

This past July I visited Moundbuilders Country Club in Newark, Ohio. Golf course superintendent Greg Goedde and his crew were cleaning up fallen trees and branches that resulted

from a severe storm that occurred June 29 and 30. The storm made headlines at the AT&T National PGA Tour event at Congressional Country Club outside Washington, D.C., when fans weren't allowed on the course because of the potential danger presented by fallen trees and the loss of electrical power.

Like many facilities, Moundbuilders has a tight budget, and when large, unexpected weather events occur, the cleanup costs are equally as unexpected.

Goedde took the time to show me the golf course. What makes Moundbuilders unique is its location on what I'd consider sacred ground, ground renowned for its unique series of shapes called "earthworks." About 3,000 years ago, an ancient people constructed mounds or monuments that appeared in various, mostly geometric, patterns throughout a large area. The mounds are roughly eight feet high and were constructed throughout the Mississippi Valley. The purpose of the mounds still is somewhat of a mystery, because most were likely worship sites, not burial grounds.

During the 1800s, as the population of the country moved west, many of the mounds were destroyed from farming and city development. In most cases, the mounds probably weren't completely understood or even noticed. The mounds and their formation were difficult to visualize and completely understand without the ability to observe them from the air.

In the early 1900s, the members of Moundbuilders Country Club leased 125 acres from the Ohio Historical Society, of which 52 acres are enclosed by the octagon mound and 20 acres are enclosed by the circle mound. The club's members commissioned architect Tom Bendelow to lay out the golf course through and around the mounds. The course was originally nine holes when it opened in 1911. Then in 1923, it was expanded to 18 holes.

I'm not an expert on architectural design,

A Course Built on Sacred Ground

BY KARL DANNEBERGER, PH.D.



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but this probably was one of those "18 stakes on a Sunday afternoon" layouts in which Bendelow was paid \$25. I'm not sure whether Bendelow realized the importance of the earthworks or if they were viewed solely as obstacles that happened to intrude on his layout. Whatever the case, the earthworks haven't been disturbed in the 100 years the course has occupied the land.

As Goedde talked about the course, it became apparent that, besides his agronomic expertise, he had a thorough knowledge of the site's history and historical significance. In addition to golfer issues, he deals with tourists who visit daily. And like others who have strong feelings for the historical site, he speaks with confidence.

Listening to Goedde and other superintendents, you realize that the job of superintendent draws on more than just what you learned in class; it requires passion and a commitment to continuing education.

I have little doubt that if it weren't for the golf course, the earthworks likely would have been destroyed. And after leaving the course, I visited the earthworks historical site down the road, where I learned more about the ancient people who were the Moundbuilders.

Unfortunately, with large budget cuts at agencies such as the Ohio Historical Society, the state wasn't able to clean up the large oaks and other trees that fell around the earthworks during the storm.

Golf has many positives. In this case, Moundbuilders Country Club has a symbiotic relationship with not only its environment, but also with history.

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