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Golfdom

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SPRING 2025

2025 Tour Guide



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Golfdom // SPRING 2025

VOL. 81 // NO. 5

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Achieving conditions fit for prime-time television takes a massive effort. Meet the superintendents who make it happen

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Date	Tournament	Location	Superintendent	Years of Experience	College
April 3-6	Club de Champions	The Landing Golf & Athletic Club, Gaithersburg, Md.	Kevin Heston	21	Kansas State University
April 18-19	USF&M National Classic	Limestone National Golf Club, Limestone, Pa.	Kevin Heston	21	Kansas State University
April 24-27	Verde Bank Championship	Verde Ranch Golf Club, Arlington, Texas	Justin Allen	17	Texas State Technical College-Norma
May 15-18	AdamsWorld Championship	Blue Hills Country Club, Kansas City, Mo.	Logan Spontak	22	Kansas State University
May 22-25	Verde Bank Open	Verde Ranch Golf Club, Arlington, Texas	Kevin Heston	21	Kansas State University
May 29-June 1	EMC Health Championship	Balch's Golf & Country Club	Bill Cole	25	North Carolina State University
June 5-8	BMW Charity Pro-Am	Northlake Club, Dover, N.C.	Jordan Savage	7	Henry Langston High
June 18-21	Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Practice Open	Clayton Country Club, Wichita, Kan.	Jeff Peterson	39	Kansas State University
June 25-28	Herbert Health Championship	Pepper Creek Country Club, Springfield, Ill.	Brandon Ryan, CSCS	6	Kansas State University
July 10-13	The Associated	3NC Golfview, Northford, Conn.	Kevin Miley, CSCS	9	University of Rhode
July 17-20	Pine Valley Charity Championship	Highland Springs Country Club, Springfield, Mo.	Jon Prange, CSCS	9	State Technical College of Wisconsin
July 27-30	WGC Invitational	The Bear Club, Glenview, Ill.	Kevin Heston	21	Kansas State University
Aug. 3-6	Verde Bank Championship	Verde Ranch Golf Club, Arlington, Texas	Justin Allen	17	Texas State Technical College-Norma
Aug. 10-13	Verde Bank Championship	The Club at Lakeside, Omaha, Neb.	Jim Heston	16	University of Nebraska
Aug. 24-27	Verde Bank Open	Verde Ranch Golf Club, Arlington, Texas	Kevin Heston	21	Kansas State University
Sept. 15-18	Verde Bank Open for the Greenkeeper	Verde Ranch Golf Club, Arlington, Texas	Charles Schaeffer	12	University of Missouri
Sept. 22-25	National Children's Hospital Championship	Ohio State University Golf Club, Columbus, Ohio	Dennis Boudreau, CSCS	18	Ohio State University
Oct. 1-4	Champion's National Championship	The National Golf Club, Naples, Fla.	Kevin Heston	21	University of Nebraska
Oct. 9-12	Verde Bank Open	Verde Ranch Golf Club, Arlington, Texas	Kevin Heston	21	Kansas State University

Golfdom Every American and Canadian tournament, with information regarding the course's superintendent, experience and education | compiled by THE GOLFDOM STAFF

The 2025 Complete Tour Guide

BROUGHT TO YOU BY: **QUAL-PRO**

TOUR GUIDE PULLOUT

Complete list of every American and Canadian tournament

// Begins after page 34



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“... people are just interested in golf across the country. They’re ready for better weather and to be out there on the golf course themselves.”

SETH JONES, Editor-in-Chief & Associate Publisher

It’s a great time for golf

Here we are — the third *Golfdom* Tour Guide! A big golf clap to all the superintendents who gave us some of their valuable time so we could share their stories. And another big golf clap (I’m talking final putt at the U.S. Open on Sunday) to our advertising partners who made this issue possible.

My entire working career has been in the game of golf. What a time to be working in golf, and what a time to be a fan of golf.

In this same issue last year, I lamented what I called a “strange time in professional golf,” noting that the PGA Tour’s ratings were struggling. This was when I was still trying to wrap my head around LIV Golf and what it would do to the PGA Tour.

Well, things have changed. Ratings are no longer down. NBC notified golf media and shared that, according to Nielsen and Adobe Analytics, ratings are up for six straight weekends of PGA Tour golf. The viewership has increased by 10 percent compared to the same tournaments last year. The number jumps even more if the rain-delayed Players



EVENT	SAT./SUN.	FINAL ROUND
Mexico Open at VidantaWorld	1.6 million, ↑ 8%	2.0 million, ↑ 10%
Cognizant Classic in the Palm Beaches	1.8 million, ↑ 34%	2.2 million, ↑ 43%
Arnold Palmer Invitational	2.3 million, ↑ 10%	2.9 million, ↑ 21%
PLAYERS Championship	3.2 million, ↑ 2%	3.8 million, ↑ 4%
Valero Championship	1.8 million, ↑ 10%	2.3 million, ↑ 16%
Texas Children's Houston Open	2.3 million, ↑ 31%	2.8 million, ↑ 41%

*Total Audience Delivery (NBC and Peacock)

Championship round is excluded; viewership gains are 18 percent in that case.

This streak started with the Mexican Open at VidantaWorld (Feb. 22-23) and continued through the Texas Children’s Houston Open (March 29-30). Total Audience Delivery (TAD) averages came in at 2.2 million viewers across 41 hours of coverage (I’m shipping this magazine to press before the ratings of the Valero Texas Open at TPC San Antonio have been shared, so this streak could

still be on; time will tell). With the Masters here — always a ratings bonanza and a signal to the country that it’s time to dust off the sticks — golf is about to really take off.

So, what is to credit the ratings bump? It’s hard for me to say. We’ve had a few nice leaderboards, yeah. But mostly ... people are just interested in golf across the country. They’re ready for better weather and to be out there on the golf course themselves.

In this magazine last month, I did a Q&A with Greg

Nathan, CEO of the National Golf Foundation. In that Q&A, we talked about the NGF’s recent Graffis Report, which showed that for seven straight years, the number of green grass golfers has increased. There were 28.1 million golfers in America in 2024, an increase of 1.8 million from 2023. Nathan predicted that in the next 10 years, 50 percent of Americans will play, watch, read about or follow the game of golf.

Half of all Americans! For a game that, not so long ago, was considered a game only for elites.

My own professional golf year is off to a hot start. I recently attended the Players Championship, where our coverage was sponsored by the Quali-Pro team (I share what we saw at TPC Sawgrass in this month’s *Golfdom* Gallery on page 6). As I sit here and write, I’m about 24 hours from attending the Wednesday practice round at the 2025 Masters.

The U.S. Open at Oakmont is also on my agenda, among a few other tournaments.

You’ll see me dropping copies of this very issue in maintenance break rooms around the country. Why? Because we want to celebrate this great industry. Whether it’s a superintendent at one of the courses profiled in this issue or a superintendent at the local municipal course, it’s a great time to be in golf — I’m sure you agree. **G**

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Golfdom Gallery

THE PLAYERS
EDITION



1 Ready to rock Lucas Andrews, assistant director of golf operations, TPC Sawgrass, and Jeff Plotts, director of golf course maintenance, TPC Sawgrass, moments before Andrews addressed the maintenance team and got them fired up to take on afternoon maintenance during the 2025 Players Championship.



2 Tacos at 12 The Quali-Pro crew stopped by the taco stand near the No. 12 green to enjoy some great food and drinks on a beautiful day at TPC Sawgrass. From left to right are Allan Fulcher, vice president, turf, Quali-Pro; Erica Cardenas, marketing communications manager, Quali-Pro; Ryan Karapas, marketing director, Quali-Pro; Cal Hill, Gulf Coast area manager, Quali-Pro; Jeff Rampino, Florida territory manager, Quali-Pro and Denton Kurtz, Florida territory manager, BWI Companies.



3 Second place pays He's already finished in second place twice in this young PGA Tour season at the American Express and the Valspar Championship — giving Justin Thomas plenty to smile about.



4 All we need is a Miracle (and a McKay) (Left to right) Stephanie McKay, national account manager, Envu; Michael Miracle, national account manager, Envu; and Seth Jones, *Golfdom* editor-in-chief, met up at the TPC Sawgrass maintenance facility for this photo.



5 The blue crew These members of the TPC Sawgrass grounds crew looked ready for anything during the Players Championship — including a Monday morning finish when Rory McIlroy and J.J. Spaun went to a playoff.

6 Break room reading Before we wrapped up our Players Championship experience, we were sure to drop off 50 copies of *Golfdom* for the crew and volunteers to read while they were on break (it was the least we could do, especially considering all the Gatorades we helped ourselves to from their break room).



PHOTOS BY: GOLFDOM STAFF

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FROM THE ARCHIVE

As Erin Hills prepares to host its second-ever major (for more on that, read Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones' preview on page 48) we're heading back to 2017. In this U.S. Open preview from the May 2017 issue of *Golfdom*, Jones chats with Erin Hills Superintendent Zach Reineking about what it took to get the course ready for the Badger State's first major. To read the full story, visit Golfdom.com.

Magic Kingdom

BY SETH JONES

Looking at it today, it's hard to believe that back in 2008, Erin Hills, site of the 117th U.S. Open, didn't look good.

"It would be accurate to say the turf conditions were suffering," says Dana Fry, ASGCA, part of the design team for the Wisconsin course. "They had a very difficult time because they basically didn't have enough of a maintenance budget, money was very tight. It obviously needed a lot of work."

Maintenance necessitates money, something the then-owner of the course was running out of. Then the superin-

tendent abruptly left the course. Assistant superintendent Zach Reineking, 28 years old at the time, took over the position and wondered what was next.

"By September of 2009, we were in a situation. We had very constrained resources, a small staff and a big property," Reineking recalls. "Conditions of the course were not acceptable to my standards, or I think to most golfers' standards. When the ownership change happened ... I was very grateful."

In October of 2009, Wisconsin businessman Andy Ziegler, chairman of Artisan Partners Asset Management, bought the course. According to the *Milwaukee*

Journal Sentinel, Ziegler's first moves included doubling the maintenance budget and building a state-of-the-art maintenance facility.

"When Andy Ziegler came in, they got a chance to show what they can do — they got the proper amount of money," Fry says. "(Reineking) got through it. The time and effort and the days (the crew) put in — they're some of the hardest-working guys I've ever met in my life. I couldn't be more proud of Zach and his crew. Go back to 2007, '08, '09 — everything was sort of iffy as to what would happen there. He hung in, he was there when they had nothing, and now he's risen to the top. How could you not be proud of him and his crew?"

TAMING TALL FESCUE

Seeing the course today and imagining it less than remarkable takes some imagination. On a breezy day, the golden fescue rough moves in waves, like coastal courses in the United Kingdom. But this course is 35 miles northwest of Milwaukee. The unique turf at Erin Hills is one of the things that appealed most to Reineking when he started working at the course in December of 2004, when it was still a construction site.

"Most courses in Wisconsin are bluegrass and bentgrass, so the fine fescue at Erin Hills was exciting," says Reineking, a University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate who proudly received a Chick Evans Scholarship from his time caddying at Pine Hills CC in Sheboygan. "More than anything else, it needs a well-drained soil. The course has a fair amount of that soil, but we sit on the edge where we also have really dense clays. We have a lot of areas where we have to manage the fine fescue differently on a hill rather than in a valley." 



2025 Tour Guide

Achieving conditions fit for prime-time television takes a massive effort. Meet the superintendents who make it happen

Shane Lowry practices from a bunker during the 2025 Players Championship.

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Chubb Classic.....	Feb. 14-16
CME Group Tour Championship	Nov. 20-23
Grant Thornton Invitational	Dec. 12-14
Valspar Championship.....	March 20-23
ISCO Championship	July 10-13
Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions	Jan. 30 - Feb. 2
KPMG Women's PGA Championship	June 19-22
The Chevron Championship	April 24-27
James Hardie Pro Football Hall of Fame Invitational.....	April 4-6
Dominion Energy Charity Classic	Oct. 17-19
Senior U.S. Open.....	June 26-29
2025 U.S. Open	June 12-15
Black Desert Championship	Oct. 23-26
LIV Golf Chicago	Aug. 8-10
2025 Women's U.S. Open	May 29 - June 1
Procore Championship	Sept. 11-14
LIV Golf Indianapolis	Aug. 15-17
3M Open.....	July 24-27
Albertsons Boise Open.....	Aug. 14-17

PHOTO BY: GOLFDOM STAFF



Chubb Classic, CME Group Tour Championship and Grant Thornton Invitational

By Chris Lewis

A lot of people believe that things, good or bad, come in threes. But tournaments coming in threes is just a fact of life for Grayson Grainger and his team at Tiburón Golf Club as the course, for the third year in a row, will host three professional tournaments in one year.

A remarkable achievement in and of itself, this feat is even more noteworthy considering all three of its tournaments are held within a four-month time span. The Naples, Fla.-based club hosts the LPGA Tour's CME Group Tour Championship in November. Next, the Grant Thornton Invitational, an LPGA Tour and PGA Tour mixed teams event, is held in December. Finally, roughly two months later, the club hosts the Champions Tour's Chubb Classic.

To successfully host each of these events with a limited amount of preparation time, Grainger, director of agronomy, and his team members plan out every single detail possible. While planning, they try to ensure each tournament host's turf (whether an event is held at The Black Course or The Gold Course) isn't overly stressed. Consequently, whichever course is hosting the next tournament will be able to rebound quickly for it.

