

Superintendents Matt Wilkinson (left) and Jim Myers teamed up to offer an internship program like no other.

Teach Your Interns Well

Two superintendents team up for the ultimate program

BY JIM MYERS

As a superintendent with more than 10 years of experience from the tourist town of Vail, Colo., I had the ability to attract several interns to such a beautiful area. Our internship program provided our interns with valuable knowledge and experience that I passed on from my many years in turfgrass management and being a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

From the inception of the internship program that I offered at my club in the Vail Valley beginning in 1999, I would always ask for feedback from the interns.

Their responses have enhanced the program as well as the intern's level of experience, and personal and professional growth. As each season turned, the internship program improved to emphasize work ethic, a maniacal eye for detail and the desire to continue along the career path of becoming a golf course superintendent. Over the years, I've learned that a superintendent's role is

very expansive, but his or her level of contribution to his or respective golf club may not be at the level it can or should be without the basic fundamentals.

Last year, I embarked on a new opportunity and took a job in Sammamish, Wash., as superintendent of The Plateau Club, which is owned and managed by Oki Golf (other Oki Golf properties include The Golf Club at Newcastle, The Golf Club at Echo Falls, Washington National Golf Club, Trophy Lake Golf & Casting, The Golf Club at Hawks Prairie and Indian Summer).

I reached out to our neighboring Oki Golf property, The Golf Club at Newcastle and its superintendent Matt Wilkinson, to discuss internship programs in the area. Wilkinson was interested in what I had accomplished with my internship program, and, coupled with his own internship program, we sought to create a program above all others — one that would help students prepare for their futures in the turf industry so they could hit the grass running upon gaining their first jobs.

A unique feature of our internship program is that the selected interns are exposed to two different dynamics — a private 18-hole golf club and a public 36-hole golf club.

The Plateau Club is a private 18-hole golf club facility with a championship golf course carved out of a classic Northwest setting. In addition to the golf course, members enjoy a 37,500-square-foot clubhouse and a recreational facility that boasts an outdoor competition-sized swimming pool, outdoor tennis courts, fitness equipment, exercise classes, day care, massage therapy and full locker rooms.

The Golf Club at Newcastle is a 36-hole public golf facility (Coal Creek and China Creek golf courses) with a 45,000-square-foot clubhouse showcasing incredible views of Mount Rainier, the Seattle skyline and the Puget Sound region.

We decided to offer student housing to minimize commute time while providing easy access to stores, shops and local restaurants from each golf club property so mid-summer transitions from one golf club to the other was easy.

A lot to learn

The Golf Club at Newcastle has a pure stand of Providence bentgrass greens and Colonial bentgrass fairways. Under Wilkinson's direction, students receive the opportunity to learn how to manage bentgrass and management practices of eradicating *Poa annua*. The Golf Club at Newcastle hosts numerous corporate events. Coupled with daily-fee play, it receives more than 55,000 rounds annually. Maintaining and continuously improving both courses with the volume of rounds offers great insight and an invaluable experience.

Additionally, with two courses comes a large maintenance crew with seasoned superintendents, assistant superintendents and staff that provides great insight and support to the interns. Under Wilkinson's supervision, internship students can learn drainage work (surface and subsurface), how to make plant growth regulator applications, irrigation repair, pump station fundamentals and much more.

As a private club, the Plateau Club's 12,000 annual rounds are significantly less

