

Off The Fringe

Gift of Mobility

GOLF PAYS TRIBUTE TO OLD TOM MORRIS – AND THOSE WHO MAY NEVER KNOW THE JOYS OF GOLF

By James E. Guyette

Keeping their promise to help others in need, a U.S. chapter of Keepers of the Green once again donated a powered wheelchair to a handicapped person at the international golf fraternity's annual fall World Invitational Championship, held last month at two golf courses in Alabama. The wheelchair is courtesy of Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design, which started the chapter.

"It brings tears to your eyes when you see this," says Mike Hurdzan of Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design in Columbus, Ohio. "It is a true fellowship of golf. It removes all the pretense of worrying about slope ratings."

Hurdzan spearheaded forming of the chapter four years ago after learning of the organization's good works. The inter-



HURDZAN/FRY GOLF COURSE DESIGN

Mike Hurdzan (right) spearheaded the forming of Keepers of the Green. The group presents a powered wheelchair to a handicapped person during its annual championship.

national membership "has presented hundreds of wheelchairs to deserving people who may never know the joys of golf, but will know the joy of mobility," Hurdzan says.

The organization, headquartered in St. Andrews, Scotland, promotes the traditions of golf while paying tribute to Old Tom Morris, known as "the father of greenkeeping."

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Superintendents in Florida and the Carolinas, where alligators are common, will feel some empathy with Mochudi's crocodile problem. Actually, the crocs are not much of an agronomic problem. But they can be a problem for players. Posted signs warn golfers about the presence of crocs in ponds and other water features. Any duffer who wants to bet a leg or hand against a dollar golf ball can feel free to do so.

However, it is the mammals that are more trouble on the turf.

"I'm not worried about the fairways," Mochudi says. "It's the greens where they cause the problems."

The greens are full of tender, luscious grass. It's like Mochudi is one of the resort's chefs, putting out a feast for the visitors.

The warthogs are especially persistent. There is a group of about a dozen warthogs that make Mochudi's life interesting. "We can't cull them," he says, noting that the nearby game reserves and national parks are the main reason visitors come to that corner of Botswana. "In some ways, they are almost tame," he continues.

That shows up in the boldness with which they dig at the No. 9 green, just a short putt from the clubhouse. However, it is on the more remote No. 4 (a 375-yard par 4) and No. 5 (a huge 519-yard par 5) holes that the warthogs are all but permanent residents. In fact, a mother and two youngsters seem to call No. 5 home.



CURT HARLER

Elephants regularly take early-morning strolls across the greens, causing much the same kind of damage one would see if a human were to track on a dew-covered green. But bigger.

Most other management practices in this area of Southern Africa would be familiar to any superintendent working in a subtropical setting. Grass on greens is cut between one-quarter inch and one-eighth inch through the warm season. Greens consist of semidwarf bermudagrass and bentgrass and are cut daily. They also receive 20 minutes to 25 minutes of irrigation water.

Buffalograss is planted on the semirough areas. The fairways are a local grass which stands up well to the heat, seasonal rainfall and grazing by wild animals. In the winter (the warm season), fairways are mowed twice a week. They also are irrigated twice weekly.

Fertilizer is applied regularly. A local complete blend, called LA-3, is sprayed with the irrigation water.

Mochudi walks out into the sunshine and waves his arms at the warthogs, which have moved on to ripping up the collar on the No. 9 green. The warthogs look up. An observer could almost swear that the warthogs wave back. Then they go on eating the sweet grass.

"Aaah, I've got other things to do," Mochudi says, frustration in his voice.

"Hey, do you have problems with snow mold?" his visitor asks.

"Huh?" Mochudi says puzzledly.

That's one concern superintendents don't have in Botswana.

Off The Fringe

Ramsay Says Yea to Yale

BUT HIS MOVE COMES AS A SURPRISE

By Anthony Pioppi

The Course at Yale has hired a superintendent and again not without raising a few eyebrows.

Scott Ramsay, the former certified superintendent at the Orchards Golf Club in South Hadley, Mass., has accepted the position. But Ramsay's move came as a surprise considering the Orchards is hosting the 2004 U.S. Women's Open. Ramsay had been at the Orchards for about 18 months.

Late last year, Yale University in New Haven, Conn., ended its national search after a two-year vacancy with the naming of acting superintendent Mike Moran to the position. Earlier this year, Moran returned to his previous post of assistant superintendent because he said he missed being on the golf course. Union rules forbid the superintendent from working on the layout.

Ramsay was one of the finalists in the previous search and was contacted by Yale director of golf Peter Polaski when Moran stepped down.

According to Ramsay, the school came to him with a tantalizing offer.