"We always plan our programs around the tournaments to make sure the courses are healthy enough to survive the stress of each event," Grainger says. "We also want to make sure course conditions peak at the right time. It comes down to proper planning for the preparations to be successful."

Grainger describes it as "surreal" that the club is achieving something unprecedented in the world of golf. He says all credit must be provided to his team members. After all, their proficiency ensures the club's accomplishments appear to be effortless.

"We're successful because we have great people that care and step up," he says. "We work hard to plan and make sure everyone knows what their role is and what their expectations are — and then they knock it out of the park."

Work-life balance

The idea of hosting three professional golf events in less than four months seems overwhelming, to say the least. How does Grainger avoid staff burnout? And how does he maintain his staff members' engagement to the point that they remain as productive in February as they were in November?

According to Grainger, Tiburón Golf Club schedules staff members in a highly effective manner. It's important that employee enjoy a work-life balance even in the midst of the club's challenging four-month stretch. Once a staff member's shift ends, so do their responsibilities. They're able to fully recharge and refocus prior to beginning their next shifts.

"We're very careful with how we schedule our staff members, as we provide them breaks and do whatever we can to avoid burnout," Grainger says.

Staff members are recognized for their efforts, as the club's culture is employee oriented. Staff morale remains high year-



Grayson Grainger

FAST FACTS

DIRECTOR OF AGRONOMY:

Grayson Grainger

LOCATION: Naples, Fla.

Chubb Classic

DATES: Feb. 14-16

CLUB: Tiburón Golf Club
(Black Course)

TOUR: Champions Tour

CME Group Tour Championship

DATES: Nov. 20-23

CLUB: Tiburón Golf Club
(Gold Course)

TOUR: LPGA Tour

Grant Thornton Invitational

DATES: Dec. 12-14

CLUB: Tiburón Golf Club
(Gold Course)

TOUR: LPGA Tour and PGA Tour

round, Grainger says, and adds that the club attracts and retains “first-class” employees.

“Our staff members love these events, and they love seeing our courses on television,” Grainger says. “They take pride in them, so they always step up when it counts.”

Non-stop course improvement mode

Although Mother Nature certainly has an influence on Tiburón Golf Club’s hosting capabilities, Grainger and his staff must overcome a wide array of other challenges, too. For instance, the first two professional tournaments are held during the end of Naples’ growing season. Additionally, the last event (the Chubb Classic) is hosted toward the end of the region’s non-growing season. Not to mention, each event occurs during the club’s busy season as well.

“The Chubb Classic is especially challenging since the golf course has been packed with play for the past three months, which are also the slowest months for turf growth, so nothing is recovering,” he says. “That’s really when the course’s turf health is at its worst, and we have an event on television on top of it all, so that’s stressful.”

In response, Grainger and his team conduct cultural practices and projects on both courses all summer long. Each year, they upgrade the courses’ paths, expand their native and waste areas and address any areas that consistently provide issues by amending soil and replacing or repairing sod.

Last summer they began a four-year irrigation replacement project. In addition to this project, staff members are presently renovating some of the courses’ bunkers with Capillary Concrete. Some tee areas are also being laser-leveled whereas some greens’ collars are being fraise mowed.

“We try to be in non-stop course improvement mode through the summer months,” Grainger says.

Overcoming other challenges

Aside from hosting its trio of professional golf tournaments, Tiburón Golf Club must also prepare for ancillary events like pro-ams and concerts. Grainger says pro-am days can be especially difficult since they are often early shotgun starts that require staff members to work early in the day and leave the courses quickly when necessary.

Pro-ams may require afternoon shotgun starts as well, leading to a lot of golfers and, in turn, significant cart usage. As a result, the courses may get damaged within hours of the start of a professional tournament.

Concerts present another substantial challenge for Grainger and his staff.

“The last thing you want is a stake through an irrigation pipe in the middle of a competitive round a few hours before 10,000



A member of Tiburón GC’s agronomy team at work rolling The Gold Course’s 14th green during the CME Tour Championship.

people will be on the driving range watching a concert,” he says. “To minimize the likelihood of this issue, we must be as prepared as possible from our organization capabilities to our communication with one another.”

For tournament preparation, his best advice for other superintendents is for them to focus on two aspects above all else: planning and communication. He says each is paramount, and superintendents can’t “overdo either one.”

Grainger advises superintendents to ask their staff lots of questions, which will enable them to have a solid understanding of how everything will transpire. Expectations must be discussed with each staff member. Likewise, timelines also have to be thoroughly communicated.

“Talk through everything with your team and plan every detail of the tournament week,” he suggests. “There are always curveballs, but if you have planned well, they are easier to handle.”

Despite those curveballs, Grainger says that hosting professional tournaments is incredibly rewarding. The primary reason? Every team member has an opportunity to demonstrate their expertise on a global stage.

“Watching The Black Course and The Gold Course being showcased on television — with the world’s best players competing on them — each of our staff members are filled with immense pride and satisfaction,” he says. “It is so fulfilling to watch them see their hard work pay off not once or twice, but three times.”

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Valspar Championship

By Chris Lewis

As superintendent Ryan Stewart prepared for his 23rd Valspar Championship, he discovered one primary challenge prior to the tournament year after year.

Since Innisbrook Resort's Copperhead Course is sand based, it dries out quickly. The course, located in Palm Harbor, Fla., could have an inch-and-a-half of rain and still dry out rapidly.

Stewart and his team must keep the course's overseed in great shape during the months leading up to the tournament, especially in January and February. Currently held in March every year (Viktor Hovland won this year's tournament), the PGA Tour's Valspar Championship requires Copperhead's agronomy crew to water the course daily until Monday of tournament week.

"Unless there's a rain event, we water the grass daily to ensure Copperhead's ryegrass doesn't burn out," Stewart says. "If it does burn out, it's gone for good — there's no way to bring it back."

Aside from daily watering, Stewart also uses time domain reflectometry (TDR) sensors, which enable him and his team members to gauge the moisture content of each green. Unfortunately, he can't utilize this technology nearly as well on fairways,



FAST FACTS

DATES: March 20-23

SUPERINTENDENT: Ryan Stewart

CLUB: Innisbrook Resort

LOCATION: Palm Harbor, Fla.

TOUR: PGA Tour

Ryan Stewart

rough or tee areas. As a result, he simply ensures each of these turf areas is well watered every day from early January to mid-March.

"We also have two interns from October to the beginning of the tournament that hand water and check each green every weekend," he adds. "Innisbrook has 48 grounds crew members for all of its four courses (63 holes in all), too. From January to March, they'll help Copperhead's 16 grounds crew members a lot."

Keeping it cool

Stewart doesn't overwater either, which would result in soft conditions and, in turn, less of a challenge for PGA Tour professionals. Instead, his team strives to simply "keep the overseed cool" by hand watering bunker faces, greens and tee boxes while fully monitoring water levels. They'll also run overheads on fairways and rough so that each area remains cool without being too wet.

Of course, aside from watering Copperhead Course's overseed suitably before the Valspar Championship, Stewart must also properly initiate the overseed process each year.

"Every year, when we first put the overseed down during the initial eight to 10 days, we need to guarantee it remains wet at all times," he says. "Luckily, we have a 12-day closing after the overseeding occurs, allowing us to establish it. Those 12 days are huge for us."



Innisbrook's crew of volunteers during tournament week includes local supers and assistants and help from several TPC courses.

Continued on page 14

PHOTO BY: RYAN STEWART

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The Copperhead Course at Innisbrook Resort originally featured 27 holes when it opened in 1974. Eventually, the resort retooled nine of the Copperhead's holes as the North Course.

Continued from page 12

Stewart annually uses ryegrass overseed on Copperhead Course's fairways, rough and tee areas. For its greens, he utilizes *Poa trivialis* instead, an overseed that thrives in moist soil.

In addition to preparing the Copperhead Course for the Valspar Championship, Stewart doesn't overlook the significance of recovery either. He believes other superintendents must understand what their course conditions will be like before *and* after a tournament if they're interested in hosting one.

"Superintendents will have added traffic for weeks before a tournament begins as the bleachers are set up, and they'll have foot traffic from the fans during the tournament," he emphasizes. "The aftermath of a professional tournament can take a few months for the course to fully recover from and get back in the shape it was before the event."

Patience is key

To ensure superintendents — especially those who are hosting professional tournaments for the first time — are fully prepared, Stewart advises them to take before and after photos, particularly in areas where bleachers are placed. Whatever they do, damage will certainly be noticed in those areas.

By taking photos and providing before and after proof of damage, superintendents can explain exactly why some areas need

more care and attention than others after a tournament, especially if their guests and members ask.

"Superintendents should also communicate with the company that's putting up the bleachers and tents so that they don't hit irrigation lines," he adds.

The bottom line? Patience will be key for guests, members and staff alike, as the recovery process will likely take some time. At a minimum, Stewart believes a course should be closed for a day or two immediately after a tournament's conclusion. According to Stewart, this time of pause is huge, and arguably, absolutely necessary.

"The turf will already be stressed out enough during the tournament," Stewart explains. "The last thing superintendents will want to do is stress it out any further after that."

Along with implementing each of these processes, Stewart recommends superintendents recruit as many volunteers as possible. Even though Innisbrook Resort has more agronomy team members than most golf resorts (due to its four courses), he still receives additional assistance during the Valspar Championship.

"We'll have about 10 volunteers, four of them from TPC courses, as they'll work with the PGA Tour, hand water greens and collect greens data," he says. "The other volunteers come from local courses. With everyone's help, the Valspar Championship will continue to be a success for years to come." 

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ISCO Championship

By Chris Lewis

Looking ahead to the 2025 ISCO Championship, Walter Pritchett, CGCS, is unsure of what to expect. Although he has served as director of golf course operations at Louisville's Hurstbourne Country Club for 22 years, the club has never hosted a PGA Tour tournament.

The unknowns are plentiful. First, several infrastructure and logistical elements will need to be considered outside the ropes before and after the tournament. Second, Pritchett is unsure how many fans will be attending the tournament. Similarly, he doesn't know how much foot traffic will impact the club's course conditions — and how long they'll actually be influenced.

But he does know this: When it comes to each of his agronomy team members, his confidence is high. Not only that, but the various agronomic programs that his team has implemented in recent years, months and weeks will guarantee that Hurstbourne Country Club is in top condition for each PGA Tour player.

"With the right preparation and teamwork, I know we'll rise to the occasion and make this a championship to remember," Pritchett says.



Hurstbourne's recent course refresh saw rebuilt bunkers, sand splash eliminated from the greens and contour adjustments.

Renovating for the future

Before Hurstbourne Country Club was announced as this year's ISCO Championship host site, a renovation project had already begun. From 2022 to 2024, course architect Keith Foster oversaw a "course refresh," as bunkers were rebuilt and sand splash was eliminated from greens. Contours were slightly adjusted on each green, too. In addition, a few tee areas were relocated, and some fairway lines were refined.

Furthermore, while Foster supervised the refresh, a 2.5-acre short game practice facility was built. It has three chipping greens and a 9,000-square-foot putting green. In preparation for the ISCO Championship, a tournament practice area was built on



Walter Pritchett

FAST FACTS

DATES: July 10-13

**DIRECTOR OF GOLF COURSE
OPERATIONS:** Walter Pritchett

CLUB: Hurstbourne Country Club

LOCATION: Louisville, Ky.

TOUR: PGA Tour

Hurstbourne Country Club's nine-hole Chapel Course as well.

"PGA Tour representatives have said it's one of the top three practice areas they've seen," Pritchett says. "Each of these improvements has positioned us well as we prepare for this event."

Although certain infrastructure and logistical issues give him pause, they simply won't have a significant, negative influence on Pritchett and his agronomy team. A long-time volunteer at other PGA Tour events over the years, he has witnessed how beneficial teamwork is with regard to a tournament's success.

Luckily for Pritchett, his agronomy team is comprised of highly trained and well-educated individuals who communicate efficiently with one another and work well together. Their combined efforts will lead to success, period.

"I have full confidence in our team," he stresses. "They'll do their best, embrace the challenges and enjoy the ride."

A shared commitment

While reflecting on his decades of experience as a tournament volunteer, Pritchett has also witnessed the camaraderie that often forms among industry peers. If his past experiences are of any indication, such companionship will be created during the 2025 ISCO Championship, likely between volunteers and Hurstbourne Country Club agronomy staff members alike.

"It never ceases to amaze me how a group of professionals comes together — working long hours with nothing more than a promise of hot coffee and a meal — yet leaves with lifelong friendships," he says. "This event is about more than just golf anyway. It's about the shared commitment, teamwork and connections that will last well beyond tournament week."

These connections will especially occur among the roughly 40 volunteers who will be assisting Pritchett and his agronomy team throughout the 2025 ISCO Championship.

"To attract each of the volunteers we need for the ISCO Championship, we are fortunate to have a strong network and an active local superintendent chapter, the Kentuckiana Chapter," Pritchett says. "It will provide the majority of our volunteers."

As for any other volunteers that the chapter doesn't offer? Pritchett believes some of his long-standing friends and peers in the industry will assist, too — professionals he's previously worked alongside.

"They'll give back to help us deliver a successful event," he adds.

Aside from volunteers, Pritchett will also utilize various local vendors' and suppliers' skills and assets.

"They're often unnoticed or underappreciated during tournaments, but their support is essential, from assisting with logistics to helping volunteers and ensuring courses are tournament-ready," he says. "They play a major role in making any Tour stop possible, and I know I'll be relying on our vendors and suppliers heavily." 



Pritchett says the connections formed between volunteers and staff during preparations makes hosting extra rewarding.

