



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

By Rob Schultz

It came in the mail a few days ago and will quickly be regarded by all who received it as "the Bible."

Golf Digest upgraded its "Places to Play" supplement this year and it's a wonderful addition for all golfers who like to travel to play different courses.

What makes the "Places to Play" supplement so special is that the *Golf Digest* folks included comments from golfers who played it. They weren't hand-picked golfers but regular folks who filled out a card and sent it in to the magazine. The comments seemed to be accurate and really helped create a guide for courses where golfers can learn which courses they should play and stay away from.

The guide listed 22 Wisconsin sites to play golf. None of the remarks were stunners. All seemed to hit the mark. Surprisingly, nobody complained about paying \$100 to play the River Course at Blackwolf Run. But there were complaints about paying \$50 to play the Springs. It shows that golfers are willing to pay the price to play great courses, but won't to play a dump.

Here's a sample of those remarks:

Blackwolf Run Meadow Course - "From arrival to departure, a truly great experience"... "Tough, beautiful, immaculate"... "Worth a six-hour drive"... "Back 9 is finest I've ever played."

Blackwolf Run River Course - "Brutal, beautiful, toughest course ever"... "Great Challenge, great scenery"... "Would pay just to walk it"... "Greatest test of game management, bar none"... "Nos. 5 through 13 are the best run of 9 holes ever seen"... "One of Pete Dye's best, he didn't ruin the land"... "Mother Nature's best"... "Simply the best public course in America."

Brown County - "Textbook public operation"... "A challenging gem"... "Best secret in Wisconsin. Shhh."

Brown Deer - "Great county course"... "Not the course it once was, but still

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fun"... "Greater Milwaukee Open here? No way!"... "Once a county course, always a county course"... "GMO should improve the course"... "Will be even better once GMO is here."

Cherry Hills in Sturgeon Bay - "Big price, bad shape"... "Stones in the fairways"... "Some bad holes."

Fox Hills National Golf Club - "No trees, wear sunscreen"... "Waste bunkers hold water"... "Very boring"... "Touted as a links-style course. Not even close!"

Lawsonia Woodlands Course - "Terrific ambience with deer prancing on fairways. But some greens aren't up to speed."... "First-class facilities at a sensible price"... "For overall enjoyment, one of the top five ever?"... "Only Blackwolf is better."

Lake Arrowhead - "Wonderfully laid out and maintained. A gem"... "Better than SentryWorld, by far."

Mascoutin Golf Club - "A surprise"... "Unbelievable"... "A true test. Two

island greens, slick greens."... "Bring a compass."

Olympia Resort - "Poorly maintained"... "Has slipped downhill"... "Facilities were dirty"... "Now OK."

SentryWorld - "A perfect experience"... "Course was designed by *Better Homes and Gardens*"... "Has gone downhill in past couple of years but still excellent"... "Haagen-Daz malts at the turn!"

The Springs Golf Club - "Rates have doubled in two years"... "Beautiful spot spoiled by condos and commercialism"... "Not in good shape at all"... "Lots of bugs."

Trappers Turn - "Super layout"... "Three great finishing holes"... "Great little course and value"... "Never a dull moment."

University Ridge - "What a beauty! What a value!"... "Closest thing to Blackwolf I've seen"... "Will be up there with the best"... "Too pricey for being supported by a university."

As it turned out, Blackwolf Run's River Course was one of just six courses listed in the guide that were given five stars. The others were Cog Hill in Chicago, Pebble Beach, Pinehurst, Spyglass and Troon North. The guide said a five-star course was golf at its absolute best. Pay any price at least once in your life.

The River Course was also one of just 25 courses listed in the guide as a SuperValue. As great as that course may be, those in Wisconsin who have opened their wallets and forked out \$100 to play it might dispute that one.

The state courses in the guide with the lowest ratings were Lake Lawn Lodge in Elkhorn and Olympia. Both received just one and one-half stars. According to the guide, that meant they rated just about a rating of just barely being a golf course and just below a rating of being good, not great, but not a rip-off either.

University Ridge got the second highest rating in the state with four and one-half stars. Blackwolf Run's Meadow Valleys Course, Lawsonia's two courses, Lake Arrowhead and SentryWorld each were given four stars.

