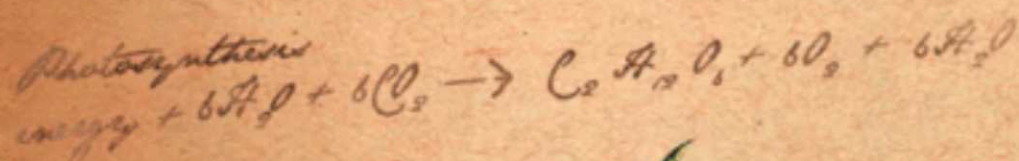


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in amount so small, closely approaching
the critical minimum needed will
tend to be the limiting one"



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have found a direct
relation between soil
moisture and plant height

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tarily, approaching
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TOP Assistants

Tyson Rutter does what it takes to get the job done

Editor's note: If you'd like to nominate someone for the Top Assistants feature, please send an e-mail to Larry Aylward at laylward@questex.com.

Here's how Tyson Rutter's boss describes him: "He is one of the hardest-working, do-whatever-it-takes-to-get-the-job-done assistant superintendents I have ever employed," says Donny Latham, golf course superintendent of the Republic Golf Club in San Antonio, Texas.

Talk about an endorsement! And there's more.

"Tyson has spent several years at some of the best clubs in America and his attention to detail and desire to produce the best product possible is very impressive," Latham says. "I've spent a lot of time teaching him the ins and outs of growing bermudagrass in the South, which is something new to him. I keep stressing to him, 'It's just grass, just grow it.' He has taken up the challenge, and we're starting to see great results."

Rutter has worked in the golf course maintenance industry for 12 years. In 2003, he received a bachelor's degree in turfgrass science and an associate's degree in agriculture business from The Ohio State University.

From his very first job working on a golf course out of high school, Rutter says he knew he would pursue a career as a superintendent. "I enjoyed everything about it — from the work environment to the hard work itself," he says.

Golfdom caught up with Rutter recently to talk about the profession he loves.

■ What's your favorite part of the job?

I enjoy the trouble-shooting demands of the job — working hard to determine the best approach to solving unexpected problems, no matter how little or big the problems may be. However, one of the very best parts of this job is the simple gratification of seeing an outstanding, well-maintained golf course at the end of the day.

■ Who has been the biggest influence on your career and why?

I have been very fortunate to work with some of the finest people in the golf industry. These people have helped shape me to be a very diverse, clear thinker in analyzing various situations. Fred Dickman, certified superintendent at the Broadmoor Golf Club in Colorado Springs, Colo., is a top individual in all aspects. I learned from his incredible work ethic and never-quit positive attitude. I'm grateful for the countless hours he spent with me after work early in my career. He genuinely cared for me and taught me so many important things about how to run a course as well as other aspects of the golf industry. I will be forever grateful to him.

■ What's your favorite product or piece of equipment and why?

The soil probe. Not only does this piece of equipment allow you to check soil moisture, but it provides you with a great deal of information like root depth, root density, thatch accumulation and knowledge of what is going on below the surface.

■ If you could change something about the industry right now, what would you change?

I would suggest that prospective employers not overlook younger but qualified turf professionals and seriously consider them based on their accomplishments and potential.

■ Describe yourself in one word.

Reliable.

■ What is your favorite hobby and why?

My favorite hobby is working cattle with family and friends on our Kansas ranch.

■ What's your favorite vacation spot?

Lake Dale Hollow in Albany, Ky., where I enjoy house boating and water skiing.

■ What's your favorite golf course besides your own?

Andalusia at Coral Mountain in La Quinta, Calif. I had the privilege of working with architects Keith Evans and Rees Jones during the construction of this amazing course.

■ If a movie were made about your life, what famous actor would play you?

Will Ferrell, because I would want it to be funny.

■ It's your last day on Earth. What do you do?

