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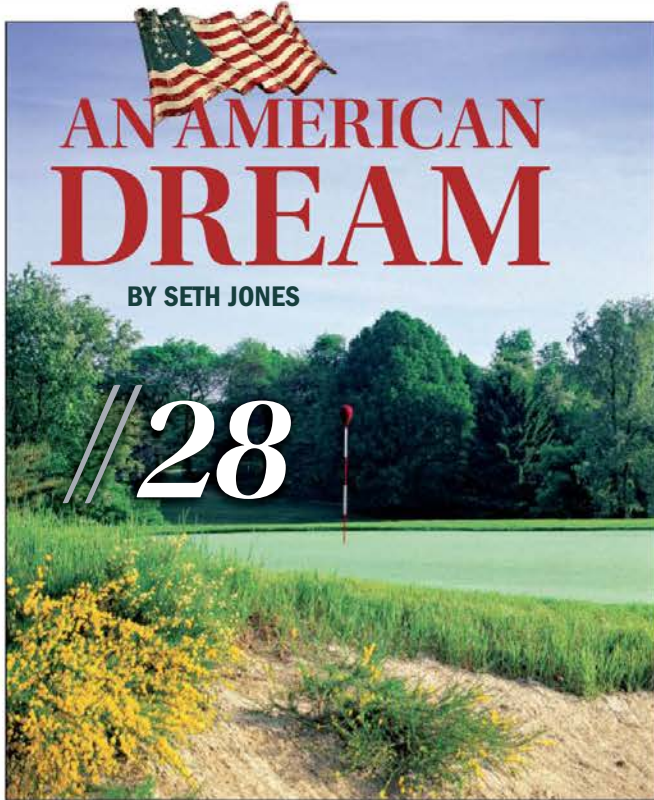
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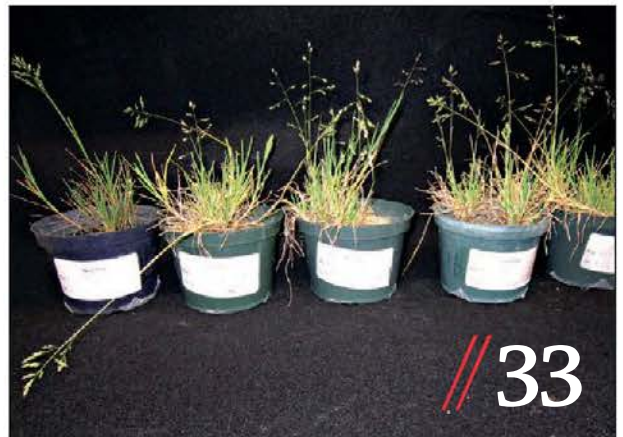


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“As much as Shaffer is a superintendent, he’s also a teacher. He teaches his crew everyday, and he also taught this visiting journalist a few things.”

**SETH JONES**, *Editor-in-Chief*

# An Open mind

**L**ast month we had Austin Allison on our cover, a young up-and-comer in the industry. ¶ This month we feature Merion Golf Club, site of next month’s U.S. Open, where Matt Shaffer is the director of golf course operations. ¶ From Allison in April to Merion in May. That’s like going from the rookie of the year on one cover to a hall of famer the next.

I’ll tell you that I felt some trepidation in taking the trip to Ardmore, Pa. to do a cover story on Merion. I went there knowing full well that Shaffer and his crew would be getting a ton of ink in the next few weeks. Not just in the industry trade magazines, but even in the magazines and newspapers that you find on the newsstand. The new issue of *Golf Digest* on my desk contains multiple Shaffer quotes.

And then there’s always the question of, what will this story do for you? Can a course profile of a place like Merion be useful to courses around the country?

Upon arriving at Merion, it didn’t take long before I knew I made the right choice to visit

the historic course. And not just as I stood over the Ben Hogan 1-iron plaque.

(A side note: the previous week I was at Augusta National for the Masters. The next week I’m standing on the same spot where Hogan hit that 1-iron to win the 1950 U.S. Open. Sometimes, I have to pinch myself.)

Last year we asked readers who they thought the most famous living superintendent was. Paul Latshaw Sr. got the most mentions, but one of his students, Matt Shaffer, also received several mentions. And something else we heard: not only is Shaffer one of the most famous superintendents, he’s also one of the most innovative as well as one of the nicest.

