

COLLEGE

MEMORIES

**TURF SCHOOL
STUDY**

RYAN BALDWIN, CGCS

COURSE: Highland Golf & Country Club, Indianapolis

SCHOOL: Purdue University **DEGREE, YEAR:** B.S., Agronomy
with emphasis in Turf Science, 1996

Ryan Baldwin didn't have much of a choice when it came to colleges, but he's glad it worked out that way.

"My mother is an extension agent with Purdue," Baldwin says. "I was destined to attend Purdue from day one."

Baldwin arrived at Purdue planning on majoring in biology, but that quickly changed. With a large student body and so many majoring in biology, he felt like a number more than a student. So he chose to switch over to agronomy.

"There were benefits going into agronomy — there was a lot of contact with fellow students and faculty," Baldwin says. "The relationships I was able to build at such a large college, but small field, was invaluable. It may have been even more important to me than the agronomy."

Because of his close proximity to the school, and his passion for it, Baldwin has remained heavily involved with Purdue. He says there is a connection between everyone in the "Purdue family," even with alumni who attended the university in different decades.

"I remember the first time I met Clark Throssell — he was my adviser — I called him 'Dr. Throssell,'" Baldwin recalls. "He stopped me and said, 'No, I'm Clark.' That's just an example of how down-to-earth everyone was there." ■

GOLFDOM READERS REFLECT ON A FEW OF THE GREAT TURF PROGRAMS IN THE NATION.

BY SETH JONES AND BETH GERACI

All superintendents are passionate about growing grass. And most are just as passionate about their turf schools. ►

Whether it's wearing team colors to the GCSAA Golf Tournament or chiding a rival school alumnus about the necessity of a "The" in his school's name, superintendents are bragging about their turf schools nearly every day.

► With a new college year underway, *Golfdom* asked turf school alumni why their alma maters are so dear to them. Here's what they said.

JOSH LEWIS, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

COURSE: Pasatiempo Golf Club, Santa Cruz, Calif. **SCHOOL:** Oregon State University **DEGREE, YEAR:** B.S., Horticulture with Turfgrass Management option, 2010

“One thing about being a small program is, it’s very tight-knit,” says proud Beaver Josh Lewis, who says he keeps in touch with his classmates as well as other Oregon State alumni. “Whether it’s right or not, with us being so small, it gives us

a feeling of ‘us against the world.’”

Lewis attended Oregon State when then-director Tom Cook, Ph.D., retired and current director Rob Golembiewski, Ph.D., took over. Lewis says that both professors encouraged his development as a turf manager.

One of Lewis’ favorite classes was what he called “a case study on steroids.” The class was divided into four different groups, and each group was assigned a part of a golf course. Their assignment was to get their particular piece of course up to U.S. Open conditions in 10 weeks.

“(Golembiewski) turned us loose. We had to come up with our own fertilizer plan and then push it,” Lewis re-



calls. “If we killed it, we killed it. It was all up to us.”

So how did Lewis’ green turn out?

“We set the green speed record,” he laughs. ■

KRIS “KD” DAVIS, SUPERINTENDENT

COURSE: Southern Hills Country Club, Tulsa, Okla. **SCHOOL:** The Ohio State University **DEGREE, YEAR:** B.S., Turfgrass Science, minor in Plant Pathology, 1999

At The Ohio State University, “football is the religion; basketball plays a close second.” So says Southern Hills Country Club superintendent KD Davis, who somehow managed to carve a path in turfgrass among the Ohio State sports hoopla.

When Davis attended OSU, it was the nation’s largest university. He knew if he was to control his future, he had to be an aggressive student. “Whether it was getting the right classes or fighting to get time with advisers and teachers, you were on your own, so to speak,” Davis explains.

But he wasn’t a bookworm, and when he recalls

his time as a Buckeye, Davis can’t help but smile.

“Whether it was the wealth of knowledge that was all around me to be soaked up or a few beers, it was definitely a great time in my life,” says Davis, who keeps in close contact with his college friends. Although he first lived on campus, he “got out of the dorms as fast as possible and never lived more than a 2-minute walk from campus. That is definitely where the fun was.”

“Dr. D.” Karl Danneberger and Dr. Michael Boehm influenced Davis most in class. The real life scenarios Danneberger presented taught him to become well informed before jumping to conclusions, while Boehm, a military veteran, taught him discipline.

