

A man wearing a black jacket and a dark baseball cap is sitting on a large, flat rock. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. In the background, there is a small stream flowing over rocks, and a grassy hillside under a clear sky.

Sittin' PRETTY

/ BY LARRY AYLWARD,
EDITOR IN CHIEF /

With a tight and tenacious crew behind him, Pebble Beach Golf Links Superintendent Chris Dalhamer has good reason to be confident about hosting the 2010 U.S. Open



PHOTO BY: LARRY AYLWARD

CHRIS DALHAMER SQUINTS his eyes to protect them from the wind-whipped rain. It's a steel-gray day at Pebble Beach Golf Links, where Dalhamer is the golf course superintendent, on the northern California coast. A stiff breeze blows off the rumbling sea. A dusky fog rolls in. There's a nip in the air.

Dalhamer, who grew up in nearby Monterey, has seen better days — literally. But even on such a colorless day, Pebble Beach Golf Links remains a striking portrait — and a view to behold.

That's because Pebble Beach Golf Links, one of the four golf courses at Pebble Beach Resorts and site of this month's 110th U.S. Open, is so distinct from most of the world's golf courses. Several of the course's 18 holes border the Pacific Ocean with mountains providing a majestic but placid backdrop. Some of the holes, including the frequently photographed No. 8, are located on rocky and ragged cliffs high above the deep, blue sea.

Dalhamer stands on the edge of the eighth fairway and stares down at the gorge that opens beneath him. He watches as the breaker waves crash into the stony shore, their white caps foaming. He breathes in the smell of the salty sea and listens to the lapping surf.

Dalhamer will never take the view — and the potpourri of senses — for granted, even on a day when Mother Nature is in a wistful mood.

"Sometimes I get caught up in my everyday duties, but I try to step back and be thankful for where I'm at," he says.

Dalhamer, who first started working at Pebble Beach as an intern in

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Pebble Beach Golf Links has hosted five U.S. Opens. Many maintenance crew members have been there for at least two of the tournaments.

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1993, isn't the only one who feels this way about the 91-year-old course, designed by Jack Neville and Douglas Grant. So do many of the golf course maintenance workers he oversees, including several who have worked at the course for more than 25 years.

Clayton Hughes has worked at Pebble Beach for 29 years, but the scenery continues to impress him. A few years ago, Hughes was building steps on the eighth tee. He walked up them upon finishing.

"It was like I was stepping up to heaven," he says. "The ocean was all around me. I was in awe. It's my favorite spot on the course."

Pebble Beach's grandeur is also not lost on newer employees, including assistant superintendent Billy Hausch, who has worked at the course for three years.

"Once in awhile, you have to stop while you're out there," Hausch says. "The sun is shining just right, the fog is rolling in and you say to yourself, 'Man, this is a really cool place.'"

PEBBLE BEACH IS a cool place to work, all right. That's why so many golf course maintenance employees have worked there for so

long. And as evidenced by the collective years they've spent there, many of them don't plan to leave anytime soon.

When individuals work together for many years, they develop chemistry between them. They learn each other's strengths and weaknesses. They recognize each other's tendencies. That has happened at Pebble Beach.

"You ought to see us come together when we go out to aerify the course," Hughes says, his face beaming. "Everybody knows exactly what to do. We blow through the golf course and leave it like we weren't even there. It's awesome to see."

The crew's members have the utmost respect for each other.

"We count on each other," says spray technician Rick Pieper, who celebrates his 33rd anniversary at Pebble Beach this month. "There isn't anybody on the crew who wouldn't do whatever they could for you. They will be there for you."

Dalhamer knows that firsthand because he has experienced it. He also won't talk about his role at Pebble Beach without mentioning his crew.

"You surround yourself with good people,"
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and people you can count on," he says.

That includes Jack Holt, the assistant superintendent at Pebble Beach for nearly 30 years.

"When you have a guy with that much experience — someone who has lived and breathed out here 365 days a year for almost 30 years — you can't put value on it," Dalhamer says.

Holt may be the seasoned veteran, but he calls Dalhamer "the rock" of Pebble Beach. He says the crew feeds off Dalhamer's calm, cool and collected demeanor.

