



The First Issue of the New Decade!



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JOHNSON Elected President of WGCSA

By Monroe S. Miller

Rodney W. Johnson golf course superintendent at Sheboygan Pine Hills Country Club, was elected president of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association at the annual election meeting on November XX.

Johnson, 35, brings excellent credentials to the office. He is beginning his tenth year as golf course superintendent at Pine Hills. In that time he has given that club some of the finest playing conditions in Wisconsin, both on a daily basis and for the numerous state tournaments hosted by Pine Hills.

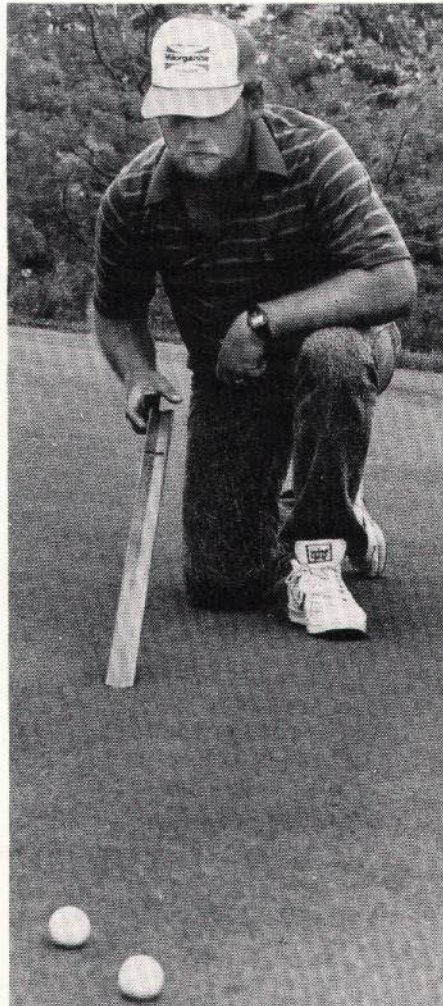
Prior to assuming the management of the Pine Hills golf course, Rodney served two years as assistant golf course superintendent at North Hills Country Club (1979-1981), three years as golf course superintendent at Clifton Highlands Golf Club in Prescott (1976-1979), and two years as superintendent for Thunder Mountain in Crivitz (1974-1976).

Rod's formal education earned him an associate degree in Horticultural Production from Gateway Technical Institute in Kenosha in 1974.

In addition to his extensive experience as a WGCSA director and officer, Rod is also a past member of the board of directors of the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association.

Natives of Osseo, Rodney and his high school sweetheart, Janell, have been married for 16 years. They have two sons — Brent (15) and Joey (6).

By reading the wide ranging interview that follows, you'll have a chance to get a feel for the direction and philosophy that will guide our association into the next decade.



GR: What first sparked your interest in golf courses and golf course management?

J: I first got interested in golf course management at the age of 14. My father was president of the Osseo Golf Club. During his term the golf course

was completely renovated, including the construction of new bentgrass greens. The course had oiled sand greens prior to the renovation. Nine greens, a putting green, a complete manual irrigation system and several new tees were constructed for a total cost of less than \$50,000! Ninety percent of the work was done by the members on a voluntary basis. I remember clearly riding "shotgun" with my dad in a large dump truck hauling green mix to the green sites. I also remember being put on the wrong end of a shovel to fill in irrigation trenches. Nevertheless, I was hooked!

GR: How do you view the role of the WGCSA president?

J: As president of our organization, I see myself wearing many hats. When dealing with other groups, I will serve as a spokesman for our group. I am also a spokesman for the board of directors within our own membership. We have established policies which are continually reviewed and updated to meet our present membership's needs. It is the president's role to see that policies are in the best interest of the entire membership, and to see that they are followed. Our bylaws state that the president appoints standing committees. My efforts have been to match interests and talents to specific committees. The role of my elected office is not to subject the membership to my personal preferences and opinions, but rather, to listen to the opinions of others and make them the basis of decisions.

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GR: In the new decade, what do you see as the role of WGCSA?