"They just made it a dream come true," he said.

Ramsay's first day coincided with a university-wide strike by Yale employees, including course workers. He had a four-hour briefing from Moran on his first day before the walkout.

"He said, 'There's your phone. That's your desk. Good luck, sucker. You are on your own,'" Ramsay said, chuckling.

During the three-week strike, nonunion members staffed the golf course.

It is the union situation at the school and golf course that kept many superintendents from applying for the Yale position.

Strict union rules forbid the superintendent from operating machinery other than for demonstration or teaching purposes. Also, the superintendent cannot hire his own staff. The school through the athletic department does the hiring.

Ramsay said three factors led him to take the job: the school offered a

good salary package, upped the maintenance budget and decided to out-source some work.

Since Ramsay's arrival in early September, the course has been aerified, seeded and fertilized by outside companies which complemented a talented and hardworking staff, he said.

"The university has made a huge investment in the golf course," Ramsay said. "A rising tide raises all boats, and this is one tide I intend to ride."

According to Ramsay, he left the Orchards on good terms. Arnold Palmer Golf Management, which runs the course, named Matt Manzi to fill the void.

"The last line of my letter of resignation said I'd be happy to volunteer for the Open," Ramsay said.

According to Tim Moraghan, USGA championship agronomist, the Orchards will be ready for the Women's Open next July. He also said Ramsay's move did not come as a shock.

"After all these years, I'm not surprised by anything," Moraghan said.



Quotable

"I used to go to all the superintendent meetings, and I'd look around the room and say, 'Look at all of these old guys.' I went to a meeting not long ago and I said, 'Look at all of these young guys.'"

— Tom Alex, superintendent of Grand Cypress Golf Club in Orlando, on getting older. Alex celebrated 20 years at Grand Cypress earlier this year

"As soon as you put 'golf' in front of anything, you can immediately double the price."

— Craig Cassaday, turf equipment manager for Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa., remarking on the disparity of pricing for shop tools that are nothing more than modified automotive tools.

"Trees are wonderful. Where else would we get furniture?"