"Chris has the ability to ride through difficult times on an even keel," Holt says. "If you can't portray that steadiness and reliability to your crew members, then they'll be running around like a bunch of chickens with their heads cut off."

Dalhamer is a buck-stops-here kind of guy. That's another thing the crew

likes about him. They also like that he views himself as one of them.

Although Dalhamer is sometimes confined to his computer with an Excel spreadsheet staring at him, there's nothing he enjoys more than hopping on a fairway mower or digging a ditch.

"That's where I got my start," he says of the physical labor. "That's what I enjoy most."

Dalhamer also believes that grabbing a shovel and jumping in a ditch with crew members shows them he's not afraid to get his hands dirty.

"Anything I can do to help the crew, I'll do it," he says.

As one can imagine, there's a lot of pressure that comes with the job as superintendent of Pebble Beach Golf Links. Mark Michaud, who was superintendent of Pebble Beach in the mid-1990s when Dalhamer was an intern and an assistant, said being superintendent there was like being on a treadmill that didn't stop. Michaud, now the superintendent at Shinnecock Golf Links, said the Pebble Beach job burned him out.

Dalhamer, who Michaud later appointed as his assistant, knows just what Michaud is talking about. Pebble Beach never stops — it's open daily, even on Christmas. The tee sheet is

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DALHAMER AND HIS CREW ARE ALSO MOTIVATED BY THE FACT THAT PEOPLE ARE PLAYING \$499 A ROUND TO PLAY PEBBLE BEACH.

The par-3 No. 7 is one of the most popular golf holes in the world.

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AT A GLANCE

Chris Dalhamer

His Work: Certified Golf Course Superintendent of Pebble Beach Golf Links

Trips Around the Sun: Almost 39

His Other Half: Married to Dionne for 11 years. Chris says he could never do what he does for a living (working a lot of hours with few days off) without a supporting wife like Dionne.

The Kids: Three girls — Stephanie, 8; Alexandra, 5; Ashley, 1.5

Hobbies: Playing in over-30 basketball and baseball leagues. The 6-3 Dalhamer can still touch the rim ... on a good day.

Favorite Baseball Team: The Cincinnati Reds (his parents were born in Dayton, Ohio).

Favorite Football Team: The Minnesota Vikings (he lived in Minneapolis for a year as a kid and became a huge fan).

Favorite Pig-Out Food: Pizza

Favorite Sports Movie: "Hoosiers"

Career Highlight: Hosting the 2010 U.S. Open



Chris Dalhamer hits the golf ball pretty well. He has a 10 handicap.

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always full, and there are tournaments galore. The course gets up to 70,000 rounds a year.

Sixty- to 70-hour workweeks are the norm. If there's a tournament going on, Dalhamer and his crew can count on working 100-plus hours.

When asked how he avoids burn out, Dalhamer, who had worked 21 straight days at the time of the question, chuckles. "It's tough," he admits.

There's no doubt the job is not for everyone. It takes a special and committed person.

The job can also be downright intimidating. For instance, in January when Dalhamer looked at the year in front of him, he saw the PGA's AT&T National Pro-Am in February, the U.S. Open in June, the Walmart First Tee Open in September and the Callaway Pebble Beach Invitational in November. And then there's all of the smaller but just-as-important tournaments mixed in. Talk about a crazy-busy year.

But Dalhamer and his crew didn't look at 2010 like it was an episode of "Survivor."

"We're using the busy schedule as a motivational thing," Dalhamer says. "Look at all the opportunities we get in one year! Some people don't get that much in 10 years. It's a tough, tough schedule, but it's achievable."

Dalhamer and his crew are also pressured and motivated by the fact that daily golfers are paying \$499 a round to play Pebble Beach. The crew takes pride in preparing the course to play as perfectly as possible for Joe Golfer as it would for Phil Mickelson.

"Everybody expects the course to be in the best shape possible," Dalhamer says.

DALHAMER, WHO TURNS

39 this month, may have been destined for this job. He's not only Monterey

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Dalhamer (right) says it's vital to surround yourself with good people, including assistant superintendents Jack Holt (left) and Billy Hausch (middle).

