

With a tight and tenacious crew behind him, Pebble Beach Golf Links Superintendent Chris Dalhamer has good reason to be confident about hosting the 2010 U.S. Open



CHRIS DALHAMER SQUINTS his eyes to protect them from the wind-whipped rain. It's a steel-gray day at Pebble Beach Golf Links, where Dalhamer is the golf course superintendent, on the northern California coast. A stiff breeze blows off the rumbling sea. A dusky fog rolls in. There's a nip in the air.

Dalhamer, who grew up in nearby Monterey, has seen better days — literally. But even on such a colorless day, Pebble Beach Golf Links remains a striking portrait — and a view to behold.

That's because Pebble Beach Golf Links, one of the four golf courses at Pebble Beach Resorts and site of this month's 110th U.S. Open, is so distinct from most of the world's golf courses. Several of the course's 18 holes border the Pacific Ocean with mountains providing a majestic but placid backdrop. Some of the holes, including the frequently photographed No. 8, are located on rocky and ragged cliffs high above the deep, blue sea.

Dalhamer stands on the edge of the eighth fairway and stares down at the gorge that opens beneath him. He watches as the breaker waves crash into the stony shore, their white caps foaming. He breathes in the smell of the salty sea and listens to the lapping surf.

Dalhamer will never take the view — and the potpourri of senses — for granted, even on a day when Mother Nature is in a wistful mood.

"Sometimes I get caught up in my everyday duties, but I try to step back and be thankful for where I'm at," he says.

Dalhamer, who first started working at Pebble Beach as an intern in

Continued on page 22

PHOTO BY: LARRY AYLWARD



Pebble Beach Golf Links has hosted five U.S. Opens. Many maintenance crew members have been there for at least two of the tournaments.

Continued from page 21

1993, isn't the only one who feels this way about the 91-year-old course, designed by Jack Neville and Douglas Grant. So do many of the golf course maintenance workers he oversees, including several who have worked at the course for more than 25 years.

Clayton Hughes has worked at Pebble Beach for 29 years, but the scenery continues to impress him. A few years ago, Hughes was building steps on the eighth tee. He walked up them upon finishing.

"It was like I was stepping up to heaven," he says. "The ocean was all around me. I was in awe. It's my favorite spot on the course."

Pebble Beach's grandeur is also not lost on newer employees, including assistant superintendent Billy Hausch, who has worked at the course for three years.

"Once in awhile, you have to stop while you're out there," Hausch says. "The sun is shining just right, the fog is rolling in and you say to yourself, 'Man, this is a really cool place.'"

PEBBLE BEACH IS a cool place to work, all right. That's why so many golf course maintenance employees have worked there for so

long. And as evidenced by the collective years they've spent there, many of them don't plan to leave anytime soon.

When individuals work together for many years, they develop chemistry between them. They learn each other's strengths and weaknesses. They recognize each other's tendencies. That has happened at Pebble Beach.

"You ought to see us come together when we go out to aerify the course," Hughes says, his face beaming. "Everybody knows exactly what to do. We blow through the golf course and leave it like we weren't even there. It's awesome to see."

