of grounds at Merion Golf Club. He made it quite apparent to me that his people have been quite busy building the city that will host this event.

Every city needs someone to take charge and drive the logistics to make things happen. The mayor of that city is none other than Matt Shaffer, and he has built quite a nice team and infrastructure around him to make things run smoothly leading up to and throughout the duration of the event.

Despite a busy schedule, Matt was gracious in the time he spent with me and the thoughts he shared about a variety of topics, including his challenges leading up to the big show, The U.S. Open at Merion Golf Club.

THE LIST. I asked Matt about the real-world lessons learned from preparing for and hosting the U.S. Open at Merion. His responses are exactly what I expected from an individual who excels at leadership. Here's his Top 10 list.

1. Blue prints. The USGA has a lot of challenges and works hard to coordinate and build a small town in a very short period of time. Aside from the golf course

that is played upon, there are dozens of tents, pavilions and hospitality suites that must go up in the months before the tournament. Add bleachers, food venues, restroom facilities and the miles of TV cables, power cables, etc., and you are literally building a city from the ground up that will begin to be dismantled the day after the event is over.

2. Safety. Visitor and player safety is paramount and there are many in-depth meetings with Homeland Security to ensure everyone's safety. These groups are extremely well organized and passionate about making sure the event is conducted with any problems.

3. Game plan. While many superintendents are accustomed to doing things in a set way (their way), The U.S. Open has encouraged the team at Merion GC to think quite differently and change their thinking and processes significantly to meet the many goals of the event.



“Tournament time is tough on staff. Lots of hours are logged and everyone experiences their fair share of exhausting weeks leading up to the event.”



4. Timing is everything. Similar to a conditioned athlete, there is a ramping up in the preparation period. And just like with an athlete, if things are not managed properly then both the turfgrass and the team can peak too early. Patience and proper timing are imperative for success.

5. Belief system. Matt shared with me how important it is to stay convicted to your beliefs even though they are inherently different from the majority. Anyone who knows Matt knows he is a man of conviction and does an excellent job of communicating his message to the club, to his own team and also to the USGA officials to reach the desired event goals.

6. Tick tock. Time management is paramount due to the enormous demands on your professional and personal schedules. Every day brings a series of meetings with any and all involved in the tournament. Matt is required to manage up, manage down and manage laterally while all the time being cognizant of not burning the candle at both ends.

7. No “I” in “Team.” Matt is proud, and rightfully so, of the team he’s assembled around him. More importantly, Matt is very proud when he witnesses his team go further and achieve more than he thought was possible. The greater the challenges, the more his

team has impressed him each and every day.

8. Expect the unexpected. Some things are within your control while others are not. Therefore, validate your suspicions about others’ professional performance outside your department with regard to how they handle the spotlight and stress. It is best to learn early who is dependable and who might leave slack to pick up as H-hour approaches.

9. Be humble. Matt feels blessed to be in such a privileged position to be coordinating the showcase of golf for a week in June. He recognizes the responsibility he has to the game, as well as to his profession, to make the event a success. Shouldering all of that responsibility and pressure doesn’t leave room to take anything for granted.

10. Support system. Last, but not least, is building a foundation of support for the tournament – not only from the club and its members, but from manufacturers, distributors, volunteers, colleagues and peers.

TEAM MERION. I’m not surprised to learn that those turfheads who spend a few years under Matt’s tutelage are sought after prospects as professional turf managers. Merion Golf Club has one of the finest training programs for rising superstars. The club and the management team at Merion GC are committed to training

young men and women to be future industry leaders. Spend time with Team Merion and it’s easy to see there is no shortage of passion, intelligence and solid work ethics among its constituents – both young and old.

Interns and apprentices anticipate a pressure-packed education. They have the opportunity to do just about every job there is in this profession, and to work hand in hand with the supervisor who chips in and gets his hands dirty on a regular basis. A lot is expected of young people on a golf course superintendent career track. Matt estimates the expectation he has for his trainees is exceeded over 90 percent of the time.

THE FINAL WEEKS. While many would expect the weeks leading up to hosting a U.S. Open would be hectic and crazy... even chaotic. That’s not necessarily the case at Merion GC.

