

Month

Hole Stats

Distance: 244 yards

Par 3

The Turf

Green: A4 creeping bentgrass

Fairway: Tifway II hybrid bermudagrass

Named one of America's 100 Greatest Golf Courses in 2005 by Golf Digest, the 18-hole North Course at the Los Angeles Country Club boasts 6,980 yards of championship golf designed by George C. Thomas Jr. (1911).

Bruce Williams, CGCS and director of golf courses and grounds, manages the North Course with 27 years of experience and a deep staff that includes a superintendent, a set of assistants and 24 full-time crew members.

"The No. 1 criteria in maintaining the course is knowing the expectations of the golfer and trying to meet those expectations," Williams says. "We work to find a compromise of what is best for the golfer and what is best for the plant"



Golfers expect a breathtaking challenge at Hole No. 11, which was named to Golf Magazine's Top 500 Holes in the World in 2000. The 244-yard par 3 features a reverse redan that requires a left-to-right shot to the elevated green.

To meet expectations, Williams practices integrated pest management and uses specifically timed products to control weeds and diseases. His year-round pest concern is kikuyugrass, which birds and water deposit predominantly in fairways and roughs.

"Kikuyugrass is bermudagrass on steroids," says Williams. "Though desirous at some courses, we'd prefer to play off bermudagrass."

Williams applies Drive® herbicide May through October at a rate of 0.37 ounces per 1,000 square feet. His crew treats three to four holes at a time with Drive, and he notes it controls 95 percent of the kikuyugrass on treated areas. The Los Angeles Country Club also benefits from the product's activity on other broadleaf weeds, such as clover.

"I highly doubt in this environment with our climate that we'll ever totally eradicate the kikuyugrass," Williams says. "But surely with the use of a product like Drive, I'm able to keep it in check."

To see past Holes of the Month, download a desktop image and more, visit www.betterturf.com.

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GOLFDOM'S HOLE OF THE MONTH IS FURNISHED BY:

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My notebook fills up with observations and comments gleaned from watching and listening to my fellow man, or from newspaper and magazine articles that strike me as pertinent to our life and times. I thought it would be “fun” to present them as a collection of snapshots on the human condition that might shed light on some of the more intangible mysteries of life, such as why we have road rage, gray hair and acid reflux.

Non-profit center: Quote from a speaker at a gathering of sod growers on persuading producers to charge a fair market price instead of reckless discounting in an attempt to grow business: “Sometimes you can look into a sod grower’s eyes and see the back of his head.”

Terms from a book called “CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap! Strategies for Coping in a World Gone A.D.D.” *Frazzing:* Multitasking ineffectively. My road rage example — A woman driving a giant SUV on the interstate while talking on a cell phone and putting on make-up. My superintendent gray hair example: Preparing for a member-guest while coaching little league and serving on his local chapter board of directors. And then there’s *Kudzu:* The unstoppable, unkillable stream of unexpected minor requests from people everywhere that slows humans down. Those requests include: Boss, can I have the day off? Can you speed up the greens? Can you slow down the greens? The rough is too high. The rough is too short. Don’t forget the F&B meeting to go over the banquet schedule.

Travel trauma: I’m a magnet for screaming, crying infants and brats. Do not dine with me or fly with me because as sure as the sun comes up in the East, there will be a teething, cranky or spoiled child located at the next table or next row. I’m feeling very persecuted when the devil’s spawn sitting behind me on a plane must kick the seat back until I am forced to abandon my normally jovial nature and request a degree of civility and courtesy from the clueless parent. And lately the airlines have been

Road Rage, Gray Hair and Acid Reflux

BY JOEL JACKSON



SOME EVERYDAY
ANNOYANCES ARE
UNAVOIDABLE, BUT
MANY CAN BE
MANAGED WITH A
LITTLE PERSPECTIVE

playing Russian roulette with flight schedules to add to the indigestion.