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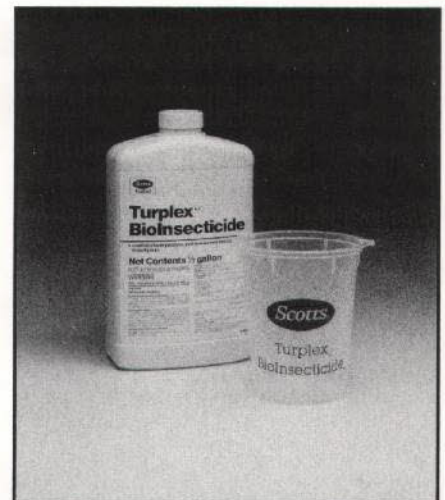
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Also, the Meadow Valleys Course, Cedar Creek in Onalaska, Lake Arrowhead and University Ridge were given Great Value distinctions.

ALL POINTS BULLETIN: *Rob Schultz, sportswriter who is supposed to write columns for THE GRASS ROOTS, has been missing from the past two issues. He is tall with a bad golf game that has worsened because of a bad back. He can usually be found holed up in his office in his home sitting in front of his computer or staring out his window scratching his head trying to figure out something to write.*

Sorry, folks. It has been a weird five months. Reporters covering the Clinton Administration haven't had to cover as many highs and lows as I have covering a Rose Bowl and a college basketball team that looked like it could beat Arkansas one night and couldn't beat the Sisters of the Poor on another night.

I traveled to highlight spots like Malibu and Beverly Hills and stayed in the lush Beverly Hills hotel. I also traveled to lowlight spots like West Lafayette, Champaign and stayed in roadside stops like the Super 8 in

Mendota, Ill. when my eyes wouldn't let me drive anymore.

How weird was my winter? One week I found myself walking the surf in Malibu in the wake of the Wisconsin football team's triumphant trip to the Rose Bowl. The next week I found myself snowed in at State College in the wake of the Wisconsin basketball team's crazy march through its Big Ten season. I flew out of tiny State College only after convincing the pilot the snow, sleet and ice really wasn't that bad.

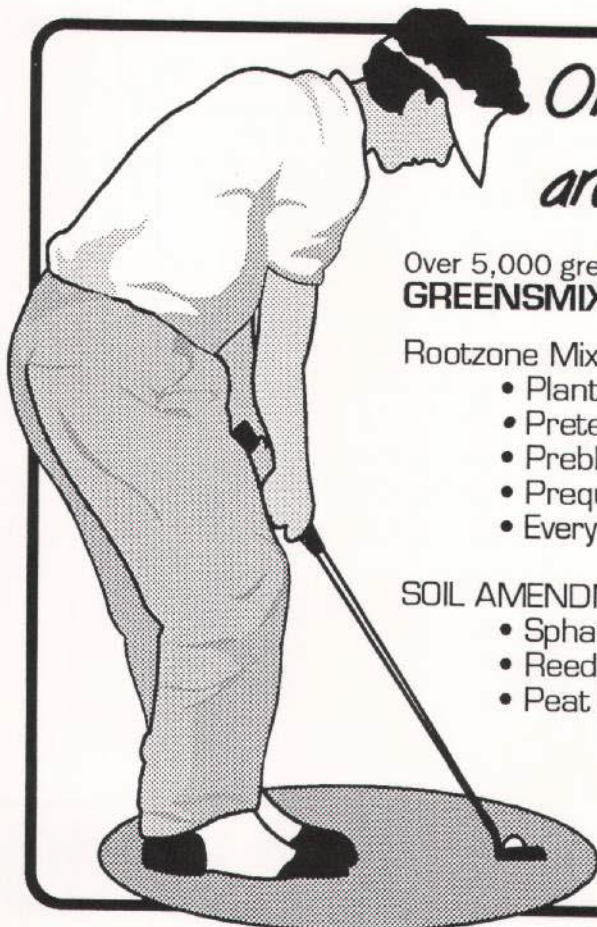
That was more than four months ago. It seems like four years. The thrill of watching a football team reach the pinnacle was erased by the vivid memory of watching pressure build on the faces of the three coaches and 12 players on the basketball team that struggled so desperately to make the NCAA tournament.

It's been said that pressure forces the true colors out of a person. That happened to the basketball team and it took its toll. Just when I thought the basketball season was over, crybaby man/child Rashard Griffith announced he was quitting the team. Call it the epilogue to a weird winter. ♣

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