Nearly every hour of every day is planned out strategically and logistically. Every action serves a distinct purpose. Yes, weather throws a few curves, but contingencies are built into the Matt’s system deal with the intangibles. To keep things on schedule, multiple mowings – as many as four times per day – take place. Lots of rolling accompanies the mowing to ensure optimal green speeds and firmness are in place the week before the



The Big Push: Nearly every hour of every day is planned out strategically and logistically to prepare for the enormity of the 2013 U.S. Open. For example, multiple mowings are scheduled, as many as four times per day. Lots of rolling accompanies the mowing so optimal green speeds and firmness are established and in place the week before the event.

event. Merion keeps its greens quite dry and uses moisture sensors and TDR 300 probes to push the greens to their max.

Prior to the event Matt plans on working on plant health with proper moisture to allow the turf to last during the event.

Tournament time is tough on staff. Lots of hours are logged and everyone experiences their fair share of exhausting weeks leading up to the event. Matt cautions his staff to pace themselves properly, and does everything in his power to make sure they are fresh and on top of their game for tournament week. The addition of volunteers more than doubles the normal, routine staffing levels. As such, all of those volunteers need to be organized for each day of the tournament.

Likewise, any event of this magnitude requires forethought about crisis management. The management team runs through a variety of scenarios for potential disasters that could occur during the event – including weather – and how each is to be handled.

TECHNOLOGY. If you know Matt, then you know he believes in the benefits of innovation and is often an early adopter of new technology. He's a data guy, too, and a big believer in "You can't manage what you can't measure." If you can chart it or measure it, then Matt likely has the stats. Matt is grateful to Walt Norley for introducing

"There are miles of drip irrigation around the bunkers so that the grass can survive while not having sprinklers moisten the sand."

him to UGMO for moisture sensing technology and being able to track moisture levels in greens along with salinity buildup. Merion Golf Club uses Toro sensors and the readouts show trends in moisture and allow for staff to hand water only the areas that are absolutely necessary. There is little guessing about greens moisture at Merion.

Green firmness is measured daily to monitor the direction of the playing surfaces. Eric Psolla and Jake Straub provide written reports regarding soil chemistry. Using these reports as a base, a sound fertility program is developed. Matt's skill with interpreting data affords him the ability to run out on the edge of the cliff on a daily basis.

FULLY EQUIPPED. Matt was highlighted in a previous GCI article (On a roll, October 2012) that outlined his use of fairway rollers. He continues to reap rolling's agronomic benefits and is grateful to be



working with Salsco's Sal Rizzo on these machines. The rollers reduce disease incidence and the need for fungicides. John Deere provides the majority of the equipment on the championship course. Several pieces of additional equipment will come in right before the tournament due to Matt's great working relationship with the people at John Deere.

OLD GREENS, NEW TECHNOLOGY. The greens at Merion are quite old, but the addition of newer technology has them performing quite well. One such technology is the use of Precision Air units that help to pull water down through the soil profile. The Philadelphia area is known for some extreme weather conditions, with high heat and humidity in the summer. Precision Air machines keep the air and moisture in balance in the soil profile without putting the turfgrass at risk. Matt's assistant, superintendent Aaron McCurdy is a believer and uses the technology whenever appropriate.

BUNKERS. A big part of Merion's teeth are its bunkers. Matt calls the bunkers edgy, and his philosophy for maintenance is very unique. Matt realizes a tremendous amount of money can go into bunker maintenance, so he tries to utilize a minimalistic approach to hazards.

While Matt likes bunkers raked a couple of times a week, applying roundup every few months to eradicate weeds, he has

instituted a more in-depth program to meet USGA needs of the event. Edges around bunkers are seldom trimmed and feature a rough-perimeter look. A lot of sand has been added prior to the tournament and that will need to be compacted accordingly. There are miles of drip irrigation around the bunkers so the grass can survive while not having sprinklers moisten the sand. Matt credits Rain Bird and Jim Barrett for his success with sub-surface irrigation.

THERE ARE LOTS OF MOVING PARTS THAT MAKE A CITY WORK. Matt has the turf care and golf course on the right pace to peak by early June. I don't doubt the course will be in fantastic shape. But prepping Merion's golf course is only a part of building the city. Truckloads of bleachers, tents and platforms are being moved into place as I write, just to accommodate the magnitude of this event. After it's over and the crowds have left, it all comes down and life slowly returns to normal.