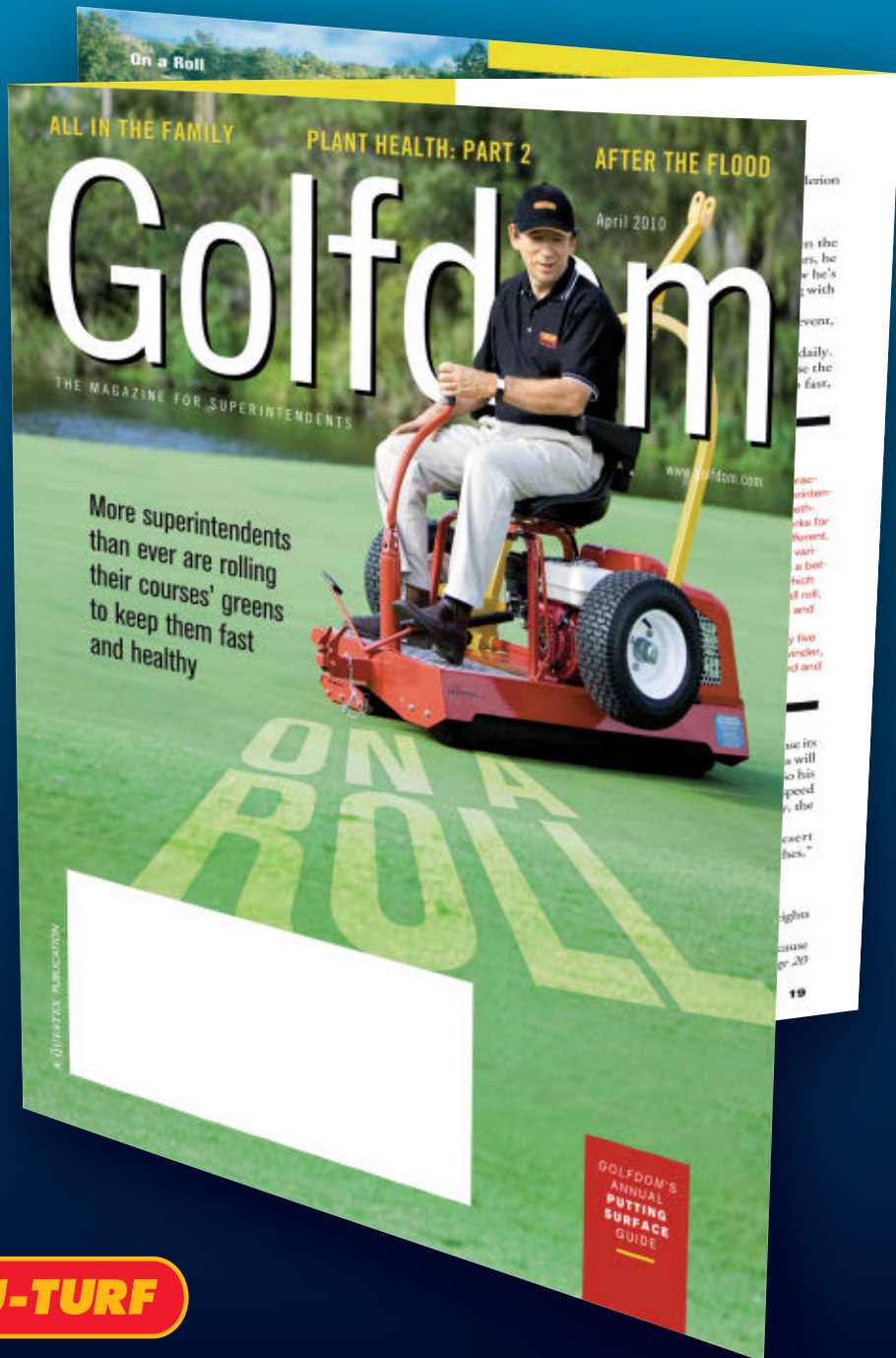
The crew's members have the utmost respect for each other.

"We count on each other," says spray technician Rick Pieper, who celebrates his 33rd anniversary at Pebble Beach this month. "There isn't anybody on the crew who wouldn't do whatever they could for you. They will be there for you."

Dalhamer knows that firsthand because he has experienced it. He also won't talk about his role at Pebble Beach without mentioning his crew.

"You surround yourself with good people,
Continued on page 27

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What's **New** at Pebble Beach?

Chris Dalhamer points out where there will be no intermediate cut between the fairway cut and the ocean during the U.S. Open.



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PHOTO BY: LARRY AYLWARD

When Chris Dalhamer began his job as golf course superintendent of Pebble Beach Golf Links in 2005, he was already thinking about getting the course ready for the 2010 U.S. Open.

"That was the focus from day one: What do we want to do in the next five years and how are we going to get there?" Dalhamer says.

There has been plenty to keep Dalhamer and his 29-member crew plus six interns busy. They rebuilt all of the bunkers and added some new ones. They also improved drainage throughout the course.