— Dave Oatis, director of the USGA Green Section's Northeast Region

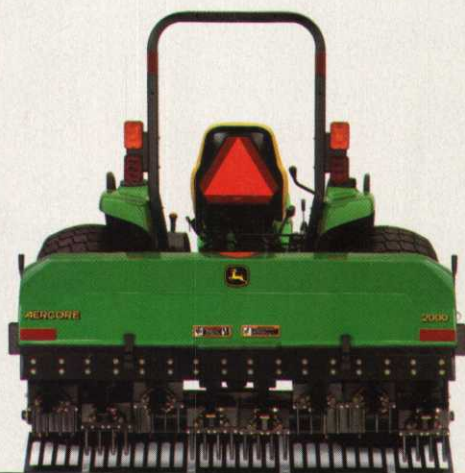


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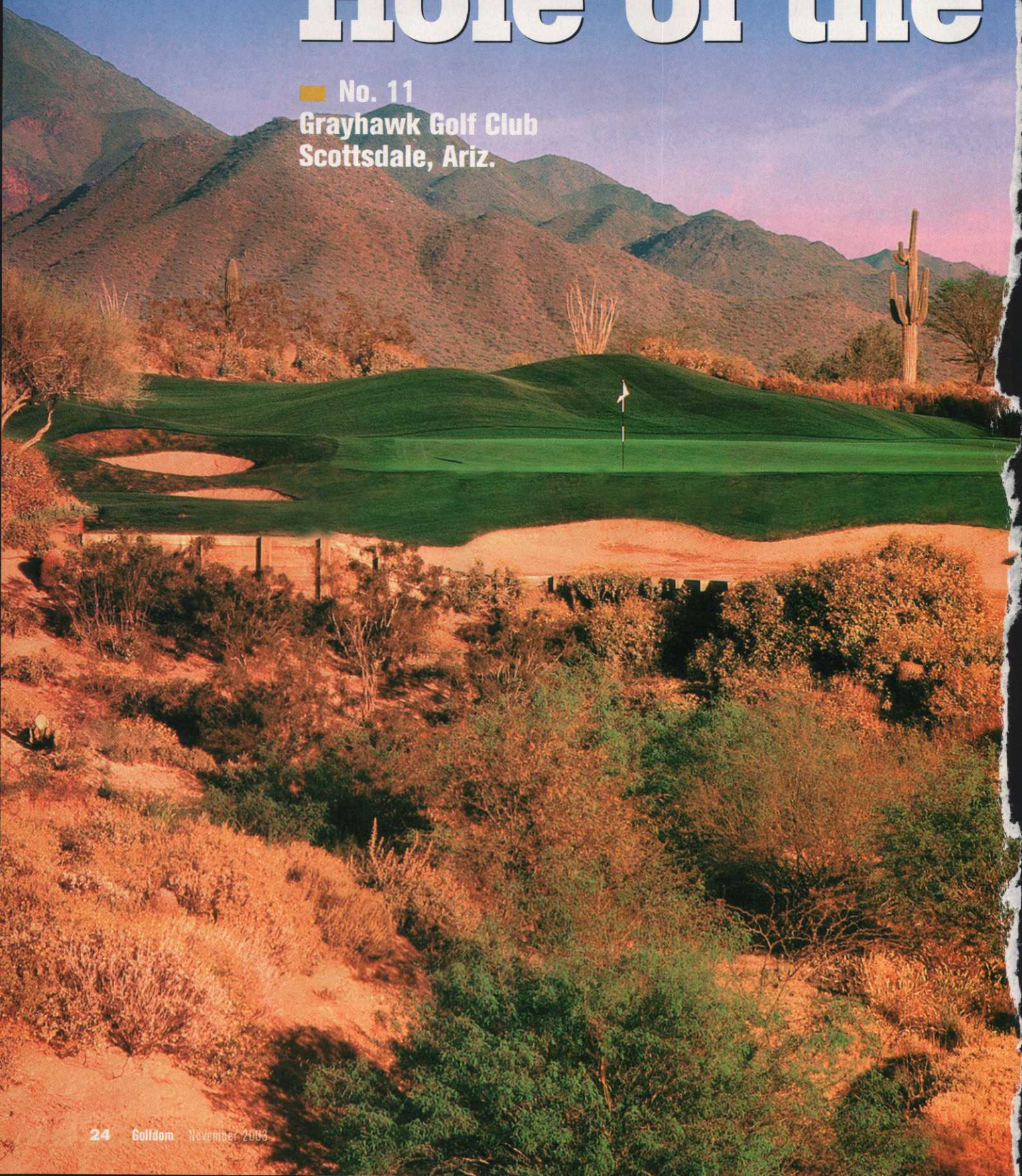
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Hole of the

■ No. 11
Grayhawk Golf Club
Scottsdale, Ariz.



Month

Always a Challenge

The No. 11 hole on the Talon Course at Gray Hawk Golf Club in Scottsdale, Ariz. (nicknamed the "Swinging Bridge" for the bridge on its right-hand side) has always been a challenge for superintendent Ernie Pock – even from the time of the grow-in.

"We didn't have any ropes around the bridge during the grow-in, and we actually lost a topdresser that got away from a crew member," Pock says, laughing.

Pock says the undulations on the greens pose the most problems. A ridge in the middle of the green must be hand-topdressed in the summer months and carefully mowed to avoid scalping.

The Talon Course (and its sister course, the Raptor) will host the 17th annual John Deere World Championship, Nov. 12-15. The tournament hosts 33 teams, each made up of superintendents, general managers, presidents and professionals from the different clubs. The event draws teams from the United States, Canada, Ireland, Great Britain, Germany and Australia.

Golfdom's Hole of the Month is presented in partnership with:

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Golfdom is devoting this issue to the environment, which has become a driving force in our industry. It's forcing the GCSAA to reorganize the Government Relations,

Research and Environmental committees under a master plan for the mission on the new Environmental Institute For Golf.

But like politics, all environmental issues are ultimately local. Until individual citizens take action in their neighborhoods, progress remains a high-minded concept instead of meaningful reality.

One superintendent who is making a difference in my neck of the woods is John Kopack, superintendent at the Legacy Club at Alaqua Lakes in Longwood, Fla. Admittedly, Kopack had a head start in environmental awareness when the company who built the course, Taylor Woodrow Homes, opted to build the residential golf community as an Audubon Signature Sanctuary. But Kopack has done a lot more than just meet the required standards for certification.

The Fazio-designed course has all the Audubon-mandated bells and whistles to protect adjacent wetlands. The course irrigates 90 percent of the time with stormwater runoff with only supplemental well water during the driest times, and that well only pumps 30 gallons per minute to keep the irrigation lake functional. That fact, plus 150 acres of restored wetlands and abundant wildlife, empowers Kopack to invite regulators and environmental groups to tour his course regularly.

Some visits by the local water-management district are all business since they monitor water-use permits, but Kopack loves watching them arrive stiff and formal and leave smiling and saying things like, "I had no idea," after strutting turkeys and grazing deer cross their paths on the course. Kopack admits not everyone melts and becomes golf lovers at the sight of Bambi and friends, but he gets detractors out on the course, challenges their misperceptions, wins some converts and gives others pause in their condemnation of golf.