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born and bred, he has always enjoyed working outdoors, something he attributes to genetics.

"Many of my relatives are farmers in Ohio, where my dad was born," he says.

During high school and college, Dalhamer worked summers and winters as a greenkeeper at Poppy Hills Golf Course, a public course in Pebble Beach. That's when he got hooked on golf course maintenance. Dalhamer, also an avid golfer with a 10 handicap, graduated with a bachelor's degree in business (and a minor in plant science) from Chico State University.

After college, he participated in the Northern California Golf Association's internship program and landed at Pebble Beach, where he worked under Michaud. About 18 months into the two-year internship, Michaud named him as an assistant superintendent, a post Dalhamer held for about five years. It was a good time to work at Pebble Beach as Michaud and his crew readied

for the U.S. Amateur (1999) and the U.S. Open (2000).

"I owe a lot to Mark," Dalhamer says. "He gave me an opportunity at a young age."

Dalhamer was impressed with Michaud's work ethic and sense of urgency to get things done. "His motto was: Let's get as much done as we can get done today instead of putting it off until tomorrow," Dalhamer says. "That's a theme I've carried through."

But Dalhamer left Pebble Beach in 1999 to take the superintendent's job at nearby Carmel Valley Ranch Golf Club in Carmel, Calif.

"It was a good opportunity locally where I could grow in the profession," he says. "It was a good place for me to hone my skills."

When Troon Golf, a Phoenix-based management company, took over Carmel Valley in 2001, Dalhamer was soon promoted to senior agronomist for the West Coast. He enjoyed the position

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IS IT SAFER
ON TURF
THAN OTHER
PRODUCTS,
EVEN IN THE
HEAT OF
SUMMER?

YES



The six crew members here have a combined tenure at Pebble Beach of about 150 years. They are (left to right) Mark Thomas, Rick Pieper, Jack Holt, Raul Aguilar, Clayton Hughes and Tom Marchese.

2010 U.S. OPEN PREVIEW

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and the chance to visit golf courses throughout California.

But in 2002, Spyglass Hill Golf Course, another of the four courses at Pebble Beach Resorts, had an opening for a superintendent and came looking for Dalhamer.

"It was tough to leave Troon, but Spyglass is one of those courses that I've always loved," Dalhamer says.

Three years into his job at Spyglass Hill,

Tom Huesgen left Pebble Beach Golf Links for the Cornerstone (Colo.) Golf Club, and the resort named Dalhamer to replace him.

"I have a lot of experience locally," Dalhamer says.

Yes, he does, and he's definitely a local boy who has done well for himself. And Dalhamer has made an impression on, not only his crew workers, but others as well.

"I thought I knew it all when I arrived here three years ago," Hausch says. "But I've learned so much from Chris. I know from the time I spend here that I'll be much better off for the rest of my career than not having this experience."

Pat Gross, director of the Southwest region for the United States Golf Association's Green Section who has worked with Dalhamer for the past few years to prepare the course for the U.S. Open, says Dalhamer has what it takes to be the superintendent of a high-profile course

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PHOTO BY: LARRY AYLWARD

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"I LOOK AT IT AS AN HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE."

— CHRIS DALHAMER, ON HOSTING THE U.S. OPEN

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like Pebble Beach.

"You think about the qualities it takes to handle that kind of job, and Chris has them," Gross says. "He has a good work ethic, he's easy to work with, and he's one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet."

Dalhamer accepts the compliments with an unassuming nod and quick

smile. He appreciates the support, but is not one to rest on his laurels. There's no time for that, especially at a place that bustles like Pebble Beach.

"I'm not somebody that needs the limelight," he says.

Dalhamer will say that hosting the U.S. Open, which he calls the Super Bowl of golf, is the highlight of his career. And the great thing is he gets to do it at a spectacular place like Pebble Beach.

"I look at it as an honor and a privilege," Dalhamer says. "Here I am at a golf course that's one of the top in the world. And I not only get to maintain it, I get to maintain it for the U.S. Open."

Even on a gray and rainy day, tending the turfgrass at Pebble Beach Golf Links is still a thrill. ■

Dalhamer and his staff don't ever take the views of Pebble Beach for granted — like this view of No. 6.

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