"We've tried to polish Pebble Beach as much as possible," says Dalhamer, who expects about 100 volunteers to join his crew for the tournament, June 17-20.

What will golfers who played in the 2000 U.S. Open (won by Tiger Woods in a rout) notice that's different about the course this year?

For starters, the ocean will be back in play at Pebble Beach for this U.S. Open, unlike in 2000. That means players will have to contend with the water on holes four, six, eight, nine, 10 and 18. There will be no rough or intermediate cut between the fairway cut and the ocean. Misplayed balls will roll easily off the turf and over the rocky cliffs into the deep, blue sea.

The fairways will also appear and play differently. Dalhamer says the United States Golf Association's Mike Davis, senior director of rules and competitions, has added a serpentine edging to the fairways, which had more of a straight edge

in 2000. The tiered rough that was popular at the previous two U.S. Opens will also appear at Pebble Beach.

The course has also added about 200 yards since 2000. New tees were built on the third, ninth, 10th, 11th and 13th holes. It's the first time the course has played more than 7,000 yards.

According to the United States Golf Association Green Section's Pat Gross, there will be no green filters on the television cameras at Pebble Beach, which means the course might not appear so vibrant in color.

"This is a good thing," Dalhamer says. "It's reality. I think it's great we'll see a little off-color in certain areas."

— Larry Aylward

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Continued from page 22

and people you can count on,” he says.

That includes Jack Holt, the assistant superintendent at Pebble Beach for nearly 30 years.

“When you have a guy with that much experience — someone who has lived and breathed out here 365 days a year for almost 30 years — you can’t put value on it,” Dalhamer says.

Holt may be the seasoned veteran, but he calls Dalhamer “the rock” of Pebble Beach. He says the crew feeds off Dalhamer’s calm, cool and collected demeanor.

“Chris has the ability to ride through difficult times on an even keel,” Holt says. “If you can’t portray that steadiness and reliability to your crew members, then they’ll be running around like a bunch of chickens with their heads cut off.”

Dalhamer is a buck-stops-here kind of guy. That’s another thing the crew

likes about him. They also like that he views himself as one of them.

Although Dalhamer is sometimes confined to his computer with an Excel spreadsheet staring at him, there’s nothing he enjoys more than hopping on a fairway mower or digging a ditch.

“That’s where I got my start,” he says of the physical labor. “That’s what I enjoy most.”

Dalhamer also believes that grabbing a shovel and jumping in a ditch with crew members shows them he’s not afraid to get his hands dirty.

“Anything I can do to help the crew, I’ll do it,” he says.

As one can imagine, there’s a lot of pressure that comes with the job as superintendent of Pebble Beach Golf Links. Mark Michaud, who was superintendent of Pebble Beach in the mid-1990s when Dalhamer was an intern and an assistant, said being superintendent there was like being on a treadmill that didn’t stop. Michaud, now the superintendent at Shinnecock Golf Links, said the Pebble Beach job burned him out.

