

Meet Mike Semler, Our New WGCSA President

By Monroe S. Miller

Michael Semler was elected 32nd president of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association on November 2, 1993 at the end of the first day of the Wisconsin Golf Course Symposium.

Mike is in the eleventh year of his career in golf turf management. After completing the requirements for a B.S. degree in Turfgrass Management at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1983, he was hired as assistant golf course superintendent at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison.

After two years at Blackhawk he assumed the golf course superintendent reins at South Hills Country Club in Fond du Lac. When the opportunity to return to Madison came up at Cherokee Country Club, Mike accepted. That was in 1987.

Although he is still in Madison, his career took another turn last year. After six years at Cherokee, he moved to a new private course under construction in Madison, Bishops Bay Country Club.

Mike is married and his wife, Kris, is a CPA with a Madison accounting firm, Kiesling Associates. She is a graduate of the UW-Oshkosh. They are the parents of a son, Matthew. The Semler family resides in Waunakee.

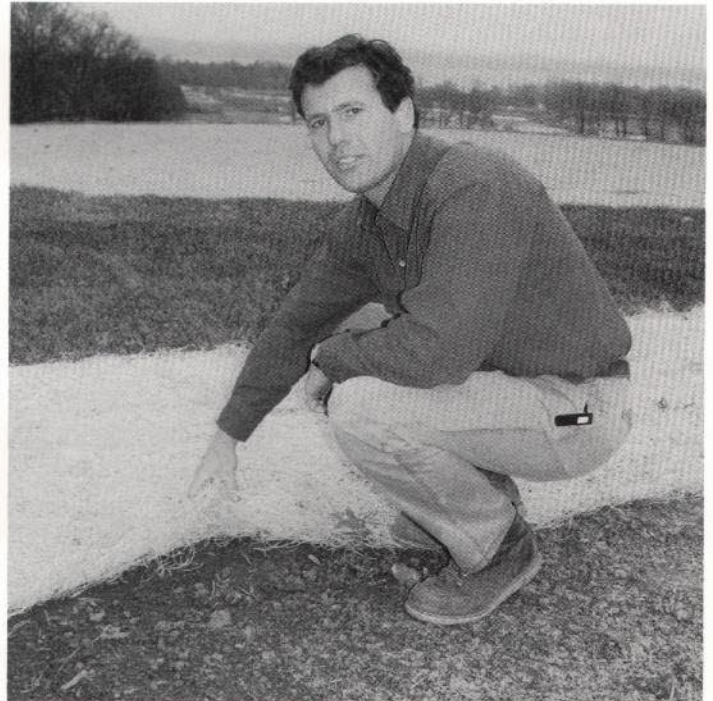
The new president and the editor sat together a few days ago to visit about Semler's views and philosophies about most things in Wisconsin golf turf management. The results of that chat are presented here.

1. How did you first become interested in a career in golf course management?

I started working on Hartford Country Club at the age of 16. This summer position was for earning enough money to attend college, and at that time I had no idea I would make a career out of golf course management. It wasn't until I met Dr. Jim Love at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and talked with him about opportunities in golf course management that I chose to make a career in it.

2. Are you prepared for the WGCSA presidency?

I believe that I am. Even though I may be one of the youngest WGCSA Presidents, I have been serving on the Board of Directors since 1987. I think the length of time I have served the WGCSA is one of the things which will help me as President. In addition, I have been involved with a



WGCSA president Mike Semler on a newly seeded and sodded area of Bishops Bay Country Club.

number of different WGCSA Presidents and their respective Board of Directors and I believe that this exposure has helped prepare me for the presidency.

3. What, in your opinion, are the most pressing problems for a 1990's golf course superintendent in Wisconsin?

Trying to maintain quality golf turf with more limited resources to choose from. The 1990s Superintendent will be using more IPM strategies with less pesticide availability. We will be putting less stress on the turf by concentrating more on agronomic management rather than concentrating on how low we can cut and how fast we can make the grass. We will be more scrutinized and watched than ever before by outside organizations, and thus, we will be challenged to become better all around managers of golf turf.



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4. What is your vision of the role of the president of the WGCSA?

With all of the different personalities involved in our association, I believe it is necessary for the president to make sure that we set policies which are for the good of the entire association today, as well as provide policy direction for the remainder of the 1990's.

5. Talk a little bit about the relationship between the WGCSA and the WSGA.

The WGCSA should always maintain a solid relationship with the WSGA. The WSGA, being an umbrella for many of golfing organizations of Wisconsin, is one good way in which the WGCSA can promote our organization and it's goals, and at the same time promote the golf course superintendent as one of the most important people in golf. Also, we utilize the WSGA offices and staff to make our association run more smoothly. Without them we would be lost.