Readers were right on all three points. And that’s why I found so much value in visiting with Shaffer and his staff in mid-April.

Shaffer has a passion for turf, a passion for the profession, a passion for seeing his employees grow as professionals and then move on. He’s dubbed the head superintendent’s office “the launching pad.” It’s currently occupied by Arron McCurdy, but probably not for much longer. Once the Open is over, McCurdy’s phone is going to start ringing, and he’s going to move on to a course of his own.

As much as Shaffer is a superintendent, he’s also a teacher. He teaches his crew everyday, and he also taught

this visiting journalist a few things. Some of these things could be applied to any golf course around the country. As you’ll see, that’s the theme of the story, “An American dream,” our U.S. Open pre-view story, which starts on page 28.

I’ll be returning to Merion the week of the Open. While I’m there, I’ll be blogging regularly at the Golfdom Daily ([golfdom.blogspot.com](http://golfdom.blogspot.com)) and Tweeting as often as I can from @Golfdom. I’ll be reporting on all things maintenance, so if you’d like to see some of the behind-the-scenes operations, and maybe even win a U.S. Open souvenir, please stop by.

Recently our blog has had back-to-back months where we set personal bests for hits in a month. Even more recently, the Golfdom Daily won first place in the TOCA awards for blogs (see page 10). This is the second year in a row the blog has won this award, and last year it also won a Gardner Award (a best-in-show award.) So we like to think that we must be doing something right.

I’m glad I kept an open mind and took the chance to visit Shaffer and his crew at Merion. I look forward to learning more things from Shaffer and his team. Hopefully, you’ll enjoy this month’s cover story while also picking up a few ideas, then stop by the blog and see what else can be learned during the week of the Open.

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# Starter

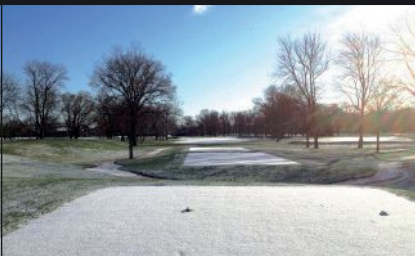
NEWS, NOTES AND QUOTES



## //WEATHER



Standing water one day at Evanston GC, following 5.6 inches of rain in 24 hours...



And then a nice little April snow storm a few days later.

## THE WAY THE WIND BLOWS

THIS SPRING'S CRAZY WEATHER PATTERNS HAVE MADE GREENKEEPING A CHALLENGE.

BY BETH GERACI // Senior Editor



Snowstorms in the Southwest. Flooding in the Midwest. A deep freeze down South. Absolutely no one has been exempt from Mother Nature's firestorm this season, least of all golf courses.

"The high yesterday was 47 with a wind chill of about 28 or 29, and I'm in central Texas," marveled Van Berry, CGCS at Hancock Park Golf Course in the city of Lampasas. "Normally it would be mid-80s during the day. Today it's 55."

On Chicago's North Shore, Evanston Golf Course has been getting hit by Mother Nature's wallop, too. On April 18, the course saw 5.6 inches of rain in about 24 hours, said superintendent Dan Charlton. The course had standing water for a day, causing some retention ponds to overflow.

"Damage-wise it wasn't that significant, but then a couple days later it snowed," Charlton said. "This has been

bizarre. It was 80 two days ago and now it's 41."

The fluctuating temperatures are not so good for grass, as Berry well knows. When temps get to be as high as 80, as they were in Lampasas in February, grass starts growing.

"It would be 80 and then the next morning we'd have frost," Berry said.

Despite what the calendar says about Opening Day, golfers largely have stayed away this spring. In the last three weeks, Hancock has seen six days with no golfers whatsoever, and it's worse in Evanston. "Play's been atrocious compared to last year. We didn't open the course until the first week of April and we've had very little play," Charlton said. "Last year in March we had 700 rounds, and this year we had zero."

Superintendents may as well laugh it off, Charlton said. "After a while you just roll with the punches."