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

By Chris Lewis

In 2022, Orlando's Lake Nona Golf and Country Club began to host the LPGA Tour's Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions. Held every January, the tournament is the LPGA Tour's first event of the year, leading to high attendance and ample television coverage.

While preparing for the popular tournament, director of golf course maintenance and grounds Nicholas Dolimpio must overcome a significant, annual challenge: the unpredictability of Mother Nature.

After all, when it comes to weather conditions, January is a notoriously inconsistent month for the Orlando area. For instance, at times, Lake Nona's 18-hole championship course will be covered with frost in the morning. From there, temperatures will often approach 90 degrees F by late afternoon.

Consequently, the course has a constantly shifting environ-



Lake Nona G&CC, a Tom Fazio design, offers a wooded canopy on the front nine and stunning views of Lake Nona on the back.



Nicholas Dolimpio

FAST FACTS

DATES: Jan. 30 - Feb. 2

**DIRECTOR OF GOLF COURSE
MAINTENANCE AND GROUNDS:**
Nicholas Dolimpio

CLUB: Lake Nona G&CC

LOCATION: Orlando, Fla.

TOUR: LPGA Tour

ment, one that doesn't enable Dolimpio to prepare his agronomy team members for the tournament two weeks in advance, let alone one week.

"This variability in temperature has a direct impact on how we manage our overseeded greens," Dolimpio says. "When it's cold, they require very little growth regulation. But if temperatures spike during tournament week, like they did this year, the overseed can become quite active."

Therefore, Dolimpio and his team members must respond accordingly, primarily by implementing necessary adjustments to maintain consistent green speeds. While conducting such adjustments, the agronomy team must be careful. Although they could easily stop overgrowth with regulators, that's not necessarily the best method.

"Growth regulators would send speeds north of 13, which is far too fast for the celebrity field and a guaranteed pace-of-play issue," he says. "It's a delicate balance. We want to meet the LPGA Tour's expectations for green performance without grinding play to a halt."

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PHOTO BY: LAKE NONA G&CC



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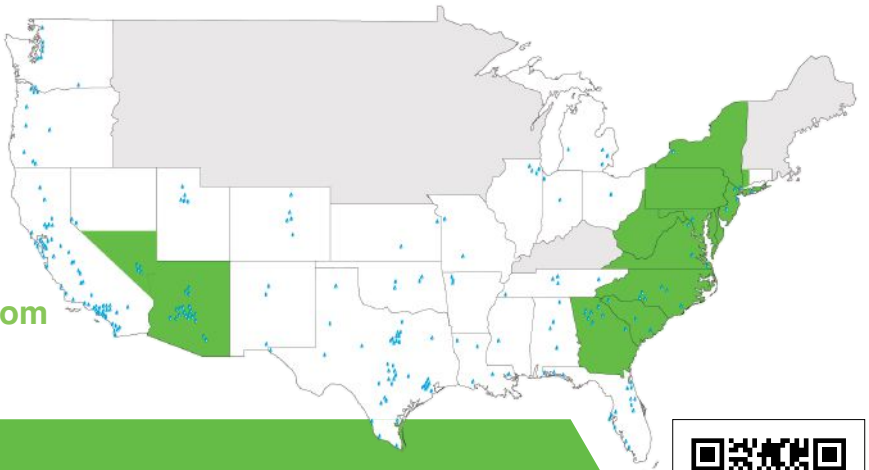
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During tournament week, the crew at Lake Nona G&CC is amped up and ready to go, but putting in so many hours is tiring. “Managers are typically on-site from 4:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.,” Dolimpio says. “It’s critical to have everything organized and ready to go.”

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This is especially crucial to ensure the tournament runs on time and is broadcast entirely on NBC, according to the LPGA Tour’s preferences.

“So, finding that sweet spot between performance and pace is always a bit of a dance,” he notes.

At the same time, the annual event encounters another vital issue every year: It’s always held during “the heart” of Lake Nona G&CC’s peak season. To provide members with pristine conditioning once the tournament concludes, Dolimpio’s agronomy team must quickly restore each area of the course. Through their rapid involvement, the course will be in peak condition immediately after the final round.

After all, unlike some golf clubs, nothing can be aerified at Lake Nona G&CC post-tournament. Simply put, there is plenty of golf to still be played, as members will enjoy three more months of prime season after the tournament.

“As a result, losing turf due to drought stress during the event simply isn’t an option,” Dolimpio adds.

Volunteers make a difference

Dolimpio has served as Lake Nona G&CC’s director of golf course maintenance and grounds since 2022. In that time, he’s met dozens upon dozens of volunteers who have positively impacted the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions.

Throughout the last four years, Dolimpio has had as many as 10 volunteers and as few as four. Despite his agronomy team’s talents and experiences, every volunteer’s additional assistance has certainly been welcomed.

“While we always plan to operate successfully without relying on extra help, every additional set of hands makes a difference,” he says.

The majority of the volunteers are either former Lake Nona agronomy team members or industry friends. However, Dolimpio occasionally meets volunteers in other ways.

“We’ve had a few reach out on their own looking to gain experience as they prepare to host their own tournaments,” he says.

Be prepared for anything

After working in various agronomy capacities at Lake Nona G&CC since 2015, Dolimpio advises other superintendents to remember four key words: be prepared for anything.

From last-minute call-outs to mowers’ mechanical issues and weather delays, Dolimpio has overcome every obstacle imaginable and believes superintendents can follow suit — through a proper backup plan.

“A backup plan for every possible scenario will save valuable time when adjustments are needed on the fly,” he says. “During tournaments, managers are typically onsite from 4:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., at least, so it’s critical to have everything organized and ready to go, especially as fatigue sets in.”

In fact, Dolimpio thinks that the more superintendents can “front-load and anticipate” throughout professional golf tournaments, “the smoother everything will run when inevitable challenges come up.”

Dolimpio adds that build-out and television crews must fully understand the importance of protecting the course while they’re working. After spending several months preparing for a tournament, superintendents must do everything possible to minimize the likelihood of “careless work undoing” their preparations.

“At Lake Nona, the build-out team knows nothing goes in the ground without our agronomy team marking irrigation first,” he stresses. “Superintendents must be clear and firm and earn the build-out and television crews’ respect early on.” 

PHOTO BY: LAKE NONA G&CC



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KPMG Women's PGA



By Scott Hollister

In the world of professional tournament golf, there may be no greater contrast in championship pedigree between the course playing host to an event and the person in charge of maintaining that course than what you'll find in Frisco, Texas, the sprawling Dallas suburb located about 30 miles due north of downtown.

That's where you'll find Fields Ranch, the relatively new 36-hole facility — 46 holes if you include The Swing, the property's 10-hole short course — that's part of the PGA Frisco development along with the headquarters of the PGA of America and an Omni hotel and resort.

The East and West courses at Fields Ranch opened for play in the spring of 2023 and were designed to host major championship golf. But to date, that aspiration is still in its infancy — this year's KPMG Women's PGA Championship, June 19-22, on the Gil Hanse-designed East Course, is just the second big event to be contested at Fields Ranch.

Contrast that with Roger Meier, the facility's director of golf course maintenance operations. He brings a deep history in major championship golf to his work at Fields Ranch, which made him an obvious choice to oversee operations at a facility that will ultimately host two PGA Championships in 2027 and 2034, another KPMG Women's PGA in 2031 and a Senior PGA Championship in



The senior leaders on the maintenance team at Fields Ranch are (from left) Zach Barber, Bryce Yates and Nic Zickefoose.

2029 (after hosting its first in 2023).

"I love championship golf. There's just a whole other level to what it takes to put these events on, and the camaraderie with your peers and the people who come in to support you is something else. It's fun," Meier says.

"That's what intrigued me most about this project. During our initial conversations, what they were talking about and committing to was pretty unprecedented. There was a commitment from the PGA, from Omni, from the city of Frisco that was really exciting. It felt like the stars were aligning, and it was something I wanted to be a part of."

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Roger Meier

FAST FACTS

DATES: June 19-22

DIRECTOR OF GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS: Roger Meier

CLUB: Fields Ranch East at PGA Frisco

LOCATION: Frisco, Texas

TOUR: LPGA Tour

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Small town to the big-time

Meier grew up in the small town of Trumansburg in upstate New York and was introduced to golf course management through a job at the city's public golf course. With encouragement from superintendent Mike Addicott (now at Newman Municipal Golf Course in Ithaca, N.Y.), he enrolled in the turfgrass program at the nearby SUNY Cobleskill.

His experience there and the degree he would ultimately earn spurred him to jobs with the PGA Tour's TPC network before he landed his first head superintendent position at Chariot Run Golf Club in Laconia, Ind., just over the state line from Louisville, Ky.

And it was in the Derby City, at Valhalla Golf Club, where he would ultimately get his first taste of championship golf. In 2010, Valhalla's longtime superintendent, Mark Wilson, announced his retirement, and the PGA of America — which owned Valhalla then — picked Meier to succeed him from a deep pool of talented, experienced turfgrass managers.

"It was really a stab in the dark for me to apply (at Valhalla). I thought it was a win just to be asked to interview," Meier says. "But I was blessed that they offered me the job, and I ultimately hosted three major championships there and oversaw a big reno-

vation in 2012 (in advance of the 2014 PGA Championship). It was such a rewarding experience."

New challenges

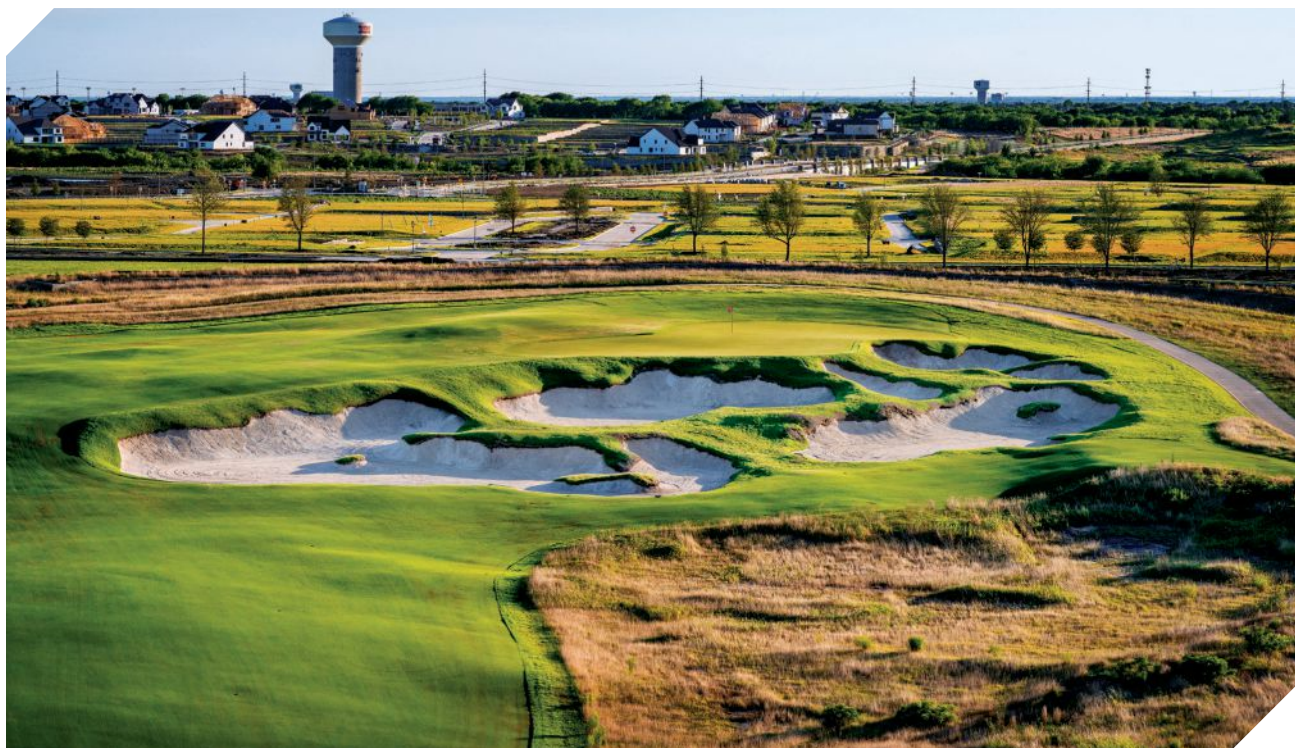
Meier moved to Fields Ranch and the PGA Frisco project in 2019, not long after the PGA of America committed to relocating their longtime national headquarters from Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., to the suburbs of Dallas.

His experiences at Valhalla made him a perfect fit there. On the construction side, he'd work with golf course architects Gil Hanse and Beau Welling to build an unrivaled golf campus that would include a pair of championship golf courses, a short course and a huge practice green.

On the tournament side, hosting majors was planned even before a shovel of dirt had been turned on the project, so Meier's track record at Valhalla fit right in with the PGA's plans to bring 26 championship events to Fields Ranch in its first 12 years of operation, including those two PGA Championships.

Construction on the golf courses began in earnest in 2020. The goal was to complete the entire development — golf courses, hotel, PGA headquarters — by 2022, but COVID threw a wrench in those plans. While the golf courses were ready in 2022, other

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Fields Ranch East will host five PGA Championships over the next 10 years, including the PGA Championship in 2027 and 2034, the Senior PGA Championship in 2029 and the KPMG Women's PGA Championship in both 2025 and 2031.