Between the WGCSA and the WTA?

This is probably one of the most important relationships we have. Both organizations are working toward the common goal of supporting research and education for turfgrass management. There is no other organization in the state which can come close to matching our relationship with the WTA.

Between the WGCSA, the PGA and the CMAA?

If ever there was a need for a closer relationship, this is one of them. Here we have three groups, all of whom should be concerned about the future of golf and golf courses, and it

appears that the common goal cannot be achieved because of individual goals or because of a lack of understanding among the three groups of that common goal. We should put aside any of the past pretenses and attitudes, and come together, working side by side for the advancement of golf.

Between the WGCSA and the GCSAA?

I believe many WGCSA members have become disenchanted with the GCSAA and its policies. Whether this is because of some ridiculous proposals that have come forward lately or because of a feeling that the GCSAA is not acting and doing what the members would like, I don't know. Now I hear they are floating the idea of charging each affiliated chapter "dues". What do they plan on doing with this money? If Chapter organizations are trying to tighten belts, how are we to come up with the extra money? I think the chapters need an explanation on their reasoning for these dues.

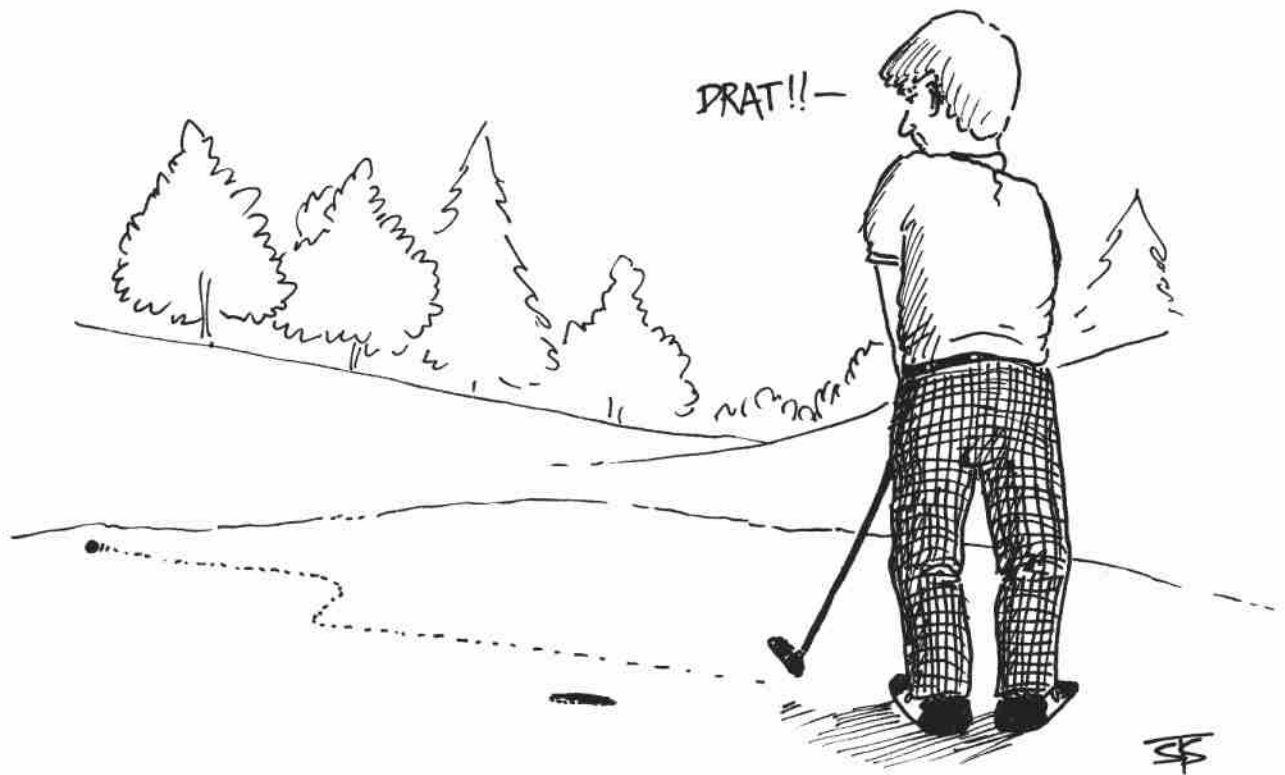
6. How do you view the Golf Foundation of Wisconsin?

A fledgling organization with some very exciting ideas for golf in Wisconsin, but little to show for it yet.

