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In the City



BRIAN RUSHING

James Patrick Morgan III decided to let homeless people use the course's sprinkler system to shower.

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(which has been renamed the Norman K. Probst Community Golf Course), local officials committed \$112 million into rebuilding all of Forest Park, including a redesign of the golf holes by Hale Irwin. Now there's a police substation inside the park, and most of the problems have disappeared. It's a safe place, he says.

"It's just as peaceful and serene as any course in the country early in the morning before all of the traffic noise starts," Carpenter notes.

And in Houston, where the showpiece public course, Memorial Park Golf Course, is just three miles from downtown and set in the middle of a 1,500-acre park, problems have been minimal as well. Jason Harsh, the superintendent there, says the presence of a security guard at the course keeps troublemakers at bay.

"Just having a body going around the golf course and being noticed can deter a lot of vandalism," Harsh says. "It's when nobody's being noticed that you get problems."

Sometimes the illicit behavior is humor-

ous. In Philadelphia, Morgan once came upon an aspiring Picasso who decided to use one of his tee boxes as a setting for his girlfriend to pose nude for a painting.

Sometimes it takes humor to cope with it. Last year, Morgan says three cars were torched on golf courses in Philly by kids who stole them, took them on joy rides and then set them on fire. Golf course employees now say that any water pooling on the course that comes from efforts to fight a car fire is considered casual.

And sometimes compromise is in order. "How would you handle homeless people using your sprinklers for showers and washing machines?" Morgan asks. He's been both repulsed by naked men bathing on his course during early-morning watering and sympathetic to their plight.

At Louisville's Shawnee course, Kevin Greenwell has the opposite problem: aluminum cans everywhere on the periphery of the course — Old Milwaukee 24-ounce beer cans, to be specific, the preferred bargain brew of his ball chasers.

"They sell the balls, buy beer, and then


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when they run out of beer, they come back," Greenwell says. "It's an ongoing process with them."

Greenwell has had ongoing confrontations with these three men, who are nicknamed the Manson brothers because of their scruffy resemblances to the famous California criminal. When he arrived in the mid-1990s, Greenwell learned that the former pro and his staff had left these hustlers alone to find balls on the course and along its perimeter, then come on grounds and sell them.

He says that once, during a charity event hosted by NBA basketball star Allan Houston, a Louisville native, a couple of them went swimming with their shirts off in a water hole on the front nine while bobbing for balls. He's also heard from women or parents of young golfers who are intimidated by their presence. He once got a call about a dead man lying on the 17th hole, only to race out there and find it was one of these men passed out on the premises.

"I don't have any reason to be buddies with them because they are a deterrent to business," Greenwell says. "I've had people tell me that they're not going to come back because they are afraid. [The trespassers] didn't do anything to them — it's just the appearance.

"They've been here 20 years — that's the first thing they told me when I talked to them. They said, 'Well, we've been here a whole lot longer than you have. This is our territory.'"

Even after Greenwell insisted he would have them arrested, these ball chasers became masters at the game of leaving the property once they were detected and before the cops could get there. But eventually they were caught and arrested. Now only one of the Manson brothers returns with any frequency. He's shifted strategy, staying just outside of the boundaries of the course where he can find balls and offer them for sale without trespassing.

"He sits off property in an Indian position behind the 15th tee with the balls on the ground," Greenwell says. "There's no solicitation, but he will sell them."

Of course, some golfers will buy, out of penury or sympathy. "I don't have that sympathy because I think they should be working just like everybody else," says the Shawnee pro.

And Greenwell, like his brethren on urban

courses everywhere, keeps working the vandalism and trespassing situations as hard as he does the playability of the course.

"It's an ongoing problem," he says. "But I think as soon as you give up on the problem, it just gets worse. So you've got to keep trying to make it difficult on them." ■

Allan is a freelance from Floyds Knobs, Ind.

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The Urban Superintendent

Continued from page 40

and the phone rang. Someone said there was a body near the 17th fairway with a gun nearby. I went out to investigate and found an older gentleman lying in the weeds on his side dressed in his Sunday best. At first, I thought he was just sleeping one off. But when I turned him over, I saw this man had shot himself in the eye. I will not describe the scene because the image still horrifies me.

At first, I was upset and yelling at the body, "Why my course?" I screamed. Then I noticed the man had a note in his pocket. It was an apology to his family and to the person who found him. Me.

This gentleman was 90 years old and had terminal bone cancer. He wrote that he couldn't take the pain anymore. The dead man was Al.

I realized that this golf course was Al's only freedom and only happiness, and he chose to die on it for one reason — it was his heaven on earth and where he received his satisfaction by giving all those balls to the kids. So Al put on his best clothes, his coolest derby and headed for the course one last time. He wanted his last vision on earth to be the place he loved most.

I understand this is an extreme example, but the city residents, not just the golfers, see these courses as their retreats. Depending on the situation, their mindsets can take a superintendent's responsibilities and frustrations to another level. Here in Philadelphia, the golf courses are part of the Fairmount Park Commission, which gives the residents the impression that the courses are like parks.

I remember going out to syringe my greens one day, and sitting next to the flag on a green were two hippie chicks playing their guitars. I had to be the bearer of bad news and inform them that this wasn't a coffee shop nor open-mike night at the course. They responded, "This is a public park, right?"

There's an art college located near the course. One day, an aspiring Picasso thought it would be a grand idea to paint a naked portrait of his girlfriend sitting on one of my tee boxes. Once again, I had to inform them that this was a golf

course, not a park where they could express certain freedoms.

