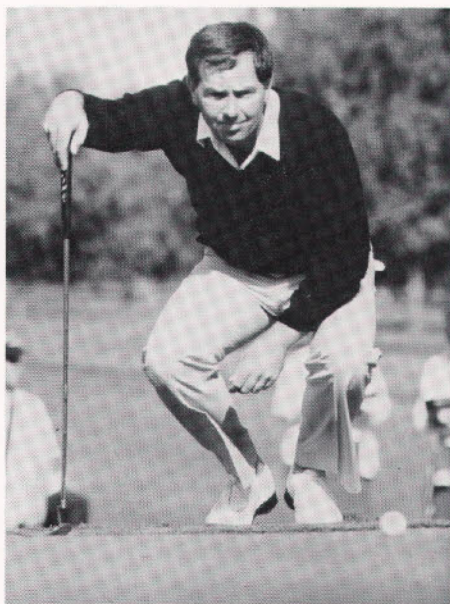


Looking Back

THE 1984 GMO

By Bob Erdahl

The Greater Milwaukee Open golf tournament at Tuckaway Country Club finally hit the big time in 1984. For years, a mid-July date forced the GMO to compete with the British Open for publicity and the top players. With this year's change to a mid-September tournament, top name players like Tom Watson participated in the GMO for the first time and helped make 1984 the best year ever for the GMO. The record four day crowds of over 100,000 spectators saw eventual winner Mark O'Meara battle Tom Watson over the perfectly conditioned Tuckaway C.C. golf course. Golf Course Superintendent Ray Knapp and his staff deserve congratulations from all WGCSA members for a job well done.



Mark O'Meara, the winner of the 1984 Greater Milwaukee Open. Photo courtesy of The Milwaukee Journal.

Let's listen to what some of the players on the PGA Tour had to say about the condition of Tuckaway C.C. Jay Haas remarked that, "The greens were very fast." Tom Watson agreed, adding "If there's a lot of wind this course can be tough. These greens are very fast so you'd better not be on the wrong side with your approach shot." GMO champion Mark O'Meara had these compliments; "This is the best shape I've ever seen Tuckaway in.

The people of Milwaukee can really be proud. These are the best conditions we play under in any tournament all year."

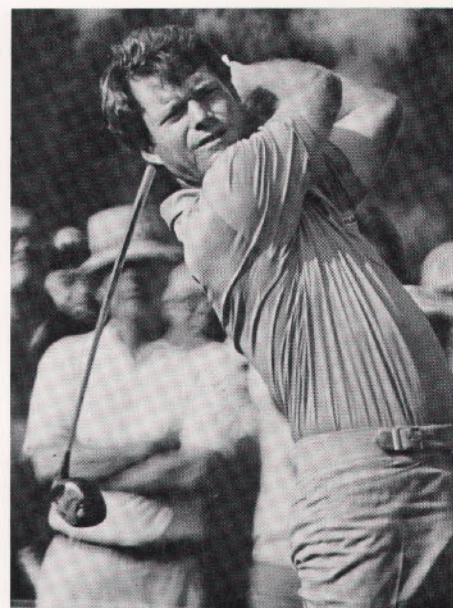
The exceptional conditions these pros are referring to included fairways cut at 0.50", tees mowed at 0.25", and greens shaved down to 0.10". The average stimpmeter reading for the greens on the first day of the tournament was 9'6". The PGA officials were so pleased with the greens that they told Ray to keep them just the way they were.

In addition to providing superb turf conditions, Ray undertook a major renovation program to upgrade Tuckaway's 65 sand traps prior to the GMO. All of the sand traps were recontoured and then filled with a total of 900 tons of sand.

When the GMO changed from July to September, some of Ray's concerns regarding the condition of his turf were alleviated by the cooler September weather. The change to September, however, meant that Ray would not have his well trained summer crew and the amount of daylight would be limited. The two problems were solved by hiring more employees to complete the work in less time and by recruiting employees from several southeastern Wisconsin golf courses to fill the skilled positions on the crew. On the final two days of the tournament, Ray's crew of 23 included 6 members of his regular staff, 7 recruits from other golf courses, and 10 temporary employees.

The aftermath of the GMO left Ray and his staff with several projects. First and foremost was to cut the 6" rough down so the Tuckaway members could once again enjoy a round of golf. In addition, the clubhouse lawn had to be resodded and the practice tees had to be renovated after the workout they received from the pros.

I'd like to close this article with some personal thoughts regarding the state of our profession. Golf course superintendents have long suffered an image problem within the golfing community. This problem really struck me while I was reading a newspaper article about the GMO. The article was written by the Milwaukee Journal Golf Editor and included the following statement, "The greens are faster this year because they are being triple cut twice a day." One can only guess as to the source of



First time GMO participant Tom Watson. Photo courtesy of The Milwaukee Journal.

such an exaggeration. One thing is certain, however, the reporter obviously did not have enough knowledge about the skill and dedication of the golf course superintendent to consider his comments to be of interest to his readers. A brief interview with Ray Knapp would have provided enough material for an entire article on how Tuckaway C.C. was prepared for the GMO.

Times are beginning to change, however. Following this year's U.S. Open, the co-superintendents at Winged Foot C.C. were introduced to the national television audience. It was a moment all of us had waited to see for many years, national recognition for the golf course superintendent's role in the game of golf. Even more important is the public relations campaign that the GCSAA has initiated to promote the image of the "Professional Superintendent." I wholeheartedly support this effort but feel it will not succeed unless every member of the WGCSA makes an individual commitment to promote themselves and our profession. Working together we can ensure a brighter future for all golf course superintendents.

Season's Greetings