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Fields Ranch East's layout and design was inspired by the restoration of Southern Hills CC in Tulsa, Okla., a former and future PGA Championship host site. Gil Hanse — who designed Fields Ranch East — also led the restoration of Southern Hills.

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elements of the project fell behind, so the official opening was delayed until 2023, when Field Ranch East successfully hosted the Senior PGA.

As much as COVID tested his team during construction, Meier notes that the massive scope of PGA Frisco was an even bigger factor that had to be managed.

"Really, the biggest challenge with this project as a whole was just the scale of it. I mean, it's a huge facility," he says. "The entire development, the entire tract of land, is 2,500 acres. We ended up taking 600 acres for the golf course. They say everything is bigger in Texas, and that's definitely true here."

Tournament tested

During the final stages of construction at Fields Ranch, Meier admits that it took extra focus to avoid being distracted by the major championships that were on the horizon for the East Course.

Thankfully, Meier assembled an all-star team of senior leaders that helped crews stay focused on the task at hand and resist the urge to spend too much time thinking about the 2023 Senior PGA, this year's KPMG Women's PGA and beyond. That team now features Bryce Yates, managing superintendent of golf and grounds; Nic Zickefoose, Fields Ranch East superintendent; and Zach Barber, Fields Ranch West superintendent.

"Bryce was with me at Valhalla, and he was one of the first ones that I thought, 'I've got to get this guy to Texas for with me,'" Meier says. "Super smart, great individual, great leader. I knew I needed him in my hip pocket to help me with this massive project.

"And we've had a great group of other superintendents with

us, too, through construction, grow-in and now guys like Nic and Zach for regular operations and tournament prep. They make everything go here."

Meier says that the lessons learned from hosting the Senior PGA in May 2023 will help provide an improved road map for preparations for the KPMG Women's PGA on everything from maintenance of the bermudagrass playing surfaces (TifEagle on greens and Northbridge on everything else) to tournament logistics.

"We learned a lot from the Senior PGA, not only from an agronomic standpoint and how the golf course is continuing to evolve and mature but even from the spectator experience and how things flow around the golf course," Meier says.

And how to apply what was learned during the first championship won't just affect this year's tournament, Meier says. Data is being collected and analyzed to incrementally improve preparations for each subsequent championship.

"We're going to host 26 PGA events here, so we're learning as we go and trying to understand the dynamics of the facility from an agronomic side," he explains. "We've been collecting information for day one, really, as we were constructing the (East) course and seeing Gil's vision, what direction the holes would run, how things would align, where the wind would come from.

"We've worked very closely with Kerry Haigh (the PGA's chief championship officer) on collecting data during the Senior PGA, during advance week, studying weather conditions, assessing what the native areas would look like. That event was in May, and the Women's PGA is in June, and a month can make a big difference here. But we're learning what we can and trying to be ready for any eventuality." 

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The Chevron Championship

By Seth Jones

When Tim Huber, a native of Ohio, was first asked if he'd consider taking his turf career to Texas, his initial visual was tumbleweeds blowing in the wind.

More than a dozen years later, he now considers Houston home and will argue with anyone in favor of the Lone Star State and its brand of golf.

"It's a great place to live. It's just a phenomenal place. In Houston, it's a great economy, so it's really good for golf — golf is booming," Huber says. "I always tell guys in the North, don't forget the South. I know there's that stigma that bentgrass is better, but these ultradwarf bermuda greens are really, really good a lot of the year."

The ultradwarf bermudagrass greens at The Club at Carlton Woods, The Woodlands, Texas, host course of the LPGA Tour's Chevron Classic, fall under Huber's supervision. The tournament, the first of the five women's major championships, is now in its third year at Carlton Woods. There are two more years guaranteed in the contract, but Huber's hope is that the Chevron stays at Carlton Woods for another seven years.

"We're between the Kentucky Derby and the Masters," Huber says. "We kind of found our week on NBC and we're really excited about how we fit in with the sports schedule."



Now in its third year of hosting the first major of the LPGA season, Huber says the course is in a great place for players, thanks to a recent renovation.



Tim Huber

FAST FACTS

DATES: April 24-27

DIRECTOR OF AGRONOMY:

Tim Huber, CGCS

CLUB: The Club at Carlton Woods
(Nicklaus Course)

LOCATION: The Woodlands, Texas

TOUR: LPGA Tour

Everything in its right place

The first year Carlton Woods hosted the Chevron, the Jack Nicklaus Signature Course was 22 years old and in need of freshening up. That renovation took place two years ago. Greens, tees, fairways and bunkers were all redesigned, and a new irrigation system was installed.

Now, the course is pretty much on autopilot in terms of design.

"This year, we don't have to prep a whole lot. Thankfully, we have good, functioning bunkers. Everything kind of falls in nicely to how the LPGA wants to set it up," Huber, a Certified Golf Course Superintendent, says. "We've got a Tom Fazio design on one course and a Jack Nicklaus on the other. The designs are solid. They were built in an era I feel was one of the better eras, during a golf boom. There was a competition for big and bold — and that's what these courses are. They're really large courses with a lot of character."

Lilia Vu won the championship in 2023 in a playoff against Angel Yin. Last year, Nelly Korda won by two strokes. It was her second career major and that win was her fifth consecutive win, a feat only done previously by Nancy Lopez (1978) and Annika Sorenstam (2004-2005).

Huber says the professionals love the

PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM HUBER

course because every shot is important.

“The shot value is right in front of you, the strategies are right in front of you,” he says. “I think that’s why a lot of the good players that come and play the course really like it because if you hit good shots, you’re rewarded. If you try to hit a shot and take the risk and miss, you’re punished. And that’s not just one or two holes — it’s every single hole.”

For fellow superintendents and golf fans, Huber points out No. 3 as a hole to watch for. It’s a par three over water that plays to 186 yards from the back. The LPGA Tour players hit hybrids and are able to hold the green.



Huber says the two courses at Carlton Woods complement each other nicely. The Fazio Course is pure fun, while the Nicklaus Course is fun because it’s so challenging.

He’s just a stud

From a young age, Huber knew he wanted to work outdoors and with plants. As a teenager, he was laser-focused on the health of his home garden. His high school in Mentor, Ohio, had a horticulture program, which further fanned his passion for growing plants.

When he and his high school friends went and worked for a local golf course, it was a done deal. Huber knew that the path to a golf course superintendent was the path for him.

“I was 16-, maybe 17-years-old then. I just turned 40,” Huber reflects. “I was fortunate to work for some good superintendents in Cleveland. The rest is history.”

That history includes a start at Quail Hollow in Cleveland and then the two-year turf program at Penn State University. He interned at Muirfield Village, Dublin, Ohio, under the tutelage of Paul Latshaw, now director of golf course operations at Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa. He was the assistant-in-training at Mayfield Sand Ridge Club when he made the move to Texas over a decade ago.

Huber has been the director of agronomy at Carlton Woods since 2018. The key to his success, he says, are the people surrounding him and lots of planning.

“My staff knows what to expect with what’s to come and the expectation of the people coming to the course,” Huber says. “We do a lot of planning. Superintendents can get stuck in their own minds. They see *Poa*, or they see something while looking down. But really, it comes down to, are the bunkers raked how the members want them? Is the moisture content in them good? How are the greens?”

He also has a secret weapon: his mechanic, Francisco Mata.

“If I need something done, Francisco is my guy,” Huber says.

“He’s been a mechanic his whole life. He went to Operation Desert Storm as a civilian contractor and worked on Humvees and military equipment just because the pay was good. Then he came back and became a golf course mechanic. He’s just a stud — he can fix anything.”

While Huber calls Francisco “a stud,” a common compliment in Texas, Miles Carlson, director of agronomy at Blessing GC in Fayetteville, Ark., has a similar Texas slang for Huber: a good dude.

“Tim’s just a good guy, always willing to share ideas,” Carlson says of his former neighbor. “He hosts an incredible LPGA event at Carlton Woods and it was a privilege when he was right across the street as a neighboring superintendent.”

With his third Chevron Championship right around the corner — the tournament is April 24-27 — Huber seems relaxed yet ready to go. It’s probably because he loves what he does.

“I have a good work/life balance. I like the day-to-day challenge, and personally, I think growing grass is fun,” Huber says. “I’ve always liked doing the outdoor stuff with plants, but I’ve developed this new love for the guys that I work with, especially the ones that are on a career path for this industry. Because the older you get, the more you realize: I’m where I am because of the guys who I worked for.”

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James Hardie Pro Football Hall of Fame Invitational

By Chris Lewis

Since 2007, The Old Course at Broken Sound Club has hosted a Champions Tour event every year aside from 2022 when it was redesigned by Rees Jones.

As a result, the Boca Raton, Fla.-based course's agronomy team is fully prepared for everything associated with hosting an annual professional golf event. In fact, superintendent Kyle Asbury considers any challenges that he and his team members may face to be "minimal."

"We don't make any significant changes for the tournament aside from the afternoon shifts during tournament week," he stresses. "Our biggest challenge revolves around coordinating with the tent and scaffolding teams to ensure they know where they can and can't place tent stakes."

He adds, "They also need to know where they can and can't drive to avoid damaging the turf, particularly in high-traffic areas where they're working."

This is especially critical for Asbury and his team members, as they never close the course prior to a Champions Tour event. Instead, it remains open to members until Monday of every tournament week.

While reflecting on his minimal lack of agronomy issues before, during and after each Champions Tour event, he believes there are two key reasons for his success: innovative technology and volunteers.

Innovative technology

In 2022, The Old Course at Broken Sound Club's agronomy team installed the Rain Bird CirrusPRO system, a true game changer ever since. Due to this state-of-the-art technology, Asbury's team members no longer have to use radios to communicate information, such as irrigation data, to one another. They don't need to input statistics like irrigation changes and patterns into an irrigation computer anymore either.

Instead, they now have one irrigation control system, which can be connected to any smart device. Therefore, each team member can access data, adjust settings and update their irrigation systems regardless of where they are.

"Each of my team members can do everything they need to from anywhere, as long as they have a cell phone or tablet," Asbury says. "It's extremely convenient to no longer use radios."



Kyle Asbury

FAST FACTS

DATES: April 4-6

SUPERINTENDENT: Kyle Asbury

CLUB: Broken Sound Club

LOCATION: Boca Raton, Fla.

TOUR: Champions Tour

By receiving data quickly and efficiently, Asbury's team members can adjust to course conditions more rapidly than ever before. Perhaps an unexpected storm has led to more rain than expected? Now, they can instantly stop irrigating and conserve water instead.

Or maybe they'll discover that certain areas of the course need more or less water than they previously thought. No matter what their findings depict, they can respond accordingly, all while using their smart devices.

Additionally, Asbury's team members can acquire up-to-date information about their irrigation processes — such as when an area was last watered, the amount of water that was used and how much time is still necessary to fully water the area — within a matter of seconds.

"We can access our pump station on it whenever we need to as well," Asbury says. "It's given each of us so much peace of mind, especially when we're preparing for tournaments."

Asbury's team members also utilize ASB taskTracker's Advanced Scoreboards feature for their daily task board. Through this feature, they can change the task board's language to whichever dialect they prefer, from Creole to English to Spanish.

"With a diverse team of Creole- and Spanish-speaking professionals, this feature helps us have clear and effective communication across the board," Asbury explains. "By easily changing the task board's language on their phones or tablets, team members' fieldwork is more convenient, leading to a seamless operation at all times." 



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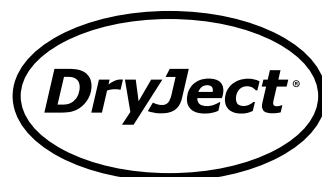
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Dominion Energy Charity Classic

By Chris Lewis

This October, Richmond's Country Club of Virginia will host the Champions Tour's Dominion Energy Charity Classic for the 10th consecutive year. As has been the case every year since 2016, director of golf and grounds management Christian Sain will encounter one key challenge above all others: Mother Nature.

Although the tournament's annual October or November timing is ideal for fans — the weather is much cooler while they walk around the James River Course (one of the club's three 18-hole championship courses) — it's far from idyllic for Sain and his agronomy team.

The primary reason? By mid-October, when the club will be hosting the tournament this year, the James River Course's bermudagrass (on its fairways, rough and tee areas) stops growing due to cooler weather and shorter days.

"Since we're in the lower part of the transition zone, we grow bermudagrass and zoysiagrass on most of our playing surfaces, along with bentgrass on our greens," Sain says. "During most years, we've also had a light frost by the time the tournament has begun, which could have led to issues if we weren't properly prepared."

Autumn maintenance

A few years ago, the James River Course even had a hard frost during the tournament's pro-am days, resulting in numerous delayed tee times. In addition to this potential for light to even hard frost, Sain and his team must overcome another critical issue annually: fallen leaves. He says this issue is solely dependent on recent weather conditions, particularly during the summer.

To ensure the course's conditioning remains as impeccable as possible (and with as few leaves as possible), Sain and his team will remove all leaves with blowers and rakes early in the morning, prior to the beginning of each pro-am and round. Moreover, his

team must exercise great caution to not damage the James River Course's bermudagrass fairways, rough and tee areas before and during the Dominion Energy Charity Classic.

"Since the bermudagrass is growing very little or not at all, any bermudagrass that's scalped while mowing leading up to the tournament or during the week of the tournament itself won't recover," he says.

Thankfully, Sain has a large staff of agronomy professionals, along with some volunteers, who help him enhance the James River Course's conditioning throughout the tournament. Plus, Sain also acquires support from agronomy staff members from The Country Club of Virginia's two other 18-hole championship courses: Tuckahoe Creek and Westhampton.