Unexplainable phenomena: The interstate is four lanes to six lanes wide. You are approaching an exit or entry ramp. The right-hand and merge lanes are moving faster than the passing lane. Of course, I forget to factor in the idiot who is trying to cross those six lanes of traffic to exit at the last minute.

Punishing the good guys: Failure to start a meeting on time is one of the most abused tenets of how to run an effective meeting. Why punish the people who are punctual by wasting their time while waiting for the people who are late? The late comers are the ones who should suffer and have to beg forgiveness for disrupting the meeting.

Out-of-order ordinances: While local governments dump millions of gallons of effluent into the bay, they want you to consider the nutrient value (nitrogen and phosphorus) in effluent water irrigation and reduce your fertilizer applications accordingly to prevent runoff of nutrients into the bay. I lose sleep over that one.

Guilt by association: Some people feel guilty about joining an association, attending meetings and missing work. Others feel guilty because they work all the time and never join an association and never help their associations tackle the issues.

Take five. Count to 10. Pop a purple pill or dab on some Gray Away. Life is too short to be frenzied (no matter how irritating it might be) by the small stuff, and most of it is all small stuff. When I find myself ranting at newspaper articles and TV news reports, I know it’s time to go enjoy a nice sunrise or a sunset.

Certified superintendent Joel Jackson is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.



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First, the kudos. John Zimmers Jr., his crew and the legion of grounds volunteers did an amazing job presenting Oakmont Country Club in pristine condition for last month's U.S. Open.

Mike Davis, the USGA's senior director of rules and competitions, presented one of the most varied setups in the game's history. Tees and hole locations were moved around to beautiful extremes. If they could keep it on the short grass, players were asked to adapt daily to vastly different yardages and shot demands, creating a fascinating examination of their versatility.

Oakmont itself sparkled, with back nine vistas allowing players and fans to witness action on multiple holes at once. Oakmont proved that separating holes with trees is unnecessary.

But corresponding with Oakmont's tree removal should have been an appreciation for the importance of width under extreme championship conditions. Oakmont's stiflingly narrow fairways registered a measly 21 yards to 25 yards on sloping ground, proving too confining to produce skill-rewarding golf.

With all due respect, Angel Cabrera is a fine player and probably an equally wonderful humanitarian. But the Oakmont setup cried out for a surprise winner and got it.

It was not a good sign when Davis openly stated prior to play that firm, fast fairways could cause problems. Ernie Els noted in an interview that the course was fair because the fairways were "holding." NBC on-course reporter Mark Roling summed up the absurdity of Oakmont's landing area widths best when talking about the first hole during The Golf Channel's excellent post-round coverage. "Not only is it a hard hole for the players, it's a hard hole for the announcers. I stood there, called Paul Casey's tee shot, said it's straight down the middle and it ends up in the left rough."

Too many perfectly struck drives trickled into excessively thick rough that induced two withdrawals and great concern about Phil Mickelson's future. Over and over again, players were not able to display their skills because the USGA's attempt to put a "premium on accuracy" was simply not feasible under this setup.

Life in the Fairway No Fun at Oakmont

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



THE COURSE'S
NARROW FAIRWAYS
PROVED TOO
CONFINING TO
REWARD SKILLFUL
GOLF SHOTS

Davis did a fine job communicating the USGA's approach each day. And despite USGA Executive Director David Fay's insistence during Friday's borderline conditions that the course was "right where we want it," Davis boldly ordered the course softened for Saturday's play.

I know, the USGA can't win! Let the course turn into another Shinnecock Hills, and the USGA is criticized. Water it to keep it seemingly "fair," and the USGA is criticized.

Here's the crux. The need to soften the ground was brought on by a faulty fairway width setup heading in to the tournament. Inheriting fairway contours from the prior USGA regime, Davis had an unwieldy setup to work with and made the best of a lousy situation.

Now remember this is the organization that snickers at the PGA Tour for playing "lift, clean and cheat" (as Tom Meeks famously said at the 1996 U.S. Open). This is the same governing body of American golf that tells us to play the ball as it lies. Yet, the U.S. Open has become a contrived mess of man-made lies crafted to keep the course just playable enough that the dreaded "fair" word is muttered grumpily by players, but still extreme enough to ratchet up scores.

