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CIRCLE NO. 131



A framed photograph of an eagle in flight against a sunset sky. The eagle is silhouetted against a bright orange and yellow background. The frame is made of rough, natural wood. The text is overlaid on the lower right portion of the image.

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Gone, But Not Forgotten



Tom DeVaux, superintendent of Hunter GC in Meriden, Conn., peruses through turf from the greens of Canton Public GC.

Canton Public GC will live on – literally – through its donated greens Story and photos by Anthony Pioppi

The sky was blue. The turf was green. The air was delightfully warm and the companionship wonderful. It was one of the saddest days I've ever spent on a golf course.

After 68 years the Canton (Conn.) Public GC has closed. Conceived, built, maintained and run by the Lowell family, the decision was made to sell the valuable piece of property in this upscale Hartford suburb to a developer that will turn most of the land into a mall called The Shoppes at Farmington Valley.

On this day, I played the nine-hole course with Heather Lowell Garvin, the

third generation to be involved with Canton. She inherited the superintendent position from her father who stayed on as golf pro. We were not the only golfers that day. A few others were out as well — friends of the family and long-time men's club members who wanted one more round. The general public, though, had played its last.

Neighbors have already taken to turning the course into their own playground, stealing cups and vandalizing turf. Incredibly, as we stood in the middle of the fourth fairway waiting to hit our approach shots, a young boy rode his bicycle across

the green while his mother stood nearby watching the entire proceedings. They appeared surprised when Garvin told them to leave, in a firm but polite voice.

We traversed the layout in no time even as we negotiated silt fences already in place for the coming destruction. There were cups in the greens and broken flagsticks (when visible) served as our targets. The good ones had been removed to thwart stealing.

The putting surfaces hadn't been mowed in a few days, but the undulations her great-grandfather and grandfather built into the greens in the early 1930s

still made putting a delightful challenge even at slow speeds.

Garvin has played the course innumerable times, honing a game that was good enough at one time for her to qualify for the USGA Women's Public Links Championship. She is a low-handicap that hits straight and far and possesses a deft putting touch.

As we went along, I found the course more and more to my liking — the natural rolls in the fairway, the variety of the holes and the shots required to master them. I wondered why I had never driven the 45 minutes

Continued on page 86

Fundamentally Speaking



with Scott Curtis



Eagle Crest GC

Like most superintendents, Scott Curtis earned his current position at Eagle Crest GC through hard work and dedication. The cornerstone of his success has been setting high standards and lofty goals. His current goal is "to be the #1 public golf course in the state". While the scenic views of the Arkansas River Valley make for a beautiful track, the thin soils and rock shelves create a number of turf management challenges.

Secrets to your success?

"I am a big believer in promoting and developing the soil and letting nature take its course."

Fertility Philosophy?

"I like granular, meal-based organic fertilizers in conjunction with verticutting and top dressing to control thatch. I reduced my thatch by 45-50% the first year I used Nature Safe. The result is more efficient fertility with tremendous density, improved water management and a dramatic reduction in disease pressure."

First time you used Nature Safe?

"After I came to Eagle Crest, I had to find a way to balance our soils as well as control disease. Nature Safe has been the ideal product line for improving my turf's health."

Why use Nature Safe?

"Since I started using Nature Safe my root system is incredible! I have never seen roots that are this thick and white. Also, we reduced zoysia patch disease by 30-40% without spraying. The increased microbial activity from using Nature Safe seems to inhibit the disease."

Where is it used?

"I'm using Nature Safe on greens, tees and fairways."



Professional Profile

Alma Mater:

Penn State
-Turf Management

Age:

41

Career Highlights:

- Superintendent Eagle Crest GC, 2000-Present Alma, AR
- Superintendent Shadow Creek GC, 1987-2000 Sallisaw, OK
- Assist. Superintendent Hardscrabble CC, 1983-1987 Fort Smith, AR

Most rewarding professional experience:

"I really enjoy attacking tough challenges. My time here at Eagle Crest has been particularly gratifying. I'm having fun."