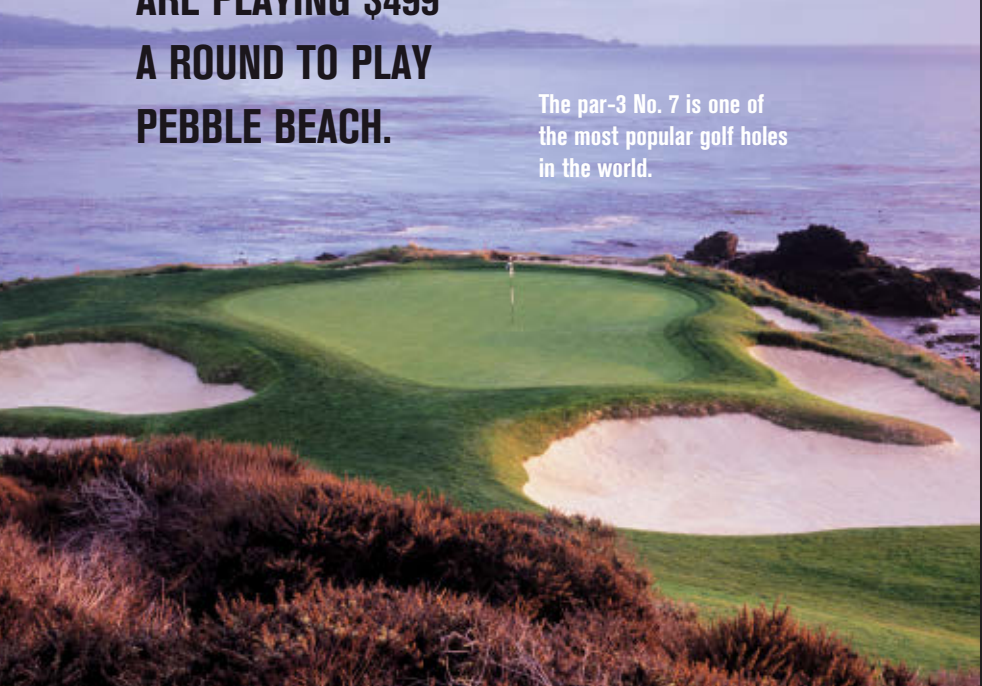
Dalhamer, who Michaud later appointed as his assistant, knows just what Michaud is talking about. Pebble Beach never stops — it’s open daily, even on Christmas. The tee sheet is

Continued on page 29

DALHAMER AND HIS CREW ARE ALSO MOTIVATED BY THE FACT THAT PEOPLE ARE PLAYING \$499 A ROUND TO PLAY PEBBLE BEACH.

The par-3 No. 7 is one of the most popular golf holes in the world.

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AT A GLANCE

Chris Dalhamer

His Work: Certified Golf Course Superintendent of Pebble Beach Golf Links

Trips Around the Sun: Almost 39

His Other Half: Married to Dionne for 11 years. Chris says he could never do what he does for a living (working a lot of hours with few days off) without a supporting wife like Dionne.

The Kids: Three girls — Stephanie, 8; Alexandra, 5; Ashley, 1.5

Hobbies: Playing in over-30 basketball and baseball leagues. The 6-3 Dalhamer can still touch the rim ... on a good day.

Favorite Baseball Team: The Cincinnati Reds (his parents were born in Dayton, Ohio).

Favorite Football Team: The Minnesota Vikings (he lived in Minneapolis for a year as a kid and became a huge fan).

Favorite Pig-Out Food: Pizza

Favorite Sports Movie: "Hoosiers"

Career Highlight: Hosting the 2010 U.S. Open



Chris Dalhamer hits the golf ball pretty well. He has a 10 handicap.

Continued from page 27

always full, and there are tournaments galore. The course gets up to 70,000 rounds a year.

Sixty- to 70-hour workweeks are the norm. If there's a tournament going on, Dalhamer and his crew can count on working 100-plus hours.

When asked how he avoids burn out, Dalhamer, who had worked 21 straight days at the time of the question, chuckles. "It's tough," he admits.

There's no doubt the job is not for everyone. It takes a special and committed person.

The job can also be downright intimidating. For instance, in January when Dalhamer looked at the year in front of him, he saw the PGA's AT&T National Pro-Am in February, the U.S. Open in June, the Walmart First Tee Open in September and the Callaway Pebble Beach Invitational in November. And then there's all of the smaller but just-as-important tournaments mixed in. Talk about a crazy-busy year.

But Dalhamer and his crew didn't look at 2010 like it was an episode of "Survivor."

"We're using the busy schedule as a motivational thing," Dalhamer says. "Look at all the opportunities we get in one year! Some people don't get that much in 10 years. It's a tough, tough schedule, but it's achievable."

Dalhamer and his crew are also pressured and motivated by the fact that daily golfers are paying \$499 a round to play Pebble Beach. The crew takes pride in preparing the course to play as perfectly as possible for Joe Golfer as it would for Phil Mickelson.

"Everybody expects the course to be in the best shape possible," Dalhamer says.

DALHAMER, WHO TURNS

39 this month, may have been destined for this job. He's not only Monterey

Continued on page 31

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