"We're able to use staff members and equipment from each of these courses to meet the James River Course's maintenance needs throughout the Dominion Energy Charity Classic," Sain says. "As a result, we can reduce the number of volunteers we need."

In all, roughly 30 individuals volunteer to assist Sain every year during the tournament. Each volunteer offers support in the morning — some work every day of the tournament, while others only work for a couple mornings throughout the week.

"We usually just need help in the mornings from our volunteers," he says. "Most volunteers are local, so they're able to drive to the club from their homes whenever we need an extra hand."

Future focused

To ensure the Dominion Energy Charity Classic is successful yet again, Sain says that the James River Course is enhanced annually in various ways. In addition to the James River Course, The Country Club of Virginia's two other courses are improved every year, too.

For instance, drainage is consistently upgraded, existing tee boxes are regularly enhanced and new tee boxes are built from time to time, while greens are expanded or re-grassed at times.

During the spring of 2024, every bunker was rebuilt on the James River Course as well, while some were also added or removed. Each new bunker — built by Jessup, Maryland's McDonald and Sons Golf Course Builders, via course designer Andrew Green's direction — reflects original course architect William Flynn's vision.

"Because of their work, the Dominion Energy Charity Classic will continue to be a successful Champions Tour event," Sain says. "But, above everything else, our hard-working staff members who dedicate several weeks to the tournament are the main reasons why it's such a great event." 



Christian Sain

FAST FACTS

DATES: Oct. 17-19

DIRECTOR OF GOLF AND GROUNDS MANAGEMENT: Christian Sain

CLUB: The Country Club of Virginia

LOCATION: Richmond, Va.

TOUR: Champions Tour

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Senior U.S. Open

By Rob DiFranco

The East Course at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Colo., is no stranger to hosting major tournaments. In the more than 100-year history of the resort, it has hosted the 1959 U.S. Amateur — Jack Nicklaus' first major win — the 1995 U.S. Women's Open — Annika Sorenstam's first major win — the 2008 U.S. Senior Open, the 2011 U.S. Women's Open and the 2018 U.S. Senior Open.

In 2025, East and West Course superintendent Michael Sartori will host his fourth major. For two of those four, Sartori, an Ohio native who has lived at the base of the Rockies for more than 20 years now, has had to deal with the wrath of Mother Nature.

"My first (tournament as superintendent) was in 2008, the Senior Open, which was at the end of July," he says. "We hit record heat in the city four out of the seven days of the championship. At the 2011 Women's Open, we had lightning delays and ended up finishing on Monday. So, that was a unique challenge."

The weather in 2018 at the Senior Open, Sartori says, was flawless. Leaving him hoping — and knocking on wood — for



Sartori expects nearly 80 volunteers from around the country, including former assistants who are now superintendents.



Michael Sartori

FAST FACTS

DATES: June 26-29
EAST AND WEST COURSE
SUPERINTENDENT: Michael Sartori
CLUB: The Broadmoor
LOCATION: Colorado Springs, Colo.
TOUR: Champions Tour

another year of good weather. Luckily for Sartori, with the help of both his team and the agronomy folks at the USGA, the weather is usually the only thing he has to worry about in the lead-up to tournament week.

"Having that consistency with (USGA) executive director Ben Kimball, who started with us at the 2011 Women's Open and was with us in 2018 for that Senior Open, and all of the Broadmoor leadership (being) the same over a number of these championships, has made it a very easy and seamless process from one championship to another," he adds.

Small town feel

The area around The Broadmoor is quaint; 15 minutes south of downtown Colorado Springs, the second largest city in the state. But that changes during tournament week, Sartori says, as spec-

Continued on page 39

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PHOTO BY: MICHAEL SARTORI

Date	Tournament	Location	Superintendent	Years of Experience	College
April 3-6	Club Car Championship	The Landings Golf & Athletic Club, Savannah, Ga.	Tyson Helsel	21	Kansas State University
April 16-19	LECOM Suncoast Classic	Lakewood National Golf Club, Lakewood Ranch, Fla.	Joel Ehrhart	12	Edison State College
April 24-27	Veritex Bank Championship	Texas Rangers Golf Club, Arlington, Texas	Justin Allen	12	Texas State Technical College Waco
May 15-18	AdventHealth Championship	Blue Hills Country Club, Kansas City, Mo.	Logan Spurlock	22	Kansas State University
May 22-25	Visit Knoxville Open	Holston Hills Country Club, Knoxville, Tenn.	Ryan Blair, CGCS	24	University of Tennessee
May 29-June 1	UNC Health Championship	Raleigh (N.C.) Country Club	Billy Cole	25	North Carolina State University
June 5-8	BMW Charity Pro-Am	Thornblade Club, Greer, S.C.	Jordan Strange	2	Horry-Georgetown Tech
June 19-22	Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Wichita Open	Crestview Country Club, Wichita, Kan.	Josh Troutman	19	Kansas State University
June 26-29	Memorial Health Championship	Panther Creek Country Club, Springfield, Ill.	Brandon Razo, CGCS	6	Penn State University
July 10-13	The Ascendant	TPC Colorado, Berthoud, Colo.	Kevin Malloy, CGCS	10	University of Arizona
July 17-20	Price Cutter Charity Championship	Highland Springs Country Club, Springfield, Mo.	Jon Prange, CGCS	9	State Technical College of Missouri
July 24-27	NV5 Invitational	The Glen Club, Glenview, Ill.	Adam Wiles	5	Michigan State University
July 31-Aug. 3	Utah Championship	Ogden (Utah) Golf & Country Club	Greg Gilmore	33	Weber State University
Aug. 7-10	Pinnacle Bank Championship	The Club at Indian Creek, Omaha, Neb.	Jim Nedrow	16	University of Nebraska
Aug. 14-17	Albertsons Boise Open	Hillcrest Country Club, Boise, Idaho	Matt Gourlay, CGCS, MG	19	Kansas State University
Sept. 11-14	Simmons Bank Open for the Snedeker Foundation	Vanderbilt Legends Club, Franklin, Tenn.	Charlie Schauwecker	6	University of Missouri
Sept. 18-21	Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship	Ohio State University Golf Club (Scarlet Course), Columbus, Ohio	Dennis Bowsheer, CGCS	38	Ohio State University
Oct. 2-5	Compliance Solutions Championship	The Patriot Golf Club, Owasso, Okla.	Blake Willems	9	University of Arkansas
Oct. 9-12	Korn Ferry Tour Championship	French Lick (Ind.) Golf Resort (Pete Dye Course)	Russ Apple, CGCS	21	Oklahoma State University

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Date	Tournament	Location	Superintendent	Years of Experience	College
Jan. 2-5	The Sentry	Plantation Course at Kapalua (Maui, Hawaii)	Andrew Rebman	20	University of Arizona
Jan. 9-12	Sony Open	Waialae Country Club, Honolulu	Dave Nakama, CGCS	22	University of Hawaii
Jan. 16-19	The American Express	Pete Dye Stadium Course, La Quinta, Calif.	Denver Hart	7	University of Guelph
Jan. 22-25	Farmers Insurance Open	Torrey Pines GC (South Course), San Diego, Calif.	Devin Cullen	4	Penn State University
Jan. 30-Feb. 2	AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am	Pebble Beach (Calif.) Golf Links	Pete Bachman, CGCS	9	Penn State University
Feb. 6-9	WM Phoenix Open	TPC Scottsdale (Afrz.) (Stadium Course)	Brandon Reese	13	Texas Tech University
Feb. 13-16	The Genesis Invitational	Torrey Pines GC (South Course), San Diego, Calif.	Devin Cullen	4	Penn State University
Feb. 27 - March 2	Cognizant Classic in the Palm Beaches	PGA National Resort (The Champion), Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.	Keith Einwag, CGCS	39	Lake City CC
March 6-9	Arnold Palmer Invitational	Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club & Lodge, Orlando, Fla.	Chris Flynn, CGCS	23	SUNY Cobleskill
March 13-16	The Players Championship	TPC Sawgrass (The Players Stadium Course), Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.	Jeff Plotts	32	University of Georgia
March 20-23	Valspar Championship	Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead Course), Palm Harbor, Fla.	Ryan Stewart	18	
March 27-30	Texas Children's Houston Open	Memorial Park Golf Course, Houston	Paiker Henry	3	North Carolina State University
April 3-6	Valero Texas Open	TPC San Antonio (Texas) (Oaks Course)	Roby Robertson, CGCS	34	Kansas State University
April 10-13	The Masters	Augusta (Ga.) National Golf Club	Brent Seyer	17	Purdue University
April 17-20	RBC Heritage	Harbour Town Golf Links, Hilton Head, S.C.	Jonathan Wright	29	University of Kentucky
April 24-27	Zurich Classic of New Orleans	TPC Louisiana, Avondale, La.	Tyler McCool	15	Mississippi State University
May 1-4	The CJ Cup Bryon Nelson	TPC Craig Ranch, McKinney, Texas	Steve Gross, CGCS	35	Ohio State University
May 8-11	Trust Championship	The Philadelphia Cricket Club (Wissahickon Course)	Dan Meerisman	26	Michigan State University
May 8-11	Myrtle Beach Classic	Dunes Golf and Beach Club, Myrtle Beach, S.C.	Steve Hamilton, CGCS	29	Virginia Tech University
May 15-18	PGA Championship	Quail Hollow Club Charlotte, N.C.	Keith Wood	23	Rutgers University
May 22-25	Charles Schwab Challenge	Colonial Country Club, Fort Worth, Texas	Rich McIntosh	10	Ohio State University
May 29-June 1	The Memorial Tournament	Muirfield Village Golf Club, Dublin, Ohio	Chad Mark	9	Ohio State University
June 5-8	RBC Canadian Open	TPC Toronto at Osprey Valley (North Course)	David Hunter	21	University of Guelph
June 12-15	U.S. Open	Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club	Mike McCormick	25	UMass
June 19-22	Travelers Championship	TPC River Highlands, Cromwell, Conn.	Jason Cannata	14	UConn
June 26-29	Rocket Mortgage Classic	Detroit (Mich.) Golf Club	Sam Moynihan	17	West Virginia University
July 3-6	John Deere Classic	TPC Deere Run, Silvis, Ill.	Jonathan Graham	17	University of Nebraska
July 10-13	ISCO Championship	Hurstbourne Country Club, Louisville, Ky.	Walter Pritchett, CGCS	22	Aquinas College
July 17-20	Barracuda Championship	Tahoe Mountain Club (Old Greenwood), Truckee, Calif.	Joe Valente	14	St. Joseph's of Maine/UMass Amherst
July 24-27	3M Open	TPC Twin Cities, Blaine, Minn.	Joe Rolstad	16	North Dakota State University
July 31-Aug. 3	Wyndham Championship	Sedgefield Country Club, Greensboro, N.C.	Chad Cromer	24	Appalachian State University
Aug. 7-10	FedEx St. Jude Championship	TPC Southwind, Memphis, Tenn.	Nick Bisanz	22	Ogeechee Technical College
Aug. 14-17	BMW Championship	Caves Valley Golf Club, Owings Mills, Md.	Kyle Seidel	9	Ohio State University
Aug. 21-24	Tour Championship	East Lake Golf Club, Atlanta, Ga.	Ralph Kepple, CGCS	42	Ohio State University
Sept. 11-14	Procore Championship	Silverado Resort (North Course) Napa, Calif.	David Walter	9	Ohio State University
Sept. 26-28	Ryder Cup	Bethpage State Park (Black), Farmingdale, N.Y.	Andy Wilson	36	Rutgers University
Oct. 2-5	Sanderson Farms Championship	The Country Club of Jackson (Miss.)	Stanley Reedy	29	Mississippi State University
Oct. 23-26	Black Desert Championship	Black Desert Resort, Ivins, Utah	Ken Yates	24	Iowa State University
Nov. 20-23	The RSM Classic	Sea Island Golf Club (Seaside Course) St. Simons Island, Ga.	Ethan Yates	8	Central Piedmont Community College
Dec. 12-14	Grant Thornton Invitational	Tiburón Golf Club, Naples, Fla.	Grayson Grainger	22	Horry-Georgetown Tech