Sadly, the U.S. Open still comes down to producing a high score despite all of the USGA's claims to the contrary.

After all, if the USGA widened fairways out to appropriate widths for the architecture at hand, it wouldn't have to so radically tamper with day-to-day conditions to keep control of the course. But reasonable width that affords players the freedom to demonstrate their talent means the USGA would have to hand players control of the outcome instead of making it all about itself.

Shackelford can be reached at geoffshac@aol.com.



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Fine *by* Nine

It's as good as any course in greater Boston, but it's practically invisible to golfers. Nestled into Westwood, a suburb where workers leave for and return from their jobs in the city, sits Norfolk Golf Club. The course subsists much the way it has since 1896 when a group of local businessmen built it, with spectacular conditions, quirky features and a non-formulaic approach to design. Its superintendent Jason Adams maintains greens that are as good as any of the more prominent courses in the greater-Boston area.

BY ANTHONY PIOPPA, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

But the club is hardly ever mentioned among a list of must-play courses and is relatively unknown even though it has had a number of prominent members, including Eddie Lowery, who as a 10-year-old carried the clubs of Francis Ouimet when he won the 1913 U.S. Open at The Country Club in Brookline. The club also enlisted Ted Bishop, who captured the U.S. Amateur in 1946, the first time the tournament was played after a four-year hiatus for World War II; and Wilfred Crossley, winner and medalist of the 1947 U.S. Public Links.

To Adams, the reason Norfolk exists in almost total obscurity is explained in a phrase he has heard over and over since coming to the club eight years ago.

"It's just nine holes."

The words are meant at once to demean and damn. They are a verbal dismissal, a blatant slight.

Adams, who was superintendent at an 18-hole course before coming to Norfolk and club champion at the nine-hole Petersham (Mass.) Country Club while growing up, chuckles when the sentence is repeated to him, as do Bruce Carlson, John Yakubisin, Alan Southward and Ed Bale, who, like Adams, are all keepers of nines.