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Natural & Organic Fertilizers

Continued from page 84
before to play such a wonderful course and was disappointed I had not. In a state that abounds in boring, repetitive layouts, Canton stood out — even with only nine holes.

Garvin doesn't like to talk of the future. Part of the course she has nurtured for so long may be turned into a nine-hole par-three layout or a teaching facility that will preserve a few of the holes as part of the shopping center complex. Of course, the entire place could be bulldozed under and replaced with cement and asphalt. The owners haven't decided. Garvin doesn't want to dwell on what is being lost, even when local residents she meets during her daily routine press her on how she is *really* feeling about the sale. How do they think she is feeling?

Garvin is too busy to be morose, packing up and sorting through her parent's house (circ. 1780), which sits just off the first tee and will also be lost, as well as readying items for an auction. Much has been accumulated in the last 60 years.

Even in such a depressing and emotional time, Garvin has turned the demise of her course into a positive for other layouts. Canton is giving away its greens.

While other courses in the area have been hit with severe winterkill, Canton made it through unscathed. So rather than just turn her back on the greens, Garvin has allowed other to come



in, cut them up and cart them off.

Superintendent Kevin Bengston of Indian Hill CC in Newington used about 1,500 square feet of turf from the third and the eighth holes to resod his entire damaged putting green. Bengston was happy to get the grass, but not with the

The Lowells have a history of giving to the game of golf and this was just the latest donation, sort of like an organ transplant.

circumstances that made it possible. "I'm not a big fan of bulldozing golf courses to put up buildings," he says.

At Hunter GC in Meriden, superintendent Tom DeVaux and his crew built

a nursery out of turf strips taken from two greens, something the golf course has wanted to do for years. Three of DeVaux's workers traveled to Canton and loaded up with nearly 1,500 square feet of good, healthy turf. Less than 24 hours later on a chilly morning, what was once a Canton green was now a Hunter nursery.

Making the deal even sweeter for Indian Hill and Hunter was the price — free.

The Lowells have a history of giving to the game of golf and this was just the latest donation, sort of like an organ transplant. The person may be dead, but in the process he has given life to someone else.

Garvin is delighted the two courses were willing hosts. She intends to keep an eye on how the transplants worked.

"My husband (Dana, Canton's assistant superintendent/mechanic) said,

DeVaux and his crew took nearly 1,500 square feet of healthy turf back to their course and built a nursery, something they always wanted to do.