J: For many members, WGCSA is a social organization. That is not all negative, and we will continue to provide a social atmosphere at our monthly meetings. For many of us, it is our main contact with other superintendents. Our profession, and ultimately our employers, profit from the camaraderie and idea exchange at these meetings. Educational opportunities will continue to prepare us for the challenges we are presented. It is not the role of WGCSA to force feed education, but to build on our existing formats.

GR: Do you have any specific plans or goals for WGCSA?

J: A specific goal is to see the successful completion of the fund drive for the O.J. NOER CENTER for TURF-GRASS RESEARCH, to see the construction of this facility, and to insure that WGCSA and other golf related donors receive their due credit.

GR: How does the GCSAA fit into the picture at the state level?

J: GCSAA is the big picture. The tangible benefits of membership, such as member services, are not affordable to local chapters and are provided through the financial resources of GCSAA. Our national organization seems to have reduced its emphasis on public relations and has refocused its attention on membership services. This will benefit superintendents at every level. GCSAA is developing strong working relationships in Washington, D.C. and Far Hills, New Jersey. The benefit of these relationships to our state level should not be overlooked.

GR: Are you satisfied with the relationship between the WGCSA and the WTA?

J: Yes and no. I am satisfied that we are working toward a common goal, the construction of a research center for turfgrass research. The WTA provides funds for viable turfgrass research in Wisconsin and WGCSA members benefit tremendously from that research. Our interests are well represented by the WTA, as several of our members serve as directors. The WTA Field Day and Winter Conference are slanted toward the golf industry. I am satisfied that the WTA serves a purpose that the WGCSA can not and does not want to serve. We derive huge benefits from the WTA.

My dissatisfaction is not with the



WTA, but with the fact that WGCSA has lost some of its identity. Within our group, there is confusion about what is WTA and what is WGCSA. There is confusion between the O.J. Noer Foundation and the O.J. Noer Center. If our own group is confused, what is the perception of outsiders? I want to see the WGCSA recover its identity without jeopardizing our present relationship with the WTA. Our common goals are of the utmost importance.

GR: What is your position on current environmental and governmental regulatory issues?

J: We can't bury our heads in the sand. More efforts need to be made to help our membership comply with governmental regulations. There is a tremendous amount of confusion surrounding AG 29 and its effect on our operations. Upon the completion of this legislation, we need to clearly define its content to our membership.

GR: What about our relationship with other Wisconsin golf groups?

J: The WGCA (Wisconsin Golf Course Association), although a relatively new organization, has already earned our respect. It is amazing what that group has accomplished in a short period of time. I see our relationship as the strong and silent brotherly type. As organizations, we share several common bonds and goals. We profit from each other's existence, and many of our most active members are heavily involved in WGCA.

Our involvement with the PGA and CMAA has been limited at best. This is not to say that we would not welcome involvement; however, the basic make-up and motivation of our groups differ greatly. We can play golf together, we can have dinner together, but at this

point I don't see our groups riding on the same bandwagon.

GR: Do you plan on initiating any changes in "The Grass Roots"?

J: It would be easy to say, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!". Nevertheless, we do need to keep in mind that we do not produce our newsletter to win awards. The quality of "The Grass Roots" is for our members, and more membership participation is needed. There is a wealth of talent and ideas within our membership. We need to lean on a few people to share their talents and put their ideas and programs on paper.

GR: Any thoughts on the Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium?

J: Symposium is, and will continue to be, a highlight of our year. The long-standing relationship between WGCSA and MMSD is as strong as ever. Symposium would not have developed without the good people at Milorganite. This year will mark the 25th anniversary of this golf-turf-only conference. This milestone presents us with the opportunity to make the 1990 Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium a very special event. I believe the extra effort required will lead us to even bigger and better events in the next 25 years.

GR: How does your club feel about your involvement in WGCSA?

J: The membership and the board of directors is aware of my commitment to WGCSA and is very supportive. They realize the importance that I place on being actively involved and encourage that activity. They understand and see the benefits that my involvement has given the club.

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