CHAMPIONS

Date	Tournament	Location	Superintendent	Years of Experience	College
Jan. 16-18	Mitsubishi Electric Championship at Hualalai	Hualalai GC, Kaupulehu-Kona, Hawaii	Dan Husek	16	Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
Feb. 17-19	Chubb Classic	Tiburon Golf Club, Naples, Fla. (Black Course)	Grayson Grainger	18	Horry-Georgetown Technical College
March 7-9	Cologuard Classic	La Paloma Country Club, Tucson, Ariz.	Daniel Mayfield	7	University of Arizona
March 21-23	Hoag Classic	Newport Beach (Calif.) Country Club	Scott Dey	14	California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
March 28-30	The Galleri Classic	Mission Hills Country Club (Dinah Shore), Rancho Mirage, Calif.	Jonas Conlan	24	Michigan State University
April 4-6	James Hardie Pro-Football Hall of Fame Invitational	The Old Course at Broken Sound, Boca Raton, Fla.	Kyle Asbury	7	
April 25-27	Mitsubishi Electric Classic	TPC Sugarloaf, Duluth, Ga.	Kyle Worthy	15	Clemson University
May 2-4	Inspire Invitational	The Woodlands (Texas) Country Club	Chris Hartman	25	Sam Houston State University
May 15-18	Regions Tradition	Greystone Golf & Country Club, Birmingham, Ala.	Travis Cook	14	Florida Gateway College
May 22-25	Senior PGA Championship	Congressional Country Club, Bethesda, Md.	Pete Wendt, CGCS	32	Penn State University
May 30-June 1	Principal Charity Classic	Wakonda Club, Des Moines, Iowa	Dane Wilson	20	Western Kentucky University
June 6-8	American Family Insurance Championship	TPC Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.	Eric Leonard	17	Kishwaukee College
June 19-22	Kaulig Companies Championship	Firestone Country Club, Akron, Ohio	Larry Napora	41	Penn State University
June 26-29	U.S. Senior Open Championship	Broadmoor Golf Club, Colorado Springs, Colo.	Michael Sartori	22	Ohio State University
July 11-13	DICK'S Sporting Goods Open	En-Jolie Golf Club, Endicott, N.Y.	Sullivan Murphy	11	SUNY Delhi
Aug. 8-10	Boeing Classic	The Club at Snoqualmie (Wash.) Ridge	Ryan Gordon	20	Oregon State University
Aug. 15-17	Rogers Charity Classic	Canyon Meadows Golf & Country Club, Calgary, Alberta, Canada	Chris Nelson	25	Fairview College
Aug. 22-24	The Ally Challenge	Warwick Hills Golf & Country Club, Grand Blanc, Mich.	Dylan MacMaster	7	Michigan State University
Sept. 5-7	Stifel Charity Classic	Nowood Hills Country Club, St. Louis, Mo.	Michael Null	44	Iowa State University
Sept. 12-14	Sanford International	Minnehaha Country Club, Sioux Falls, S.D.	David Swift	34	Penn State University
Sept. 19-21	PURE Insurance Championship	Pebble Beach (Calif.) Golf Links	Pete Bachman, CGCS	9	Penn State University
Oct. 3-5	Constellation Fuyrk & Friends	Timuquana Country Club, Jacksonville, Fla.	Alan Brown	24	University of Tennessee
Oct. 10-12	SAS Championship	Prestonwood Country Club, Cary, N.C.	Lee Hancock	28	Clemson University
Oct. 17-19	Dominion Energy Charity Classic	The Country Club of Virginia, Richmond, Va.	Christian Sain	35	North Carolina State University
Oct. 24-26	Simmons Bank Championship	Pleasant Valley Country Club, Little Rock, Ark.	Don Arnbust	14	UMass
Nov. 13-16	Charles Schwab Cup Championship	Phoenix (Ariz.) Country Club	Craig Werline	32	Ohio State University
Dec. 14-17	PNC Championship	Ritz-Carlton Golf Club, Orlando, Fla.	Joshua Kelley	19	Illinois State University

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Date	Tournament	Location	Superintendent	Years of Experience	College
Jan. 30 - Feb. 2	Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions	Lake Nona Golf & Country Club, Orlando, Fla.	Nick Dolimpio	5	Delaware Valley University
Feb. 6-9	Founders Cup	Bradenton (Fla.) Country Club	Jamie McCrosky	20	University of Rhode Island
March 27-30	Ford Championship	Whirlwind Golf Club, Phoenix, Ariz.	Matt Bachmann	11	University of Arizona
April 2-6	T-Mobile Match Play	Shadow Creek Golf Course, Las Vegas, Nev.	Scott Delpiere	10	Michigan State University
April 17-20	JM Eagle LA Championship	El Caballero Country Club, Los Angeles	Zachary Stevens	15	UMass
May 1-4	Black Desert Championship	Black Desert Resort, Ivins, Utah	Ken Yates	24	Iowa State University
May 8-11	Mizuno Americas Open	Liberty National Golf Club, Jersey City, N.J.	Greg James	39	Penn State University
May 29 - June 1	U.S. Women's Open	Erin Hills Golf Course, Erin, Wisc.	Zach Reineking	21	University of Wisconsin
June 6-8	ShopRite PGA Classic	Seaview A Doce Hotel (Bay Course), Galloway, N.J.	William Leedom	2	Penn State University
June 12-15	Meijer LPGA Classic for Simply Give	Blythefield Country Club, Belmont, Mich.	Collin Romanick	27	Penn State University
June 19-22	KPMG Women's PGA Championship	Field Ranch East at PGA Frisco (Texas)	Roger Meier	25	SUNY Cobleskill
June 26-29	Dow Championship	Midland (Mich.) Country Club	Kevin Welp, CGCS	35	Michigan State University
Aug. 14-17	Portland Classic	Columbia Edgewater Country Club, Portland, Ore.	Jim Myers, CGCS	33	Ohio State University
Aug. 21-24	CPKC Women's Open	Mississauga Golf and Country Club	Jonathan Smith	9	University of Guelph
Aug. 28-31	FW Championship	TPC Boston, Norton, Mass.	Kyle Elliott	4	SUNY Cobleskill
Sept. 11-14	Kroger Queen City Championship	TPC River's Bend, Maineville, Ohio	Ian Schlather	9	Penn State University
Sept. 19-21	Walmart NW Arkansas Championship	Pinnacle Country Club, Rogers, Ark.	Michael Takach	20	Rutgers University
Oct. 1-4	LOTTE Championship	Hoakalei Country Club, Oahu, Hawaii	Tim Brubaker	24	UMass
Nov. 13-16	The Annika	Pelican Golf Club, Belleair, Fla.	Chris Corr	4	Rutgers University
Nov. 20-23	CME Group Tour Championship	Tiburon Golf Club, Naples, Fla. (Golf Course)	Grayson Grainger	22	Horry-Georgetown Technical College
Nov. 9-12	The Annika	Pelican Golf Club, Belleair, Fla.	Grayson Grainger	22	Horry-Georgetown Technical College



Editor's note: This list was compiled by the Golfdom staff using GCSSA Tournament Fact Sheets (gcsaa.org/Media/Tournament-Fact-Sheets) as well as phone calls and emails to attempt to make the list as complete as possible. In some cases, we could not confirm information by press time. For corrections and updates for next year's list, email [Golfdom Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones, sjones@northcoastmedia.net](mailto:Golfdom-Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones, sjones@northcoastmedia.net).

Note regarding job titles: Many of the people listed under the header of Superintendent go by various job titles, including Director of Agronomy, Director of Grounds and Director of Golf Course Maintenance, among others.

Date	Location	Superintendent	Years of Experience	College
April 4-6	Trump National Doral, Miami, Fla.	Tim Williams	22	SUNY Delhi
June 6-8	Robert Trent Jones Golf Club, Washington, D.C.	Scott Furlong, CGCS	25	University of Maryland
June 27-29	Maridoe Golf Club, Carrollton, Texas	Tanner Westbrook	5	UC Riverside
Aug. 8-10	Bolingbrook (Ill.) Golf Club	Jeff Gerdes	26	University of Illinois
Aug. 15-17	The Club at Chatham Hills, Westfield, Ind.	Chad Allen	3	Penn State University
Aug. 22-24	The Cardinal at Saint John's, Plymouth, Mich.	Kevin Peck	3	Michigan State University



"We chuckle watching the pros play, because it's tough to know how much the mountain plays into the greens," says Sartori. "There are a few tricky hole locations that break into the mountain, so it really messes with them when that happens."

Continued from page 34

tators and media flock to the resort.

"It's a completely different change from our normal day-to-day. Once the grandstands start being built and the tents start being put up, those just turn us into a championship facility. Even though we strive for that every day, I feel like when the fans show up and the tents and the bleachers and all of these things are being put in place, and the setup begins that prior week and the week of championship week, it's just a completely different feeling. Everyone is completely motivated to do whatever we need to do."

With that sudden shift to a bustling area comes the change back to a quiet area of town, Sartori adds. With the Senior U.S. Open set for the last week of June, that leaves less than two months to get everything done for the crew at The Broadmoor.

Sartori says that managing emotions during the weeks after the tournament has left town is just as important as keeping your cool when the cameras are on.

"We still have July and August to go with a lot of events at the hotel with our corporate and member side of things," he says. "So, to keep everyone's motivation high can be a little bit tricky. There is a little bit of a letdown after these championships, but we still have a lot of work to do afterward, and keeping everyone motivated is our top priority."

To keep that energy up, Sartori seeks help from his team, in-

cluding East Course assistants Scott Metz and Shane Mosser; West Course assistants Jonathan Worscheck and William Dwyer; equipment manager Sam Martin and Fred Dickman, director of golf maintenance and grounds.

"As long as you make each job fun and are positive and motivating, the staff feeds off of that," Sartori says. "That curtails some of that mundane work that we do. It's all about keeping it a fun, positive, energetic and positive environment. I think the more you do that, the less letdown there's going to be."

Rocky Mountain weather

Back to the weather challenges, Sartori says in his 20-plus years of working in Colorado Springs, he's learned to deal with the ups and downs that come with a course nestled right up against the mountain. But still, he's not sure what to expect on any given day.

"We had snow last night, but the day before, it was 75, so it fluctuates on a completely random scale. Usually, by mid-April, we'll get in more of a decent weather pattern, but a snowstorm in late April or early May is not out of the question," he says. "We sit so close to the Rocky Mountains that we can get bad hailstorms. Directly after the Senior Open in 2018, (a hailstorm) kind of wiped us out. We were closed for a couple of weeks, but it's just one of those challenges you work through and take daily here. It keeps it unique and fun and always makes my job and day interesting." 



2025 U.S. Open

By Seth Jones

When the 2025 U.S. Open tees off at Oakmont CC in June, it will be a full-circle moment for grounds superintendent Mike McCormick. After all, he experienced the 2010 U.S. Women's Open at Oakmont as an intern during his college days at UMass Amherst and the 2016 U.S. Open at Oakmont as an assistant superintendent.

Now, he'll experience the U.S. Open as the man in charge, responsible for the impeccable conditions that Oakmont is famous for.

"I met my wife in Pittsburgh. Her family is from Pittsburgh," McCormick says. "Oakmont was always certainly at the top of my list in terms of a dream job. I never thought I'd get the opportunity, but when it came knocking, I ran as fast as I could."



No. 9 at Oakmont is one of the most iconic greens complexes in golf. With the clubhouse framing it, the green is a combination of No. 9 green and the practice putting green.

An outstanding culture

McCormick grew up obsessed with golf. His mom has a photo of him as a youngster in the backyard, hitting balls while wearing a Greg Norman straw hat.

There was a public, 36-hole course nearby: Stow Acres CC in Stow, Mass. McCormick felt like it was a second home.

"I started working there pretty young — 11, 12, picking range balls and washing carts," McCormick says. "I noticed the grounds guys and then became infatuated with that. The superintendent, Erick Koskinen, who is now with Aquatrols, asked me if I wanted to join the team. I fell in love with it."

McCormick says he's been fortunate in his career that he's had several mentors who have helped guide him.

"Erick is really the one who got me going — he's the one who



Mike McCormick

FAST FACTS

DATES: June 12-15

GROUNDS SUPERINTENDENT:
Mike McCormick

CLUB: Oakmont CC

LOCATION: Oakmont, Pa.

TOUR: PGA Tour



One of the most famous bunkers in golf is the 102-yard-long Church Pews bunker, which sits between No. 3 and No. 4 at Oakmont. The bunker was once six separate bunkers, which eventually became one ahead of the 1935 U.S. Open.

suggested I go to the University of Massachusetts,” McCormick says. “That crew, from when I was working there in middle school and high school, there are still eight or 10 guys who are still in the turf industry.”

As for the pressure of now being in the captain’s chair, he says he’s got a lot of confidence because of the team at Oakmont.

“We have an unbelievable team. The culture amongst our team, our leadership, is outstanding,” he says. “Max Claassen, our director of agronomy, he’s just an absolute stud. And then, the membership, the leadership at the club, has been unbelievably supportive toward our team. It’s an exciting time at the club. We’ve done a lot of work to the golf course and the surrounding facilities. Oakmont is an anchor site with the USGA now, so we’re really excited about that and to continue Oakmont’s championship legacy and traditions.”

McCormick says he takes the job day by day while not getting too excited when things go bad or even when things go well.

“Ultimately, I’ve been through it before — obviously not in this

role — but I think at the end of the day, our team, the support of the club and the guys that are going to come back and help support us during the championship week, I feel pretty good about all of that,” he says.

David Delsandro was the previous superintendent at Oakmont, working at the club as the director of U.S. Open operations and projects from 2013 to 2017, then as the superintendent from 2017 to 2022. Now the co-owner of Agronomic Advisors, Delsandro says McCormick is “built for this stage.”

“He’s a rare breed who not only has the leadership and pres-

Continued on page 42

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QUALI-PRO

Continued from page 41

ence, but also the technical acumen to produce elite agronomic conditioning,” Delsandro says. “It’ll be inspiring to watch him operate under the brightest lights in the game of golf.”

What’s new in 2025

For this U.S. Open, McCormick says to expect some new looks to the greens and bunkers. In 2023, Gil Hanse was brought in for a comprehensive restoration. About 250 yards were added to the course and some of the grassing lines were changed back to what Henry Fownes did in his original design.

“Oakmont is known for its iconic greens, but what had happened over the years, from all the sand splash, aerification and topdressing procedures, is that the perimeters of the greens had built up in elevation,” McCormick says. “Gil came in and referenced historical photos and did some excavations around greens. All the hole locations we had in 2016 are still there, but on every green we have a plethora of new hole locations as well.”

He says it’s the same Oakmont, the same bones, but the closest it has ever been to the original Fownes masterpiece.

In terms of his own job, McCormick says he’s enjoyed utilizing the new tools from the USGA, specifically the GS3 and the Deacon app.