I would have a cook out with my family and friends, and enjoy the day with the people I care about most. ■





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GOLFDOM (ISSN 1526-4270) is published monthly (12 issues per year) by Questex Media Group, Inc., 306 W Michigan Street, Suite 200, Duluth, MN 55802. Corporate office: 275 Grove St., Suite 2-130, Newton, MA 02466. Accounting, Advertising, Production and Circulation offices: 306 W. Michigan St., Suite 200 Duluth, MN 55802-1610. Subscription rates: One year \$39 (U.S. and possessions), \$59 (Canada and Mexico) and \$89 (all other countries). Air expedited service is available in countries outside the U.S. and Canada for an additional \$75 per year. Current issue single copies (prepaid only) \$5 (U.S. and possessions), \$7 (Canada and Mexico) and \$8 (all other countries). Back issues (if available, prepaid only) \$10 (U.S. and possessions), \$14 (Canada and Mexico) and \$16 (all other countries); add \$6.50 per order shipping and handling for both current and back issue purchases. Periodicals postage paid at Duluth MN 55806 and additional mailing offices.



POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to GOLFDOM, P.O. Box 1268, Skokie, IL 60076-8268. Canadian G.S.T. Number: 840033278RT0001, Publications Mail Agreement number 40017597. Printed in the U.S.A.

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Newfound Minimalists

Have you heard the plaintive wail emanating from the mass production golf design outfits? The ones where the phone has stopped ringing, and where they have realized the old way of doing business won't work in the future? The press releases have been flying off the send buttons. One firm, whose well-intentioned associates are trying to take the helm of a wayward ship captained by a known enervator of earth, used the election of Barack Obama to announce that it was time for golf architects to "move earth more efficiently" and focus on courses that "create minimal disturbance" to create "maximum enhancement of natural ecosystems."

Oh, and they were just the members of the firm that would lead this newfound way of doing things.

Another bling-wearing desk jockey/archie sent out some propaganda announcing that he too was going GREEN. Would he be melting those gold chains for a charitable donation in the name of greenhouse gas emissions? Reducing his carbon footprint (whatever that is!)? No, he's ending production of his firm's printed newsletter that annually used up a couple of sycamore branches in favor of a digital-only house organ. What these masters won't do for the environment!

They've even taken to the airwaves. Well, the digital airwaves. You can find a few of them stationed on www.GolfClubAtlas.com where some of the all-time leaders in clunky mounding, over-wrought design, bloated budgets and rolls of blueprints

BEFORE, THEY NEVER SOUGHT WAYS TO DESIGN AROUND THE NATIVE FAUNA. NOW, THEY'RE PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF MOVING LESS DIRT

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



are touting their affinity for lay-of-the-land architecture, multi-hued landscapes and, of course, the strategic, old-style golf courses of the gods. You know, works of architecture reminiscent of ones they used to never build but always mocked before everything came crashing down.

It's breathtaking to listen to the newfound minimalist in all of these reforming architects who rearranged earth like children at the beach trying to build a bigger castle. Yes, many of the same walking, snobbish "brands" who allowed contractors to run up the change orders (while blatantly taking a percentage of the construction budget in lieu of a fee) are now preaching their homespun, golly-gee approach.

These rejuvenating, rebranded deadheads of design are no longer the same folks who looked the other way as irrigation designers threw in unnecessary heads that only created headaches.

These light-seeing, VW bus-driving, all-things-organic aficionados who never walked a property to think of clever ways to design around the native fauna that they now idolize are preaching the gospel of the minimalist. Their old and destructive practices, driven by a desire to feed their coffers, led to

hundreds of thousands of unnecessary irrigated turf and many damaged or destroyed natural landscapes.

And did I mention they are courses that aren't a whole lot of fun to play, either!

Yet, suddenly, the old way doesn't look so sexy as energy costs and sensibility kick in. The list of crimes against the best interests of golf is too long to tabulate, and a "Most Wanted" list of perpetrators might be fun, but it won't get us anywhere if the game is to survive or even thrive in the future.

So let them bellow on. The urgent effort to take turf out of play, to promote environmentally sensitive landscapes and to re-imagine a game rooted in the natural beauty of links golf is the best possible road for our industry. Sure, maybe some people who were selling more widgets than we needed will make less money than they did or go out of business altogether. While I hate to see anyone lose a job or a living, it's hard to sympathize when many of those very same people were the ones driving up cost at the expense of golf.

Sometimes the truth hurts.

Geoff Shackelford can be reached at geoffshac@aol.com. Visit his Web site at www.geoffshackelford.com

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