I use these examples to illustrate some of the "unique" problems I and others experience as city superintendents. Yes, some are comical and are others heart-breaking. But all are real problems that must be dealt with on a recurring basis.

In the 10 years I've been working in the city as a superintendent, I've had to ask numerous nongolfers to leave the property, and I've had to have countless burnt-out cars towed from the premises.

I remember going out to syringe my greens one day, and sitting next to the flag on a green were two hippie chicks playing their guitars.

I know superintendents at private clubs have their share of problems, too. But I wonder if they've ever had to deal with homeless people using their courses' sprinklers as showers and washing machines? It's a real problem, considering that approaching a naked homeless man in the morning is not only irritating but also a little unsettling.

I've learned that one must have un-daunted communication skills to tell them not to do this — but I also feel pretty heartless when I tell them. So compromise is the art of avoiding confrontation, right? We allow them to use only fairway sprinklers, and we tell them that they must rinse and leave before anyone sees them.



The remnants of a car fire in the rough near the 10th tee at John F. Byrne Golf Club. The course is the site of two or three car fires a year.

BRIAN RUSHING

Why do I compromise? Because one will not find an aluminum can on my course. They are collected and turned in for money by the homeless. Besides, as long as they're not affecting my operation, how can I deny them a chance to live?

By now you are probably asking yourselves why I still work here. It's a great question, and let me explain.

I took this job to be a superintendent. I was the first assistant at a respected private club with visions of taking it over someday. Well, the superintendent is still at that club as I write this. I had to move on if I wanted to become a superintendent.

The game plan was to put in my time at a city course, gain experience and move on to a more respected club. Therein lies the problem: Not only do city superintendents have unusual situations to deal with, they don't command much respect in the golfing industry. A city superintendent is looked upon the same way a city golfer is looked upon at the private course — unacceptable. While that seems harsh, it is reality.

I believe I can grow grass and maintain a golf course as well as anyone. But private clubs would rather have an assistant from a club with a name than someone with experience from the city as its superintendent.

I and other city superintendents will continue to do our jobs to the best of our abilities. We all have the same drive and motivation as superintendents from upscale clubs.

So the next time you play a city course, remember to follow these local rules: If a ball lands inside the chalk line, you do get a free lift — and water running from the car fire is considered casual. ■

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Seeing adventure and misery, I downloaded a recent e-mail attachment from a name that looked familiar. Eloquently titled W32.novarg.a@mm, this up-and-coming attachment had a good ol' time rendering my computer useless until the folks at Symantec cooked up one of their amazing viral fixes.

But while searching the Symantec site, I stumbled across a most fascinating virus that has been eluding worm chasers for some time — the Hootie@mm.win32.

Here's what the Symantec people had to say about the Hootie worm:

For starters, it's a mass-tree planting and fairway-narrowing worm that uses its inflated sense of self to suggest that a golf course be set up to protect the egos of the committee. The worm goes about its task by inflicting harm through rough and little pine trees.

Hootie@mm.win32 sends itself subliminally through e-mails and television broadcasts. Some have reported that the virus is planted through comments made by cheerleading television announcers eager to be liked by Augusta National chairman Hootie Johnson.

The virus embeds itself in the mental hard drives of green chairman, architects, USGA officials and other ego-driven members of the golfing world eager to stop long drives from making courses appear obsolete. The worm alters all logical thinking and mesmerizes the affected souls with the mantra, "We are restoring a premium on accuracy."

The subject, body and e-mail attachment vary. However, the subject of the contaminated e-mail is typically titled "This is what Bobby Jones would have done if he were here today."

Thankfully, Symantec Security Response has developed a removal tool to clean the infections caused by Hootie@mm.win32.

Technical details

When Hootie@mm.win32 runs, it does the following:

- It creates in the minds of committees or unsuspecting golfers the belief that a golf course is created to inflict punishment and force players to plod carefully through golfing land mines.

How to Delete the Hootie Worm

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



THE WORM ALTERS

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"WE ARE RESTORING

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ACCURACY"

- The virus removes the following values: fun, adventure, heroics and drama.

- It deletes the spirit of Bobby Jones, Alister MacKenzie, St. Andrews and what golf is all about.

- The virus sends the message that rough and the pine trees are necessary on all courses, even as such elements create more shade, less fun golf and more frustrated golfers, who couldn't break 80 on the wider version of the course.

Hootie@mm.win32 can be removed from the hearts and minds of golfers in one of two ways. If the threat is not critical, simply wait until Nielsen ratings for the Masters drop or play is down at the effected courses. The virus will likely self-destruct when a new chairman takes over for Hootie Johnson or when there are no fairways left to hit at Augusta National.

If Hootie@mm.win32 is posing an immediate danger to your course, we recommend the following removal before the virus renders your course unrecognizable:

1. Force all infected minds to read Bobby Jones' *Golf is My Game* and Alister MacKenzie's *The Spirit of St. Andrews*.

2. Disable System Restore and update your virus definitions from Symantec.

3. Download the following questions from our Web site, which must be answered by all infected souls: Are the Hootie@mm.win32 changes making golf more fun to play or watch? Is this virus really in the best interests of the sport?

4. If these infected souls answer, "Yes," their systems will eventually crash, the virus will erase their hard drives, and it can be determined that their golfing souls have been corrupted.

Geoff Shackelford's new book is titled 'The Future of Golf in America. For information about the book, visit www.geoffshackelford.com.