It takes strong leadership to develop and execute the complex logistics of an event like the U.S. Open, and the time is now for Matt Shaffer and his team at Merion GC to make it happen. **GCI**

Bruce Williams, CGCS, is the principal of both Bruce Williams Golf Consulting and Executive Golf Search. He's also GCI's senior contributing editor.





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Left to Right: Woody Tasch, Sid Raisch, Roberta Paolo, Dr. Charlie Hall, Lily Brislen, & Michael Geary

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Henry DeLozier is a principal in the Global Golf Advisors consultancy. DeLozier joined Global Golf Advisors in 2008 after nine years as the vice president of golf for Pulte Homes. He is a past president of the National Golf Course Owners Association's board of directors and serves on the PGA of America's Employers Advisory Council.

DON'T PANIC...PLAN!

“*Call the fire department ... your building is on fire!*”

A panicked voice and urgent directive was the club manager's first indication that the golf cart storage building was in flames. In less than an hour, the building was gutted and its contents destroyed.

Thankfully, no one was hurt. But that elation soon turned to depression as the arduous job of rebuilding began.

As the young club manager began the job of restarting club operations, one question never left his mind: “Why wasn't I better prepared?”

If a club manager, golf professional or superintendent hasn't faced a similar situation after a crisis brought about by severe weather, natural disaster or impropriety turning his or her world upside down, that person may be living on borrowed time. Regardless of the emergency, the question of preparation and what could have been done differently comes front and center.

Here are seven suggestions to consider to prepare for a crisis.

CONSIDER THE CLOUD. In these times, when so many of the club's books and records are stored in electronic formats, clubs have a great advantage in being able to reconstruct critical information. If the club does not use a formal and redundant offsite resource for information and records back-up, this should be your first priority.

A by-product of the Information Age is the expectation that club leaders will maintain and manage information professionally and thoroughly. Assuring members and customers that they can feel confident about private or confidential information in your care is the first step in building trust.

KNOW WHO TO CALL. Identify and prioritize your list of notification calls.

First, contact the board of directors, executive committee and ownership group. Make sure they hear from you first – not from the media or another source. Confirm who speaks for the club when responding to inquiries from media, law enforcement and other jurisdictions.

CONTACT YOUR INSURANCE PROFESSIONAL. Now is when you discover how remarkable these professionals can be. Bear in mind that this may be your first catastrophe, but crisis is commonplace to them. Be prepared to explain clearly the events that have transpired and what help you need. Ask for their guidance and coaching; use your best judgment in sorting through the potential solutions.

CONTACT YOUR KEY MANAGERS AND TRUSTED EMPLOYEES. Many top-performing clubs have organized their personnel into task-force teams in advance of a possible crisis. Then make sure club members and other stakeholders are informed.

REFER TO YOUR CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN. Hopefully you have one and that it hasn't been on a shelf gathering dust since it was developed. Your plan is where you'll find:

- Key contact information.
- Primary message points and expressions of sympathy and empathy.
- The reference library in which blueprints, facility information and descriptions are stored. (The new Club Solutions program at the Club Managers Association of America offers valuable guidance and resources on this point.)
- Primary vendor and support services to address specific operational needs and shorten facility downtime. Golf cars, support vehicles, temporary storage, new supplies and temporary

“I learned a hard lesson that day. Never again did I want to be the one asking him, ‘Why wasn't I better prepared?’”

help are just a few of the things you may need quickly.

BE ACCESSIBLE. Staff, members, customers and suppliers will all want to contact you. See that everyone receives a composed and consistent answer to the question: “What happened?”

BE HONEST, TRANSPARENT AND OPTIMISTIC. Your calm and confident demeanor will translate to others. As soon as practical, begin to share the plan to restore operations. Coordinate with the board and club leaders to make sure they know the process that is now in place.

STAY ON MESSAGE. Don't speculate. Don't misrepresent. There's nothing wrong in responding simply, “It's too soon to comment on that.” Or “We don't know the answer to that question yet, but we're working on it.”

CARE FOR YOUR PEOPLE AND YOURSELF. Hydrate. Rest when you can. Call your family to assure them you're OK. In times of crisis, one is always humbled and inspired by the generous acts of friends and fellow professionals.

By the way, the young club manager whose life was turned upside down by a fire in the golf car storage facility was me. I learned a hard lesson that day. Never again did I want to be the one asking him, “Why wasn't I better prepared?” **GCI**