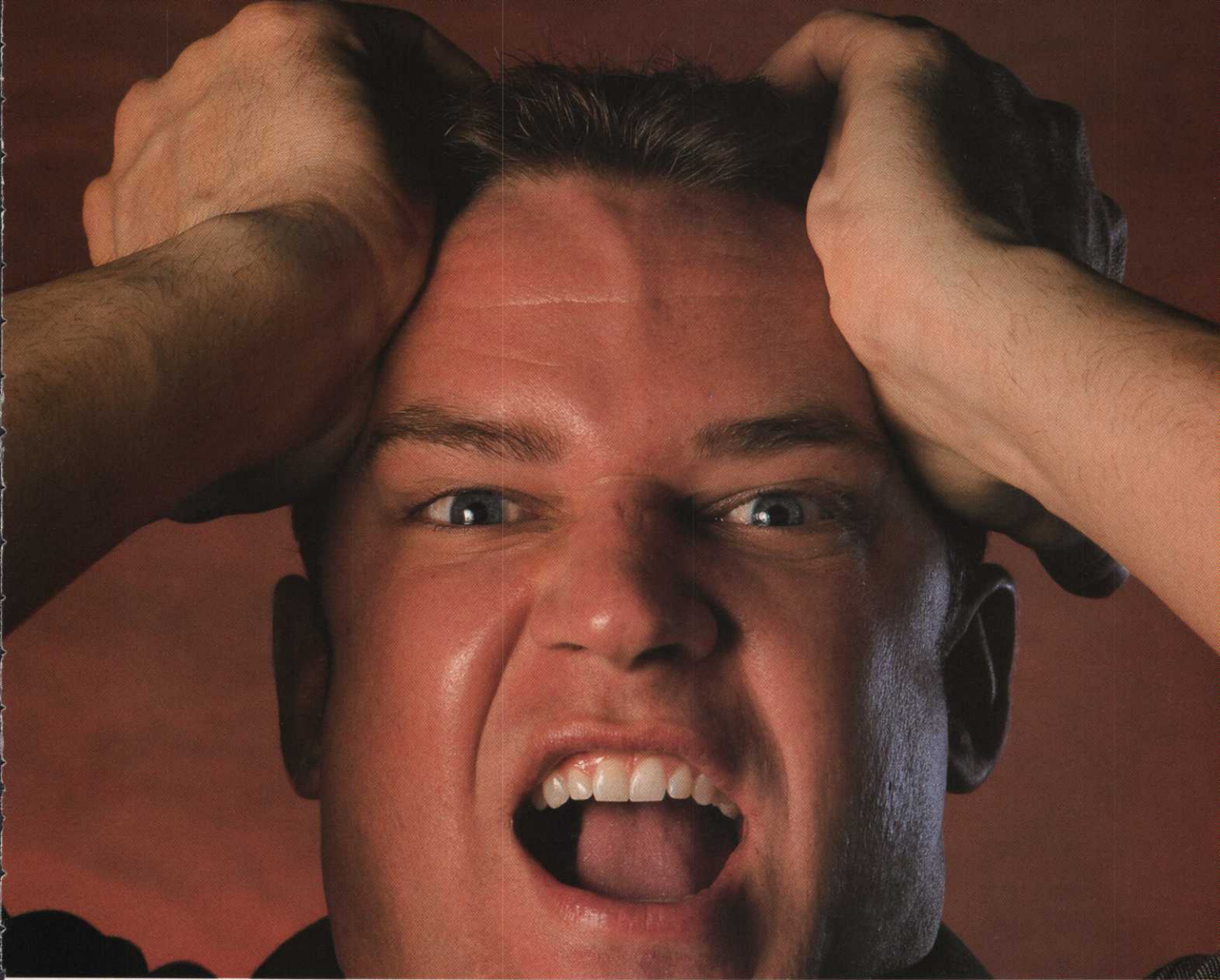
"We can go visit our grass," Garvin said smiling.

Too bad someone who cares so much about a golf course is losing one. Garvin is unsure what her next job will be. She is taking the summer off.

I feel fortunate to have had the chance to play Canton and even more so in the company of Garvin. The course is no more, but I have my memories and my Canton Public GC ball-mark, logo ball and scorecard. The scorecard is blank. The day was not about numbers. It was truly about the game and the golf course and the company — just the way it should be.

But it was a sad, sad day. ■

Pioppi is a free-lance writer from Middletown, Conn.



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Subtle Approach Ensures Subtle Changes

**Architect Tripp Davis
'massages' greens to
regain lost cupping areas**

BY ANTHONY PIOPPi

Oklahoma-based golf course architect Tripp Davis was brought in by an upscale private course located in the metropolitan New York area to see what could be done to soften portions of two greens that had lost cupping areas because of increased green speeds. The club (which declined to allow its name to be used for this story) was looking for a way to regain those areas while foregoing entire greens renovations.

"Our approach is that you want to fly in under the radar screen and make changes in a way so subtle that you leave as little mark as you can," Davis says.

The two greens Davis

worked on average about 6,000 square feet. About 2,000 square feet was recontoured on one green, and another 3,000 square feet was affected on the other green. The project began in early October 2002 and was done in seven days.

"The best time to do it is in the fall," Davis says of the procedure, which he calls "massaging." "You're not going to want to play on the [reworked areas] again that year."