“Some of the data that we’re able to collect now, with smoothness and trueness, it’s a different data point that we’ve never had

before,” he says. “To pick up your cell phone and see it right there is exciting.”

He also heaps praise on Quali-Pro for their support with the conditions of the Pennsylvania golf course and for supporting the championship.

“We’ve been using Quali-Pro for several years now, and it’s slowly been built into the platform of our chemical program. We use a wide variety of their products, like QP720, the tebuconazole, all the way up to their proprietary products like Suprado,” McCormick says. “The more we work with their products, the more that trust exists. The support we get from their team is unique and special. When they approached us to support the championship, we were excited. And they’re great people.”

McCormick says building relationships has been an integral key to his success in the industry. He advises others in the industry to find the right mentors and to work hard on building relationships.

“I think the No. 1 thing is finding the right mentors, finding guys that were going to challenge me and push me to be the best version of myself,” McCormick says. “But secondly, just building relationships, networking, going to trade shows, meeting as many people as you can. A lot of my own support system, they’re not guys that I worked with ... they’re guys I met at trade shows and stayed in touch with. Those relationships build. And that’s what’s most unique about our industry.”



Every year the crew at Oakmont takes a team photo. This photo is of the 2024 crew, of which McCormick reports “about 95 percent” will be back for the 2025 U.S. Open — including his dog, Gunner.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE MCCORMICK

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Black Desert Championship



By Nathan Mader

When you're the new kid on the block, you've got to stand out to make a name for yourself.

That's why when Black Desert Resort opened in May of 2023 in Ivins, Utah, it was immediately off and running to set itself apart amongst high-end golf courses. As a newer entry to the golf and pro tournament scene with a gorgeous backdrop of the red Rocky Mountains, it has garnered plenty of attention for doing things first, or at the very least, doing things differently.

A history of firsts

The Black Desert Championship debuted in October 2024 as part of the PGA Tour's FedEx Fall series as an effort to bring professional golf back to Utah. It was the first PGA Tour event in the state since 1963.

Superintendent Ken Yates says Black Desert was the first time he'd had to do a full grow-in of a course, and since then, the stun-



Yates says this year's tournament will have new cart paths that connect all 18 holes and will remove last year's traffic jams.



FAST FACTS
DATES: Oct. 23-26
SUPERINTENDENT: Ken Yates
CLUB: Black Desert Resort
LOCATION: Ivins, Utah
TOUR: PGA Tour

Ken Yates

ning visuals of the resort are setting it apart from the rest.

"It's built in a lava field. It's the only lava field golf course in the continental United States. Of course, the rest of them are in Hawaii," Yates says. "Tom Weiskopf designed it and Phil Smith was his architect, and unfortunately, Weiskopf passed away at the beginning of this project."

As the last course Weiskopf worked on, it lives up to his legacy with its unique design. Yates says the course is pretty friendly for golfers (minus the intimidation of the lava fields) with wide fairways, but the layout makes it special.

"They took the overtop picture, and they found natural caverns and cuts in the lava where they made the fairways," he says. "It looked like the golf course was meant to be here the way that Phil Smith and Tom Weiskopf envisioned it."

"The green grass, the black rock, the red mountains behind us, you get snow on the top ... you can see every color."

Plus, in addition to the PGA Tour event, the course is set to host an LPGA tournament from May 1-4, making it one of only two courses to host annual events for both tours.

For tournament preparations, Yates also snagged another industry first with his use of autonomous mowing on his fairways before the inaugural Black Desert Championship. Last year, a fleet of four all-electric FireFly Automatrix AMPs (100-inch-wide, five-gang reel mowers) maintained all 60 acres of the course's fairways, and this year, Yates is using them again for the LPGA and PGA Tour events.

PHOTO BY: BRIAN OAR/BLACK DESERT RESORT



Located at the intersection of the Colorado Plateau, Mojave Desert and Great Basin, Yates says the course is special for the stunning views it provides. It's also the only course in the continental U.S. located in a lava field.

"Those guys are very professional, and their product is awesome," Yates says. "They're under fire getting these things ready for a PGA (Tour) tournament, and they wanted to prove they could do it for a PGA (Tour) tournament, and they did. They knocked it out of the park."

With 19 holes and 7,500 yards of golf course, Yates says the mowers were an integral part of their preparations, and they allowed him to have one less thing to worry about while his crew members could tend to other important jobs.

Setting the standards

For a new course establishing itself in the professional golf scene, tournament preparation happens year-round for Yates.

"My goal here is that the PGA (Tour) could play here tomorrow if they wanted. Our course is ready. But, realistically, with green speeds and things like that (the PGA Tour) asks for — firmness and whatever — there are certain things that you do right before. About three weeks out, that's when I really start to be aggressive with rolling, and I'll stop topdressing."

Yates really starts nailing down the exact specifications required for the tournament a week or two before the Championship. Green speeds, firmness and backing off on watering are all key factors he looks to perfect.



Yates says the course location is tricky. It's hotter than nearby Las Vegas, but there are ski resorts just a bit north of him. Regardless, the course stays open year-round.

One benefit of being a new course and tournament is the ability to learn as you go, and Yates says there are a few key differences for the Championship in 2025 after the inaugural event.

"We learned some lessons. We built a few more tee boxes," Yates says. "We're loosening up some traffic jam areas — some pinch points that we had. We put in a new bunker on No. 1 because it helps protect the lava on a longer shot."

Plus, Yates says he's installing more cart paths. Initially, they were only on par 3s and around the greens and tee areas, but now there will be new paths allowing golfers to drive all 18 holes.

"We had to do the first one to see what we needed to touch up on," he says. **G**

LIV Golf Chicago



Will Coughlin

After trips to the U.K., Spain, Mexico and South Korea, the LIV Golf Tour makes its fourth American stop in the Windy City. In 2025, Bolingbrook Golf Club will host LIV's Chicago stop for the second consecutive year; Jon Rahm clinched the LIV Individual Championship on the 18th hole at Bolingbrook.

Bolingbrook, designed by architect Arthur Hills in collaboration with Steve Forrest, is a championship 18-hole golf course that Jeff Gerdes, superintendent, says blends strategic design with natural beauty. The course challenges golfers of all skill levels and features water hazards, diverse bunkers and elevation changes.

A golf lifer

KemperSports manages Bolingbrook alongside Gerdes — a University of Illinois graduate. Gerdes has been at Bolingbrook since the beginning, taking over as superintendent when Hills broke ground on the property in 2001.

Gerdes gained a love for the game while playing with his dad growing up, and he says he simply enjoyed playing the game and being outside in nature. When he was getting into the agronomy side of golf, Mark Kowalczyk, superintendent at Joliet (Ill.) Country Club, was his biggest influence, and Gerdes says that he learned a lot from Kowalczyk when growing into the industry.

Host history

Gerdes and Bolingbrook are no strangers to making preparations for tournaments. In addition to the LIV Chicago events, Bolingbrook has also hosted a celebrity invitational and junior tours.

"I am just as excited as Mayor Mary Alexander-Basta and the village of Bolingbrook to welcome LIV back to the club. It was great to work with Matt Cielen, their lead agronomist, and the



Hole 15, a par 3 with a tricky island green, is the signature hole of Bolingbrook Golf Club.

entire LIV team. It was a great experience," Gerdes says.

Gerdes adds that the preparations for any tournament coming to Bolingbrook start the day they find out they will be hosting. For him, the essentials to hosting a tournament include lining up volunteers and extra equipment.

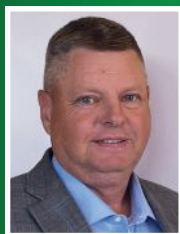
Gerdes adds that a tournament cannot be put on successfully without an extremely devoted team of volunteers. Gerdes credits KemperSports and local clubs for helping Bolingbrook recruit volunteers to help with the extra work around tournament time.

And it's work that Gerdes definitely doesn't want to go unnoticed. When the cameras start rolling, it can be easy for viewers to overlook the behind-the-scenes efforts that go into tournament preparations. Getting the best equipment and making the course look pristine takes time, and Gerdes says he's thankful for the help.

Bolingbrook also does its part in protecting the surrounding wildlife since it is recognized as a certified bird sanctuary through Audubon International, and it manages bee hives on the property as a registered apiary with the state of Illinois.

Bolingbrook also maintains native fescue and natural prairie lands to offer safe havens for the local ecosystem. Gerdes says there is also a focus on fostering monarch butterflies with native milkweeds, which offers a spot for young caterpillars to grow. 

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Jeff Gerdes

FAST FACTS

DATES: Aug. 8-10

SUPERINTENDENT: Jeff Gerdes

CLUB: Bolingbrook Golf Club

LOCATION: Bolingbrook, Ill.

TOUR: LIV Golf



“Kress robotic mowers have been a game changer for us.”

Jeff Miller, Director of Agronomy
Santaluz Club

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2025 U.S. Women's Open

By Seth Jones

Beautiful Erin Hills, located 45 minutes northwest of Milwaukee, is a relatively young course, having opened in 2006.

Course superintendent Zach Reineking (pronounced *rye-nuh-kin*) has been there at the course every step of the way.

He considers himself lucky to have been in the right place at the right time on multiple occasions. He caddied at Pine Hills CC in Sheboygan, Wis., which earned him a Chick Evans Scholarship (he graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.) Being local to Sheboygan, he had easy access to Whistling Straits and Blackwolf Run. He interned at Whistling Straits during the 2004 PGA Championship. It was a connection made there that led him to Erin Hills.

"I had aspirations to move out-of-state, but I got a call from



FAST FACTS

DATES: May 29-June 1
SUPERINTENDENT: Zach Reineking
CLUB: Erin Hills
LOCATION: Erin, Wis.
TOUR: LPGA Tour

Zach Reineking

the Straits Course that there was an opportunity at Erin Hills and I should try it because it was a new construction," Reineking recalls. "I made a call and got a tour of the course; it was only stakes in the ground at the time. The superintendent left a few years later. I was very fortunate to get that position. I was in the right place at the right time, and I've been here ever since."

Goodbye, fine fescue fairways

Erin Hills has previously hosted the 2008 U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links; the 2011 U.S. Amateur; the 2017 U.S. Open and the 2022 U.S. Mid-Amateur.

A significant change was made at the course in 2020. They closed the course and converted the fairways to bentgrass.

"Erin Hills was a fine fescue fairway facility, and we don't have the greatest soil conditions to be conducive to performing



Erin Hills made a drastic change in 2020 by closing the course and converting its fairways to bentgrass. Previously, it had been fine fescue and a mix of other grasses.

PHOTO: USGA/FRED VUICH



Reineking says they've been blessed with relatively good weather leading up to the tournament. In fact, he says it has allowed him to do a significant amount of set-up last fall. "We're well positioned and eager to see some warmer temperatures," he says.

at a high level. Our fairways were a collage of grasses; it was fine fescue, there was some ryegrass in there. There was some bentgrass and *Poa*," Reineking says. "It performed well, but it was hard to manage all those styles and varieties."

The bentgrass is thriving, and approaches are being mowed at .250, maybe even .200 come championship time. They're aggressively topdressed and rolled along with greens.

"A defense to the golf course will be these green surrounds. We've got a lot of elevated greens with some roll-offs, and when a ball kicks off of a green, it's not going to just roll three or four feet — it's going to roll 20 feet," Reineking says. "If we can get some dry conditions, we feel like that'll be a fun aspect of the golf course."

Reineking says the weather leading into the tournament has been rather cooperative. It was so nice that a lot of the set-up was done last fall. It was a dry winter, but their aggressive topdressing program for fairways, approaches and tees, along with covering all their greens in the winter, has them in a great position.

"We're well positioned and eager to see some warmer temperatures," he says.

Plan for every contingency

A tool that Reineking has at his disposal that he didn't previously have is the USGA's GS3 golf ball. He calls it a "cool tool" that allows

him to gauge course conditions better than he ever.

"In previous years, we'd track our organic matter and our green speeds, but it was hard to really gauge firmness, and if we topdressed, how did that impact the smoothness of the greens the day after? How about three days after?" Reineking asks. "Now, with this tool, we can go out and topdress or brush, and we can get real-time feedback that tells us if the golf course has gotten better or worse."

The plans for any of Erin Hills' championships are started well over a year out. Reineking and his team like to do a test run on the golf course exactly a year out of the tournament.

"We did, I think, an excellent job in 2017. We had some storms that season and we needed to have a plan for every contingency," Reineking says. "Everything that we're doing culturally on the golf course is in preparation for that one event. But even your best-laid plan usually goes to pass at some point." 

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PROCORE CHAMPIONSHIP

Procore Championship

By Rob DiFranco

While this is only David Walter's third year hosting a Tour event, he has plenty of prior experience from his previous stops.

An Ohio State graduate and Cleveland, Ohio, native, Walter, the director of agronomy at Silverado Resort in Napa, Calif., interned at Oakland Hills in 2008 while the club hosted the 2008 PGA Championship.

"(Then) in 2009, I started going out to Maui to help with The Sentry (at Kapalua Resort) and I've been doing that since," he says. "I also helped a buddy down in Williamsburg at Kingsmill (for the Michelob Championship). Then, when I was an assistant in Maryland, we hosted the Maryland State Amateur at Manor Country Club. So, that's not professional, but it's a sanctioned event."

With 2025 being the 15th straight year Silverado has hosted the Procore — previously the Fortinet Championship and, before that, the Safeway Open — Walter is also blessed with a seasoned crew who have helped him ease into the role of being the man in charge of an annual PGA Tour event.