Davis, 36, wanted to be a superintendent ever since he was 13, when he mowed yards just to pay for his membership at a local course. When Davis was 15, the course’s superintendent observed Davis was at the club more often than some of his crew. So he hired Davis part-time and the youngster played golf every day when his shift was over. That winter, he began exploring turf schools.

Davis’ curiosity and tenacity set the tone for his college and professional careers. Driven and disciplined, he continues to network with other OSU alums, which has propelled his success all the more.

Today, he brings his dog to the office, works outdoors and is living his dream. “The cons are the summer hours,” he says. “The pros are everything else.” ■

The Ohio State grad KD Davis (left) and three of his friends spell out “Ohio”.



Continued on page 26



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Continued from page 25

MARK KUHN, CGCS

COURSE: Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N.J. **SCHOOL:** Penn State University
DEGREE, YEAR: B.S., Agricultural Science, 1977

Mark Kuhns still remembers the exact name of the class — Ag Engineering 13. The course focused on irrigation and design.

"It's phenomenal how much that course has helped me today," Kuhns says. "We had to design the pump, decide on pipe sizes, everything. And it had to be efficient — the most minimal pump for the site."

Kuhns says that the Penn State program has gone more turf-centric since he left. When he was at school, he had to take more agricultural courses, which, in hindsight, also paid off.

"Agricultural engineering, horticulture, agricultural economics, accounting — those courses prepared me to look at the big picture," Kuhns says. "One class that stood out was my speech course. I had a great instructor who brought us out of our shells. He taught us how to walk and how to talk. Major Brigham — shows you how good the class was if I still remember his name."

To this day Kuhns is one of the biggest supporters of Penn State's turf program, often speaking at PSU functions and also recruiting future superintendents from the program.

"I thank Penn State

every day of my life," Kuhns says. "That's why I'm crazy (about the university.) It is a land grant institution and it did exactly what it was designed to do — it took a country boy and it turned him around." ■



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TROY LOONEY, SUPERINTENDENT

COURSE: The Emerald Golf Course, Saint Johns, Mich. **SCHOOL:** Michigan State University **DEGREE, YEAR:** B.S., Crop and Soil Sciences and turfgrass curriculum, 2007

Troy Looney, 29, wanted to pursue a career in marketing or psychology. But while a junior at Michigan State, he changed course, turning to a degree in turf.

He's glad he did, despite his dislike of ball marks.

"The MSU community as a whole is one I respect and admire and have incredible memories of," he says. "I was able to meet a wide variety of professors and students, all of whom had incredible knowledge and perspectives."

So many people at MSU left a lasting impression on Looney, he can't name them all. But two professors have stayed at the fore of his mind — James Crum, Ph.D. and John "Trey" Rogers, Ph.D., both of whom took time outside of class to answer Looney's questions.

"I found their classes to be intriguing and beneficial," Looney says. "More importantly, their guidance greatly improved my professionalism and enhanced my knowledge on how to succeed in the turfgrass profession."

Looney once showed his school spirit by helping build an MSU Homecoming float. It must have turned out pretty good, because the proud Spartan saw it on the front page of the newspaper the next day — a memory he'll always cherish. ■



TY MCCLELLAN, USGA AGRONOMIST, MID-CONTINENT

REGION **SCHOOL:** Kansas State University **DEGREE, YEAR:** B.S., Golf Course Management, College of Agriculture, 2001

When Ty McClellan arrived at Kansas State's campus in Manhattan, Kan., he was an architecture major. That lasted about a week.

"It was a combination of finding out that architecture wasn't what I wanted to do, and that K-State was coming out with this new golf management program in the fall of '98," McClellan remembers. "I had a farming background, so I decided to give it a try."

McClellan is happy he rolled the dice on the new program. He says it's one of the most innovative programs in the nation.

"You get your golf course work, then three minors: hotel and restaurant management, communications and business administration," McClellan explains. "The degree is designed to give you a well-rounded education as a superintendent, but also the credentials to go on to be a general manager, if you choose to do so."

After graduating from K-State, he went on to the University of Nebraska where he earned an M.S. in horticulture specializing in turfgrass. He later became GCSAA's first chapter liaison representative before joining the USGA. The well-rounded program at K-State was a key to his success, he says.

"Dr. Jack Fry taught one of my favorite classes — Golf Course Operations," McClellan recalls. "It was an all-inclusive look at golf course management. It blended financial decisions and turf science. It really helped us wrap our minds around the whole business of a golf course." ■



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