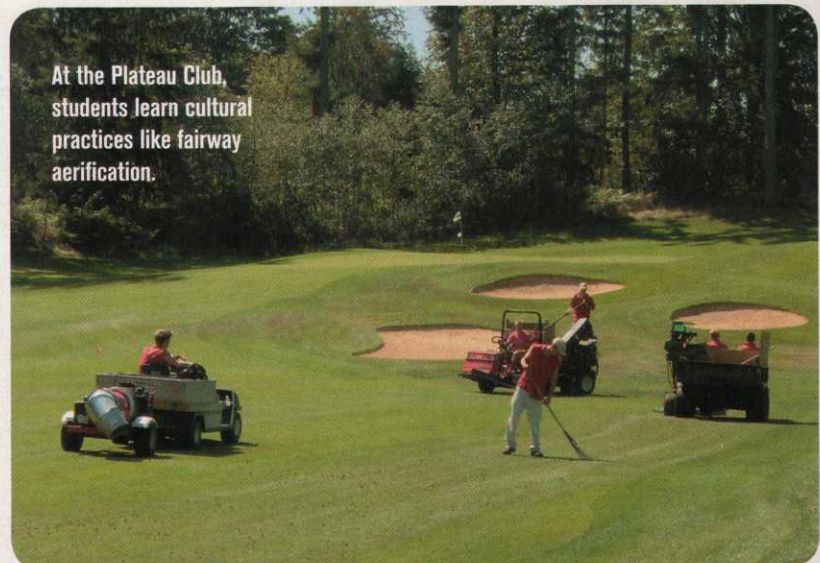
than the Golf Club at Newcastle. High standards must be maintained while improvement opportunities are continuously identified and acted upon. Under my direction, students learn to manage *Poa*-bentgrass greens at a competitive level as well as *Poa*-bentgrass fairways.

The Plateau Club has a large summer staff with a seasoned year-round crew, from whom interns can learn the valuable skill of properly scheduling for course projects and daily-maintenance practices. Additionally, students are taught how to identify various weeds, as well as budgeting, forecasting and equipment maintenance (preventive and actual). They are also taught fertility and cultural and integrated pest

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Students study the pump station at The Golf Club at New Castle.



At the Plateau Club, students learn cultural practices like fairway aerification.

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Matt Wilkinson (right) and his senior staff at the Golf Club at New Castle includes Tracey Hawkins, Dave Sandman and Matt Patton.



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management practices to maintain the level of excellence that club members expect.

One of the unique aspects of this internship program is that students experience two very different dynamics of turfgrass management under two very different circumstances in one summer.

Other components

On their first days, we ask interns to complete a self-assessment to identify their areas

of strength and where they saw their opportunities. Additionally, we ask students to document their long-range plans and identify their particular areas of interest. This helps establish a baseline to work from and identify how the internship will be most rewarding for the students as well as the club.

On a monthly basis, Wilkinson and I conduct a classroom setting to review some of the many areas of turfgrass management — bunker and weed management, cultural practices and fertility programs, just to name a few. The task taught is covered on a daily, weekly or monthly basis dependent on activity levels at each respective golf course. An example of the task outline is to the left.

This outline is a valuable tool for the students because it provides immediate feedback on each student's area of success and opportunity. In addition to Wilkinson and myself providing instruction and feedback, many staffers (assistant superintendents, irrigation and spray technicians and head mechanic) are valuable resources.

Lastly, our shared passion for our profession and desire to positively impact future superintendents help make this program successful. Collectively, we hope that prospective golf course superintendents and those passionate in turfgrass management not only benefit from our program, but use it to implement similar programs for the benefit of the profession and the larger industry. ■

Task Taught	Days/Week	Trainer	Evaluation
Mowing practices (mowing heights)	daily		
Cultural practices (verticut, aeration, etc)	1/week		
Irrigation scheduling (evapotranspiration rates)	daily		
Hand watering/syringing	daily		
Irrigation repair (pipe and pump house)	as needed		
Staff supervision (leading crew)	weekends		
Sodding and seeding (overseeding/slit seeding)	as needed		
PGR applications	bi-weekly		
Disease diagnosis (scout and identify pathogens)	daily		
Fungicide applications (preventive and curative)	bi-weekly		
Fertilizer applications (liquid and granular)	1/week		
Analyze soil tests and reports	daily		
Turfgrass math (convert square feet to acres, etc)	daily		
Calibration	as needed		
Turfgrass identification	daily		
Weed identification	daily		
Herbicide application (pre- and postemergent)	1/week		
Budgets (variance reports/forecasting)	1/week		
Equipment maintenance (reel grinding)	1/week		
Bunker maintenance	1/week		
Drainage (surface and subsurface)	1/week		
Course setup (pin positions, tee markers)	1/week		
Game of golf (play, rules and etiquette)	1/week		