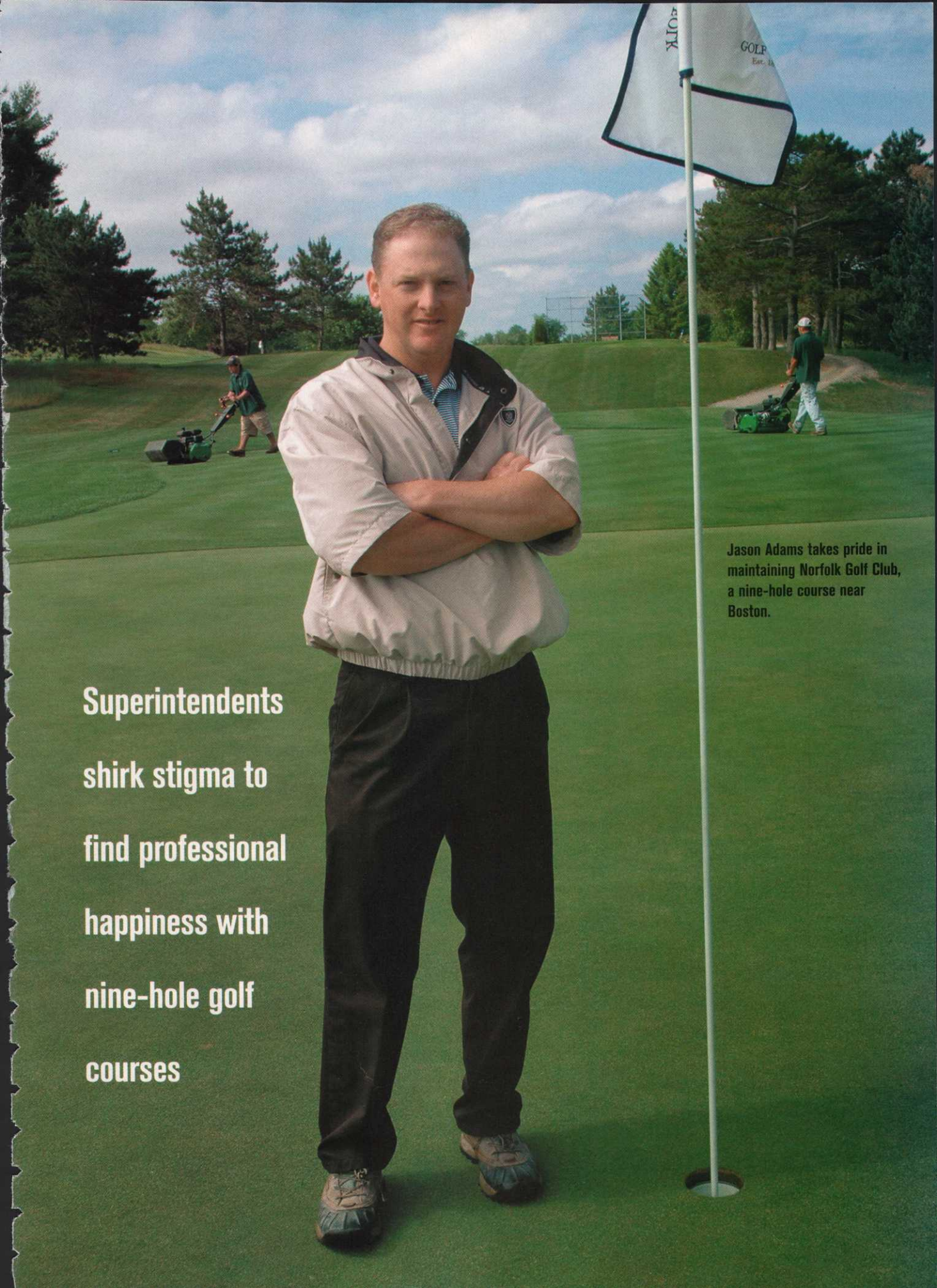
Many golfers and even some superintendents scoff at the suggestion that a nine-hole golf course is a complete golf course.

It seems no matter to them that nearly 4,600 regulation nine-hole golf courses exist in the United States and that nine states have more nines than 18s.

The stories from superintendents at nine-hole courses have a common thread from coast to coast. They easily can recall times when they were slighted for the number of holes they maintain.

A superintendent who cared for one of the most prominent nine-hole courses in the country tells the story of a heated disagreement he had with a superintendent of a

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**Superintendents
shirk stigma to
find professional
happiness with
nine-hole golf
courses**

Jason Adams takes pride in maintaining Norfolk Golf Club, a nine-hole course near Boston.

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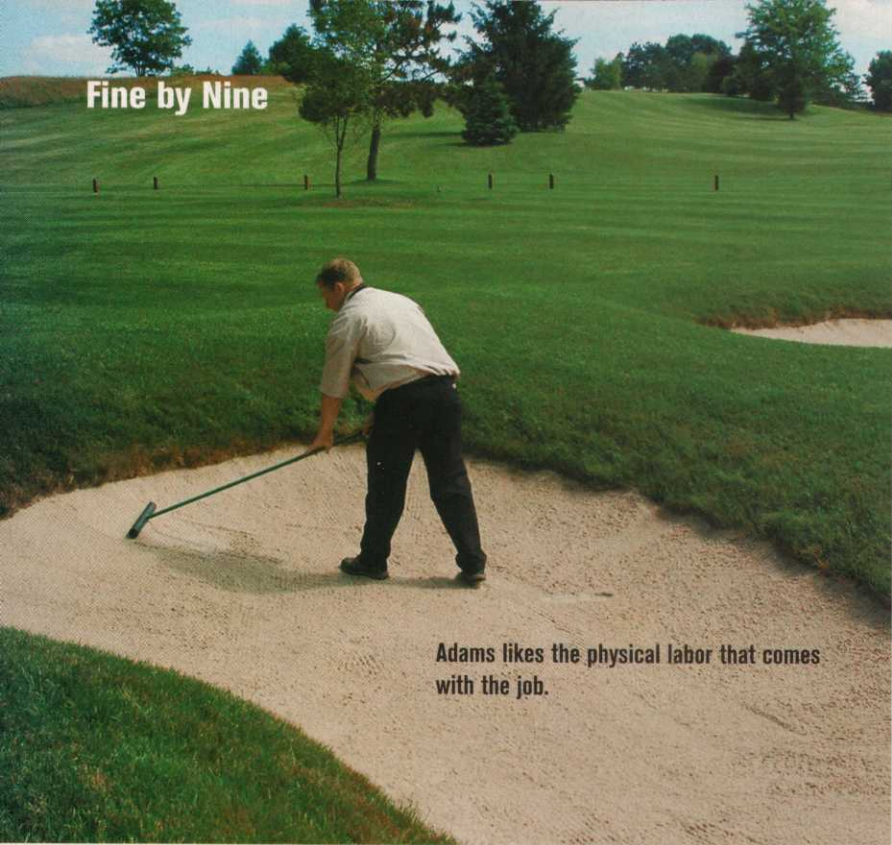