The first step of the procedure is to strip the sod from the designated area. The sod is then placed nearby in a shaded area and kept moist throughout the proceedings. Davis said it is imperative to lay the sod flat, grass side up, instead of keeping it rolled.

The purpose of re-using the sod is so the renovated section blends in with the unchanged portion. The turf of the New York layout was a bentgrass-*Poa annua* mix. Sodding or seeding with just bentgrass would have made the affected area stand out, creating an irregular putting surface that would also require different maintenance practices.

The soil from the section Davis worked on was taken out in two 4-inch lifts using a small backhoe. The material was saved in a protected area to keep it from becoming contaminated.

Davis said the first layer is



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TRIPP DAVIS

The sod is stripped away before the "massaging" procedure, but it's kept safe and re-used so the renovated section blends in with the unchanged portion upon the project's completion.

Problem

A popular New York course had lost cupping areas on two of its greens because of increased green speeds. The club wanted to regain those areas, but without an entire renovation on the greens.

Solution

"Massaging" the greens to soften them and regain lost cupping space. The process is a lot less intrusive than a full-scale renovation.

predominantly topdressing, while the second 4-inch section is the original greens mix, which in many cases will be native topsoil.

After the soil is removed, an additional 6 feet of sod is stripped from around the perimeter of the area being "massaged," allowing Davis to blend in the new contours.

With the New York project, drainage was added as well to the remodeled section. In these situations,

Davis said he had to be careful to install drainage in such a way as not to pull water from the new putting surface faster than the rest of green. Even though the original soil is re-used, it loses its compaction during removal and that causes its water-holding capacity to increase, meaning it no longer drains at the same rate.

At this job, 3-inch perforated drain lines were laid into an 8-inch trench. First, 2 inches of pea gravel was

put down, then the pipe. More pea gravel was added until there was a 2-inch layer of rock covering the pipe. The remaining part of the trench was filled with a mix of sand (50 percent), soil (40 percent) and peat (10 percent.)

In order to initially improve porosity, a 4-inch cone of the same 5-4-1 mix was added on top of the trench. "Pea gravel all the way would speed up drainage too much," Davis says.

Once completed, the original soil was replaced in two layers. Once that was complete, a light layer of nitrogen was spread to facilitate root growth, and the sod was put back.

The entire process took about three days per green. But even though the most intrusive work was completed in that short time, extra care was taken to ensure the turf was healthy.

Davis said a microscopic gap between the soil and the sod is created when the sod is replaced. If the quality of the irrigation water is not good — a high percentage of salts, for instance — a layer will build up in the gap and hinder root growth or cause roots to move laterally. Also, too much nitrogen can cause the roots to grow at such a rapid rate that they will once again move laterally instead of down into the soil, thus creating a thatch layer.

Light and frequent applications of topdressing, often as twice a week, were performed when the sod was knitted in enough to handle some wear. Depending on

the weather, the first aeration can occur later in the fall or in early spring, Davis says.

In a best-case scenario, the greens are playable in five to six months, depending on the weather. According to Davis, those wishing to take a chance performing the procedure in the spring could have the greens back in action in 60 days, but face the increased risk of losing turf.

So far Davis has massaged greens on three courses, including one of his own designs, Grand Elk Ranch and Club in Granby, Colo., that opened last fall. The technique was necessitated after a drain line collapsed. The problem was corrected before the course opened using the massaging method.

The majority of greens needing revamping, however, are on older courses and that fact points to a contradiction in what golfers will tolerate, Davis points out.

"There is a big difference between classic golf courses and new golf courses," he says. "If we built new greens with 3-percent slope that were rolling at 10, we'd get crucified. It would be a bad design. In the Northeast and other areas, they are pinning areas (on older courses) close to 5 percent with green speeds approaching 11."