7. What areas of our profession might receive special emphasis during your term as president of the WGCSA?

Number one will be increasing our association's support for golf turf research. With the facility we have in the O.J. Noer

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THE REAL REASON PAUL HARVEY NEVER SEES BIRDIES ON THE GOLF COURSE.

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Turfgrass Research Center, our goal should be to provide as much financial support for research as possible. We should also be trying to get outside support from those who directly benefit this research and not just from turfgrass managers and their respective organizations.

8. What is the most important job of the president of the WGCSA?

My job should take into consideration all of the concerns of the members and then try to provide a common sense goal for this organization. Many times that is difficult because my goals may not be exactly the same as other members of the organization.

However, this is what I believe can make the WGCSA so great. This ability to communicate multiple numbers of views and goals and turn them into a common sense policy serving the membership.

9. How do you see the WGCSA's relationship with the UW - Madison turfgrass management program?

Knowing that I am a graduate of that program the first thing everyone will say is that I am only supporting it for that reason. That is completely wrong! Since we are in the state of Wisconsin, we should keep our support for that State's program. It is no different than if I was in Michigan, I would be in favor of the Michigan Golf Course Superintendents supporting Michigan State's turfgrass management program. It is very simple.

10. Any comments about the Noer Facility?

What a credit to the State of Wisconsin. Through some individual efforts in making this facility a reality, we all will be rewarded with some of the finest research through some of the finest researchers.

11. Thoughts on: the USGA Green Section.

One of the Golf Course Superintendents greatest assets. The breadth of knowledge, the number of golf courses they tour, the research they conduct and the support they can give to Superintendents makes them an invaluable resource.

F/RoW/T Coalition.

Our friend and ally which has represented us in State government, fought our legal battles, and generally represents us in a very professional and favorable manner. We would be lost without them, and we should never waiver from our support of them.

Fast Greens.

The demise of golf. In our quest to promote U.S. Open type conditions on a daily basis, we have forgotten one of the golden rules—Mother Nature Always Wins!! We should be promoting sound management techniques (not gimmicks like rolling greens) on our golf courses to promote healthy golf turf.

Pesticide Issues.

We won one battle with the pre-emption issue, but it is not going to go away. Preemption of Federal laws will make our lives miserable, among other things, and will provide nothing more than one more way to spend local tax dollars on something completely over the head of local government.

Distributors and the WGCSA.

If the Golf Course Superintendent is the heart of golf course management, then the Distributor is the backbone. They support our organizations, our golf courses and the game of golf, and they do it ever so quietly. We should give more credit than they are currently receiving for their role in golf course management.

Student Support.

If the Golf Foundation of Wisconsin believes the future of golf lies within Junior golf, then they are only partially correct. Once again they are only recognizing half the equation. The future of golf also lies within the students who are currently in the turfgrass management programs. Our support of summer internships, scholarships, summer jobs, etc. must also never waiver because those students involved should be recognized as part of the future of golf.

Environmentalists

If I have one nice thing to say about them it is that they have made Golf Course Superintendents more aware of their responsibility in managing their courses. After that, if their only purpose in life is to arouse concern through scare tactics, through misinformation and through silly stunts, then they have no purpose. When they want to talk about issues and facts, then we should start a dialogue with them.

Women in Turf Management

Traditional views that working on a golf course is a "man's job", have never been so wrong. Our profession is slowly opening up to women, but needs to be opened more. Let the best person get the job!

The Symposium

This is more important to me, from an educational standpoint, than any other meeting in the state. It is truly wonderful to meet for two days, and extensively discuss one topic pertaining to golf. The end of the season timing puts all attendees in a very relieved state of mind.

13. It is fairly well known that you are plowing new ground with your arrangement to represent the Bruce Company in managing the new Bishops Bay Country Club. Are you excited or apprehensive? Is this a "new wave" in Wisconsin? Tell us how it will work?

Starting January 1, 1994, Bishops Bay Country Club has contracted with The Bruce Company to manage their golf course. As such, on that day I will become a Bruce Company employee as Golf Course Superintendent of Bishops Bay. There is a certain nervous excitement in this adventure because it is not a traditional means of golf course management. The Bruce Co. will be paid a sum of money to manage this golf course, and for this we will provide the staff, equipment and all the necessities to keep the golf course in excellent playing condition. We think there may be more opportunities for this type of "out of house management" in Wisconsin.

14. Will you encourage your young son to pursue a career like yours if he expresses interest in it?

If my son expresses an interest in golf course management, I will certainly let him know what it is all about. However, he will be encouraged to pursue any career he likes. ♣