Kopack's pro-activism extends beyond hosting bird counts and tours for environmentalists to taking an active role in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for schools. The club

He's A Hero For All Seasons

BY JOEL JACKSON



JOHN KOPACK
BACKS HIS
ENVIRONMENTAL
TALK WITH ACTION
— SOMETHING
MORE
SUPERINTENDENTS
SHOULD DO

adopted Heathrow Elementary as its partner school, and Kopack and his crew restored a wetland on school property, helped the kids install a butterfly garden using recycled materials and built bird feeders out of old bird houses.

Kopack is not only an ambassador of good environmental stewardship: He was a one-man junior golf program for two years at Hamilton Elementary to expose inner-city kids to the game of golf. He rounded up scores of old clubs, cut them down and regripped them to conduct golf clinics in the school's Career Club program. One highlight of his recruitment efforts was bringing the class to the course and arranging an impromptu appearance and mentoring session for the kids with Senior Touring Pro Jim Thorpe. A gaggle of young jaws dropped when Big Jim whacked a few down the range.

Johnny Kopack is a feisty, red-headed ex-Golden Glove boxer with a biting wit who can definitely liven up a dull party. He uses a punch-and-jab attack to wear down golf's bigger opponents: ignorance and intolerance. Year after year, regulator after regulator, bird watcher after bird watcher and kid after kid, Kopack is relentless and upbeat as he touts the benefits of a properly managed golf course.

We can plan and organize and raise research dollars. We can make PowerPoint presentations to the EPA and testify before Congress and county commissioners. But until you clean up your shop, host a Christmas bird count or lead a tour of school kids, it's just all talk.

John Kopack is not superman. He is everyman: the quintessential common man doing uncommon things. Sometimes we call those kinds of people heroes. I know I do.

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.

Carry the

Volunteers help bring a successful PGA Championship to fruition at Oak Hill CC



Jeff Corcoran (far right) leads an army of volunteers on a rough-cutting expedition during the PGA Championship.

Weight

BY LARRY AYLWARD,
EDITOR



GREG WALL

WITH TIRED MINDS AND MUSCLES, they gather in the vast, dimly lit hospitality tent to rest. Some of the workers sprawl out on the floor. Others slump on wooden chairs and fight to keep their weary eyes open. One person lies on a makeshift bed erected from two chairs and a sleeping bag.

They don't care *where* they sleep, just as long as they *can* sleep — even if it's for a fleeting 20 minutes. Most of them, after all, have been awake long before the crack of dawn.

It's about 12:15 on this sun-splashed and muggy Friday afternoon in mid-August, the second round of the 85th PGA Championship at Oak Hill Country Club in Pittsford, N.Y. The weary workers, most of them volunteers, are resting up for their late-afternoon chores, which begin around 6 p.m. They'll mow the rough and rake the bunkers then, among other tasks.

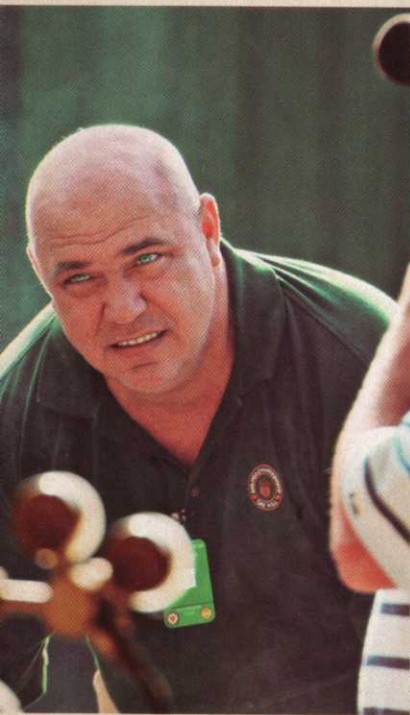
While some try to snooze in the air-conditioned tent, others file in for lunch. They snatch food from a table crowded with deli sandwiches, chips, fruit, cookies and other snacks. They sit at long tables and eat the food earnestly while watching the tournament on seven TVs positioned throughout the temporary tent, which was erected to accommodate them during their downtime.

Nearly 100 volunteers comprise the roughly 150-member tournament maintenance staff, headed by Paul B. Latshaw, manager of golf courses and grounds at Oak Hill (see editor's note below). The volunteers, made up mostly of superintendents and assistant superintendents, hail from some of the best golf courses in the land, including Augusta, Winged Foot and Shadow Creek. Some have traveled from far-away places, including Sweden.