## //EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

### BAYER PLANT HEALTH ACADEMY ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Environmental Science, a division of Bayer CropScience LP, is accepting applications from GCSAA Class A and superintendent members through June 5th for its inaugural Healthy Turf, Healthy Tomorrow plant health academy. Candidates can apply by visiting the Plant Health Academy web page at [backedbybayer.com/plant-health-academy](http://backedbybayer.com/plant-health-academy). Prospective attendees must answer two short essay questions to be considered.

The academy's curriculum will involve in-the-field training at the Bayer Training and Development Center in Clayton, N.C., and classroom training at GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kan.

"Bayer designed the Plant Health Academy to allow GCSAA members to study plant health and then see it put into practice, learning valuable strategies that they can use on their own courses," said Jose Milan, head of Bayer's Turf and Ornamental business. "We are committed to providing superintendents with the knowledge and tools to integrate and promote plant health."

## //IN MEMORIAM

### P. STAN GEORGE, CGCS AT PRAIRIE DUNES, PASSES AT AGE 57

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Philip S. "Stan" George, CGCS at Prairie Dunes CC in Hutchinson, Kan.

George is survived by his wife, two sons and six siblings, as well as numerous nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews.

George was a friend and mentor to many in the industry over his thirty-plus year career. A native Kansan, he was proud to host the U.S. Women's Open in 2002 and the U.S. Senior Open in 2006. George was a champion of preserving wildlife and the prairie grasses that surround Prairie Dunes, considered by many as one of the nation's top courses.





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## // CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

### SYNGENTA PROGRAM ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

For the fifth year, Syngenta is inviting superintendents from across the United States to apply to attend the Syngenta Business Institute, an innovative professional business development program developed in conjunction with Wake Forest University School of Business. This year's SBI will take place Dec. 6-9 on the Wake Forest campus in Winston-Salem, N.C.

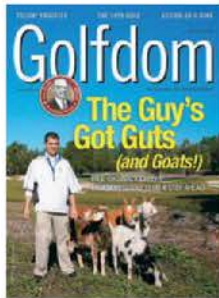
Workshop sessions focus on financial and human resource management, delegation skills, effective communications and negotiation skills, managing generational differences and more.

Superintendents can apply by filling out an essay at [greencastonline.com](http://greencastonline.com). Approximately 25 superintendents will be chosen.

## // TOCA AWARDS

# Golfdom nabs nine, including blog and feature

➔ **PORTLAND, ORE.** — It was a rewarding evening for *Golfdom* magazine. Upon the conclusion of the annual Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association awards ceremony, *Golfdom* walked away with nine TOCA awards.



*Golfdom* earned two first place awards, one for general feature article, for 2012's "The Guy's Got Guts (and Goats!)" by Seth Jones, and another for new media for the *Golfdom* Daily, the magazine's daily blog ([golfdom.blogspot.com](http://golfdom.blogspot.com)). The magazine also won seven merit awards: for photography ("Like Father, Unlike Son" and "Healing Power," Carrie Parkhill Wallace); for design (*Golfdom* Gallery, Carrie Parkhill Wallace); for ornamental feature article ("A Course Built on Sacred Ground," by Karl Danneberger, Ph.D.); for product information article ("All Zoysias are Not Created Equal," by Ben Wherley, Ph.D.); for original content on the web ("The Guy's Got Guts (and Goats!)" by Jones) and operations profile ("Enemy at the Gates," by Stacie Zinn Roberts.)

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## READER JOKE

AS TOLD BY **P.J. McGuire, CGCS**, American Country Club Comedians, supplier of golf entertainment. Visit [accocomedy.com](http://accocomedy.com) to learn more.

A married couple are playing the No. 12 hole at their local club when the wife hits a big slice to the far right side of the hole behind a big barn. After looking at the lie, the husband suggests that if they open the doors on each side of the barn, a decent hit would have her back in the fairway. But for the shot to work, he'd have to hold open the door closest to her ball.

They go through with the plan. When the wife hits the ball her slight miss directly hits her husband in the head, killing him instantly.

Many months later the widow is again playing No. 12 with some friends when her tee shot again slices, ending up behind the same barn. Her partner suggests if they open the doors and she holds the one closest, a good shot would have her right back in the fairway.

The widow shakes her head no, explaining that the last time she'd done this she'd taken a nine on the hole.