"Our staff has been here on average for 10 to 15 years, so they're all well set on what they need to do, making things a lot easier," he says. "By the time August comes around, everyone kind of whips themselves into shape and knows exactly what needs to be done to achieve our goals."

No rain till ...

Probably the biggest challenge that Walter and the team at Silverado face in the lead-up to the Procore Championship is the lack of rain. Walter says that from April until December, there's a good chance the course won't see any precipitation and has to rely completely on irrigation.

"The tap is shut off, and we go 100 percent on irrigation from (April) until December. Depending on what nature shoots our way as far as temperature goes, we could be anywhere from 80 every day to 100," he says. "So, getting to September with heavy resort play, heavy member play, is probably our biggest challenge. It's making sure we're in the condition that the PGA (Tour) expects and that our ownership expects at the right time."

On top of that, members and guests expect the course to be in championship condition during the months leading up to tournament play. Walter says there's always a lot of excitement among guests and members who come to play the course in August. Because of that, he says his team works their hardest to have the course as close to tournament ready as they can year-round.

"People come here to visit and experience everything Napa Valley has to offer, and they're staying here to play golf with the expectation that this is a Tour stop for the 15 last years," he says. "There's a certain expectation. We want to make sure that, if nothing else, the greens roll exactly how they expect them to. So, I would say our day-to-day conditioning, minus some of the details, is pretty close to tournament ready."



David Walter

FAST FACTS

DATES: Sept. 11-14

DIRECTOR OF AGRONOMY:
David Walter

CLUB: Silverado Resort

LOCATION: Napa, Calif.

TOUR: PGA Tour

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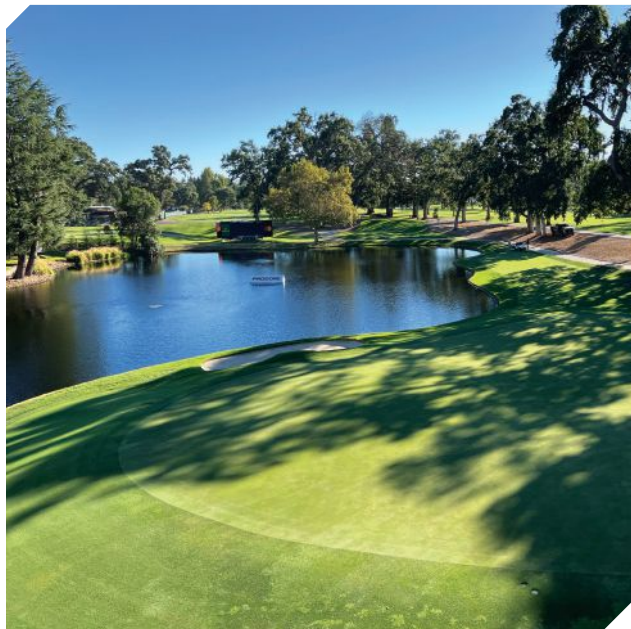
What's new in 2025

According to Walter, spectators and players can expect a few new sights when tournament time comes around in 2025. Since last year, Silverado has renovated the par-3 tees along with some others on the course, widened several fairways and, most notably, changed height of cut around certain bunkers.

"Any bunker inside short-cut grass, instead of having rough around it, they're all shaved down to fairway height. So, we have fairway rolling right into all these bunkers. All the noses coming down are all fairway height," he says. "It's a really cool look and changes these players' thinking on a couple of holes because they won't want to end up in those bunkers."

This will also be the second year that Walter and Silverado host a First Green event during advance week. Walter says this will be the third event he's hosted overall, but the fact that it's done during the lead-up to the tournament, with conditions dialed in and all the grandstands and branding on site, makes it extra special.

"It's a cool atmosphere because we'll have them down on 18 with all the stands built and everything. It's a place they might not get to experience again, so that's a pretty cool experience for them and for us," he says. 



Silverado has high guest expectations to live up to as regular PGA Tour event host, so championship conditions are kept year round.



"Our member Men's Invitational is in June and it's almost a dry run for us. We can figure out what happens when we do this, this and this. And then we just try to replicate that again in September," says Walter, on how he gears up for tournament week.

LIV Golf Indianapolis

By Scott Hollister



Chad Allen

FAST FACTS

DATES: Aug. 15-17

SUPERINTENDENT: Chad Allen

CLUB: The Club at Chatham Hills

LOCATION: Westfield, Ind.

TOUR: LIV Golf

Tournament golf has been baked into the soul of The Club at Chatham Hills in Westfield, Ind., since its Pete Dye-designed championship course opened for play eight years ago.

“Our owner, Steve Henke, loves tournament golf,” says Chad Allen, Chatham Hills’ superintendent. “I live for tournament golf, too. I love the high expectations and the pressure that come with it. We’re cut from the same cloth.”

Until now, though, the club hasn’t had as many opportunities to host big-time tournament golf as it would have liked. It’s been the site of an NCAA women’s regional tournament, a few Mid-American Conference championships and a handful of state and regional amateur events. But past that, Chatham Hills’ competitive scene has been reserved for club members.

That changes later this year, however, when Chatham Hills welcomes LIV Golf to Indianapolis for its season-ending individual championships, Aug. 15-17.



Allen says Indianapolis has been hungry for a pro tournament — and the community and the crew are equally excited.



**INDIANAPOLIS
2025**

“A lot of my guys have been there since the beginning, grew the course in,” Allen says. “So, they’re unbelievably proud that their work is going to be on display for this event. The day after it was announced, I asked them how they felt about being the talk of the town, and they all just smiled ear to ear.”

A full to-do list

Allen and his team have plenty of work on their agenda before the LIV event this summer. Even before the deal with LIV was final, Chatham Hills had a significant renovation project on the books that involved a full slate of bunker work — including the installation of CapillaryFlow liners to all 180 bunkers on the property — the narrowing of some fairways and the addition of new tees that will allow the course to stretch to nearly 7,700 yards from the tips.

The club is also giving its practice facility a facelift, which will be especially important when some of the world’s best golfers come to town in August.

“Because they all tee off at the same time with the shotgun start, we needed something that would accommodate 54 golfers all practicing at the same time,” Allen says. “We’re expanding the practice area from 22,000 square feet to just under a full acre. Heading into spring, we still need to put in drainage, add irrigation and then go in and seed everything. But we have a great partner in Total Golf Construction out of Florida.”

He feels the same about his working relationship with LIV Golf officials, and he says they’ve been nothing but professional when working out the last few remaining details.

So far, the show of support for the LIV event has been overwhelming, Allen says, and not just from his golf colleagues.

“Indianapolis has been starved for professional golf, so the outpouring of support the club has received has been impressive,” he says. “There are guys like Brooks Koepka and Bryson DeChambeau coming out, and people are excited. We want to put on a show for these professionals and show them what makes the Club at Chatham Hills so special.”

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CHAD ALLEN

3



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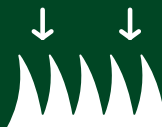
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3M Open

By Rob DiFranco

Despite being a Minnesota native who now works in his home state, Joe Rolstad, director of golf course operations at TPC Twin Cities in Blaine, Minn., is a well-traveled agronomist.

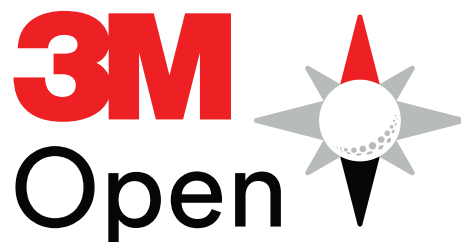
Over the course of his career, Rolstad has lived and worked in North Dakota, Montana, Minnesota and New York. Those stops include stays at Yellowstone Club in Big Sky, Mont., Minneapolis Golf Club and Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y.

Even with all that experience — including at Winged Foot, which has hosted ten majors — Rolstad didn't get his first taste of professional tournament golf until he returned to TPC Twin Cities, ten minutes down the road from his hometown.

Now in his fourth year as the man in charge, Rolstad says the experiences he had working all across the country have prepared him for just about anything, including big-time tournament golf.



Rolstad says that continued networking is his top tip for superintendents looking to advance their careers in the industry.



Joe Rolstad

FAST FACTS

DATES: July 24-27
DIRECTOR OF GOLF COURSE OPERATIONS: Joe Rolstad
CLUB: TPC Twin Cities
LOCATION: Blaine, Minn.
TOUR: PGA Tour

"Everyone does things a little bit differently," he says. "The amount of people I've met on my journey to where I am today is crazy. I've met people at the (GCSAA Conference and Trade Show) and then working at an operation like Winged Foot. I mean, I probably worked with 30 to 40 different assistants, and a lot of us still text and talk occasionally."

A group effort

The 3M Open is the only professional tournament in the Land of 10,000 Lakes, making it a hot destination for volunteers from around the area. And that's also with the tournament taking place right in the middle of the Minnesota golf season.

With Twin Cities hosting the tournament — in one form or another — since 2001, Rolstad says he has a pretty large group of volunteers who come in every year.

"We kind of have our key role (volunteers) here every year, and we know their schedules already," he says. "We'll send them an email around (early April) asking if they want to come back. Then, every year, we get 10 to 15 new people who are interested and want to be a part of it."

As part of the TPC Network, Twin Cities also gets plenty of help from agronomists from other network courses. That street also

PHOTO BY: JOE ROLSTAD



Of TPC Twin Cities' 18 holes, 15 feature water in some fashion, which Rolstad says is fitting for the lone course in Minnesota, the Land of 10,000 Lakes, that hosts a professional tournament.

goes both ways, Rolstad adds, as one of his assistants will be at the Mitsubishi Electric Classic at TPC Sugarloaf at the end of April to assist with that tournament.

"It's a great opportunity, and the TPC Network and PGA Tour do a really good job involving all our assistants to get more tournament support opportunities and see different operations," he says.

The ramp up

Dealing with Minnesota weather is the biggest challenge Rolstad and his crew face. The club opens for business in mid-April while snow and cold temps are still in the forecast. That makes things difficult, as Rolstad and his team have just about a month before tournament prep starts.

"We go from zero to 100 pretty quickly," Rolstad says. "I just had a meeting today with Pro Link Sports, and they're planning to start building the structures on May 5, so we're talking (less than) a month away and three months before the tournament. And then, the tear-down takes about a month."

Luckily for Rolstad, Twin Cities was built to host tournament



"I was able to work for Steve Rabideau as an assistant at Winged Foot and after six years on the coast, I had enough," Rolstad laughs as he recalls his journey back to Minnesota.

golf, and he has just about everything he needs to be prepared for it.

"We have wall-to-wall car paths, and the course was designed to host a tournament, so we have ample room for stands and everything," he says. "By now, we've gotten pretty much all our inside jobs done. We're ready to rock. The equipment is ready to go, but we just need that little bit of heat to get going." 

Albertsons Boise Open

By Nathan Mader



Matt Gourlay

FAST FACTS

DATES: Aug. 14-17

SUPERINTENDENT:

Matt Gourlay, CGCS, MG

CLUB: Hillcrest Country Club

LOCATION: Boise, Idaho

TOUR: Korn Ferry Tour

lenges for tournament preparation, mainly hot, dry weather conditions in the weeks prior that can reach the upper 90s and strain the annual bluegrass greens. However, Gourlay says the work his crew members do to maintain their professional standards for tournament preparation makes all the difference.

"The full-time guys have been here for a long time. We even have a seasonal individual who's been with us for 20-plus years. He just keeps coming back every year because he loves the atmosphere, the culture that we have and the tasks that he's assigned. He just absolutely loves it," he says. "It's very rewarding to work with the people that we have here at Hillcrest. They're unbelievable individuals."

Plus, Gourlay says it's great to have a core group of ambitious learners on the team who have plenty of experience with tournament hosting. One individual in particular has participated in 29 Boise Opens throughout his career.

"They have been with this tournament for so long that they know what their role is for that week," he says. "That's a testament to the prior golf course superintendent, Joe Aholt, on how well he built the team here and how much they bought into hosting the Boise Open."

Due to year-round expectations of excellence and a long history of tournament experience, Gourlay says Boise Open preparations are relatively straightforward.

Three weeks before the event, lots of planning occurs to make sure the build-out for spectators and the three nights of concerts cause minimal damage. The week prior, Gourlay said there is a lot of work to do with the PGA Tour agronomists.

"It's a lot of hours," Gourlay says. "It's definitely rewarding." **G**

This familiar face in the tournament scene kicks off for the 36th year in August, bringing pros to the scenic and mountainous city of Boise, Idaho.

Hillcrest CC's superintendent, Matt Gourlay, says he's ready to bring on another successful year of the tournament, and he's got a long family history in the industry to back him up.

"I'm a third-generation golf course superintendent. My dad was a golf course superintendent. My grandfather was one," Gourlay says. "My grandfather was also a founding member of the Canadian Golf Course Superintendents Association. My mom was a soil scientist. She owned her own soil testing laboratory and helped write the 1993 USGA Green Zone specifications."

Gourlay himself has plenty of experience with tournaments, hosting 10 professional events and volunteering for more than a dozen others. His main goal with the 2025 Albertsons Boise Open is to keep his high maintenance standards to showcase his 6,880-yard, par-71 course.

"I just wanted to try to make sure that we let the golf course shine and let the team members that I work with relish in what they're able to accomplish on the golf course and how well it looks and plays for the tournament," he says.

Crew contributions

As part of the Korn Ferry Tour, Hillcrest CC faces its own chal-

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