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Adams likes the physical labor that comes with the job.

Continued from page 26

nearby 18-hole layout. The nine-hole superintendent, who wished to remain anonymous, said the argument culminated in a nasty letter he received from his 18-hole contemporary that contained a written backhand. "He told me I was just a nine-hole superintendent."

Adams has encountered that view among superintendents in the Northeast as well.

"The people that don't know me might say, 'Ah, he's at a nine-holer.' But guys that know me view me as I view them," he says.

Ed Bale knows the feeling that comes with maintaining nine holes. He has been superintendent at the Alister Mackenzie-designed Northwood Golf Course, 90 miles north of San Francisco in the Russian River Valley, for more than 20 years. Bale's father was one of a group of locals who purchased the course out of bankruptcy in the 1970s, saving the only Mackenzie nine-hole design from eradication.

They Wear Many Hats

Speaking of the golf course maintenance profession, Larry Aylward reports in his "Pin High" column on the myriad responsibilities that superintendents have gained beyond just turf maintenance. See page 8.

Bale says there is a small faction in the golf world that looks down at superintendents of nine-hole courses. For the most part, though, Bale says most superintendents respect what he does.

Bale also shows a bit of an inferiority complex inherent in many nine-hole superintendents. It is at the national conference and show, he says, when he is most susceptible.

"You feel less when guys ask how many holes you have," as if his answer of "nine" is somehow wrong.

In his younger days, Bale spent summers working on the Northwood grounds crew. Later, he was on the crew at the nearby 18-hole Santa Rosa Country Club for almost a year.

Bruce Carlson has a bit of a different opinion of how nine-hole superintendents are viewed, but then again he has a unique history. Along with his wife, Sue, he leases and runs the nine-hole Marion (Mass.) Golf Course, the first design of prominent architect George Thomas, who would go on to design Riviera Country Club (among others) and write the must-read book, "Golf Architecture in America." The Carlsons took over Marion in the early 1990s while Bruce was superintendent at the private 18-hole Foxboro (Mass.) Country Club. He would maintain his dual career until 2006, when he gave up the Foxboro position.

Carlson says he has never felt slighted by other superintendents, probably because he was maintaining 27 holes at a time, but said the prejudice articulated by many golfers toward nine-hole courses also affects their view of those who maintain them.

"They think differently about nine-hole superintendents," he says.

That view, says Alan Southward, can act as a black mark against superintendents of nine-holes that are looking to move to a course with more holes. Southward is in charge of the The Dunes Club, the nine holes Mike Keiser built before creating the world-class golf destination in Bandon, Ore. The Dunes Club is easily the best nine holes built during the modern era — after 1959 — designed by Keiser and the father-and-son architecture team of Dick and Tim Nugent.

Southward was originally in sales for