They've trekked to Oak Hill to help Latshaw and his crew stage this great spectacle of a tournament. Latshaw and his normal crew of about 50 could never produce the tournament without the volunteers because there's so much more to do than usual. Consider that the greens must be double-cut and rolled every morning during tournament week. Consider that the rough must be groomed meticulously. If Latshaw and his normal crew tried to do it all, it would be akin to two cooks trying to feed a dinner party of 1,000.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Shortly after the PGA Championship ended at Oak Hill, Paul B. Latshaw, manager of golf courses and grounds at the club, took a new job as superintendent at Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin, Ohio. Latshaw's replacement at Oak Hill was one of the tournament's top volunteers, Jeff Corcoran. See the "Pin High" column on page 10.



GREG WALL

“What’s the biggest party in the state of New York this year? You’re standing in it.”

JAY REHR
SERVICE TECHNICIAN
AUGUSTA NATIONAL

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Many of the volunteers took precious vacation time from their jobs and paid their own travel expenses to come to Oak Hill. They also left behind their families and their comfortable beds.

“I have a wife and two kids at home,” says Kevin Seibel, superintendent of Century Country Club in Purchase, N.Y. “But I want to be here to be part of this event.”

It all sounds paradoxical, really. In essence, the volunteers took time off from their jobs to work 16-hour days (or longer) and fall behind on their sleep.

But those volunteers wouldn’t have it any other way. They know that the long days and short nights are parts of the package that come with volunteering for one of the biggest golf tournaments of the year. And most agree that it’s easy to get pumped up to work double-digit hours for five straight days when you’re helping to put on a Major.

“It’s funny,” a volunteer says. “A quarter to four comes in the morning and you’re dragging. But as soon as you get on the golf course, the adrenaline starts pumping.”

THAT ENERGY WAS EVIDENT

earlier Friday as workers hustled about the course, hustling to complete their duties before the first tee time shortly before 7:30.

It’s shortly before 6, and Latshaw and several maintenance workers are walking down a fairway. Latshaw clutches a tall cup of steaming coffee and remarks to no one in particular that he’s functioning on three hours of sleep. He appears edgy, but not nervous. He knows he has incredible support and will get by with a little help — make that a lot of help — from his friends.

But it’s not like Latshaw can delegate his authority and disappear into his office to watch the tournament on TV. He must coordinate all those workers. And it’s not like he has too much help — for every person is needed. The maintenance is intensified, inside and outside the ropes, when a course stages a tournament the stature of the PGA Championship. And that equates to Latshaw’s responsibilities being broadened.

“Right now, with all the maintenance we’re doing, we need everybody to do something,” Latshaw says later while taking a short break in his office, where he slept on the floor the night before covered by his winter parka. “Some of the tasks might not seem that im-

portant, but they all lead up to the ultimate goal to produce a great product.”

Latshaw is one of the top superintendents in the business. He’s also a fine recruiter of volunteers. Included on his crew are Eric Greytok, superintendent of Winged Foot; Jeff Corcoran, superintendent of Weston Golf Club; Greg James, superintendent of Plainfield Country Club; Tom Gosselin, superintendent of Overbrook Golf Club; and several others from other top tracks.

“With the talent that’s here, I could get struck by lightning and nothing will miss a beat,” Latshaw says. “They all care about helping out and putting together the best possible championship because they want to be part of it.”

Latshaw pauses.

“Without the volunteers, we wouldn’t be able to have this,” he says. “There’s no way we could do it.”

Latshaw knows where he would be — something akin to hitting a tee shot in the drink — if it wasn’t for the volunteers’ astonishing effort on Tuesday. That’s when the PGA of America, which sponsors the tournament, decided the rough was too penal and needed to be cut. It came at a point in the day when Latshaw’s regular crew was spent. It had rained the night before, and the crew’s members had spent hours battling standing water on the course.

Greytok knew the regular crew needed a rest. So he told Latshaw that the volunteers would mow the rough. So two groups of nine volunteers, headed by Greytok and Corcoran, set out with an army of 21-inch rotary mowers to cut 30 acres of rough. It was a tedious and exhausting duty. But the volunteers’ good deed sent morale soaring among the entire staff.

HOSTING A MAJOR TOURNAMENT,

of course, is a pressure-packed atmosphere for the ones doing the hosting. The greatest golfers in the world will judge the course’s setup and playability. And millions of golf fans will scrutinize the course from their armchairs while watching the tournament on TV.

Needless to say, the workers need someone to provide a little comic relief to keep their collective blood pressure in check. Since Bill Murray isn’t available, the job falls to Jay Rehr, a service technician from Augusta National, who’s known for his knack of keeping people loose.

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