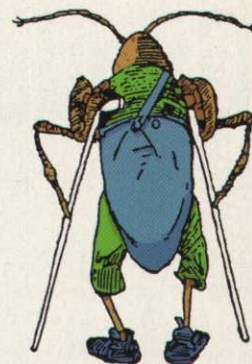
If one day those clubs find the contours too severe, a massage may be just the cure. ■

Pioppi is a free-lance writer from Middletown, Conn.

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The Turf Doctor from **Allen Power Equipment** and distributed by Seago International is a verticutter designed to clear out thatch and provide a healthy, playable surface in a short time. This unit should be used at an approximate depth of one-eighth inch for maximum coverage and effectiveness. *For more information, contact 800-780-9889 or*
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Walking greens mowers

Jacobsen Turf, Commercial and Specialty Equipment offers the new Jacobsen E-Walk all-electric walking greens mower. The mower has no oil, no

hydraulic fluids and no emissions. It's also virtually noiseless, the company says, so greens can be cut in early mornings without disturbing golf course neighbors.

Independent, weather-sealed, 48-V brushless DC electric motors drive the unit. One controls ground speed while the other allows the operator to adjust clip frequency independent of the mower's ground speed.

Jacobsen also introduces the Tournament Cut-22, first in a family of floating-head walking greens mowers. The mowers



feature greens-hugging, floating head reels. Suspended from the chassis, the floating reel of the Tournament Cut mower moves horizontally, vertically and from side-to-side to eliminate scalping severely undulating greens. *For more information, contact 704-504-6600, www.jacobsen.com or*
CIRCLE NO. 203

Roller

The greensIRON 30 turf roller from **Wood Bay Enterprises** provides superintendents with the opportunity to produce a faster, smoother more consistent playing surface without causing compaction or lowering the mowing height. The roller also provides a uniform sur-

face following aeration, reduces moss problems caused by low mowing heights and assists in dew removal.

For more information, contact 800-661-4942, www.greensiron.com or
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Golf cup

The White Metal golf cup, assembled, packaged and distributed by the **ARC of San Diego**, unites the features of metal, plastic and practice green cups into a single golf cup. By combining a heavy zinc base with a replaceable ABS crown that's pure white, the White Metal has the sound and strength of a metal cup and the paint-free convenience of a plastic cup. The zinc base can be used as a practice green cup before or after it is used on the course, so it's unnecessary to buy separate cups for the practice green.

For more information, contact 800-548-1033, www.whitemetalgolf.com or
CIRCLE NO. 205

Foliar nutrition

Milliken Turf Products says its Emerald Isle CPR-True Foliar Nutrition Program is successful in defending against basal rot anthracnose. The CPR-True Foliar Nutrition Program was tested in independent trials at The Pennsylvania University Valentine Research Center last summer.

The CPR-True Foliar Nutrition Program provides small, efficient amounts of foliar-absorbed, complete nutrition along with a generous amount of high-quality seaplant extract.

For more information, contact 800-845-8502 or
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Roller

Smithco offers its Tournament X-Press Greensroller, which features tilt steering with one-hand turning, powder-coating 9-inch rollers, heavy-duty cast roller bearings and 10-foot inside wheel-turning radius. *For more information, contact 877-833-7648 or*
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Hole cutter guide

Standard Golf's new Hole Cutter Guide helps remove the worries in making a consistent perfect cut. To ensure a perfect cut, users simply stand on the Hole Cutter Guide — a strong aluminum platform — and drive the hole cutter through an opening that matches the size of the cutter shell. The lightweight platform prevents the users' feet from twisting and damaging the surface.

For more information, contact 319-266-2648, www.standardgolf.com or
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Control grain

The Greenskeeper from **Broyhill** controls grain on greens. With height and speed adjustable rotating brushes that have soft, but firm bristles, the Greenskeeper controls the grain of grass without bruising or scuffing.

It can mount easily onto most popular triplex mowers. *For more information, contact 800.228.1003, www.broyhill.com or*
CIRCLE NO. 207