



# Change Leads to Outstanding Symposium

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

In recent years the WGCSA/Milorganite Symposium Committee has been looking for a formula to move the meeting to a new level. They found it for the 35th annual meeting of this event, held on Tuesday and Wednesday, November 14 and 15.

The change came by starting the Symposium at 1:00 p.m. and carrying it forward for a full second day. The intention was to keep the majority of the program registrants around the second day. It worked.

To enrich the potential of the meeting, WGCSA added a one-half day seminar on the morning of the first day. Bob Vavrek, USGA Green Section Agronomist, and Ron Forse, well known golf course architect, designed and presented the seminar. The topic was "Trees On the Golf Course," a timely topic for Wisconsin superintendents. Ron addressed design and play issues relating to trees, and Bob looked at maintenance problems trees create and offered suggestion for correcting those problems. The seminar received excellent reviews from those who attended it.

The Symposium looked at the single issue of sand bunkers. Speakers talked about every conceivable aspect of sand hazards.

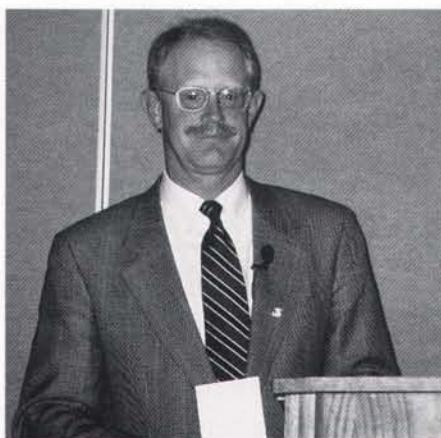
Especially enjoyable was Geoff Shackelford's keynote address – his "State of the Bunker" perfectly set the stage for the rest of the meeting. He talked about the look of them and their placement on the course, inviting players to make bold shots. Geoff also spent time talking about changes that will be necessary to restore the role of the bunker to the game. This was the first time many of us had heard this

well known author speak, and no one was disappointed.

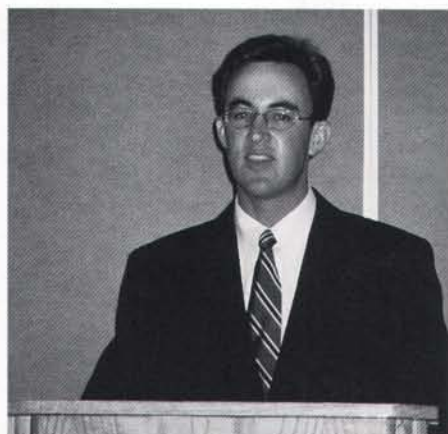
Ron Forse shifted gears from his morning subject of trees and spoke to the history of sand bunkers. His interest in classic courses and



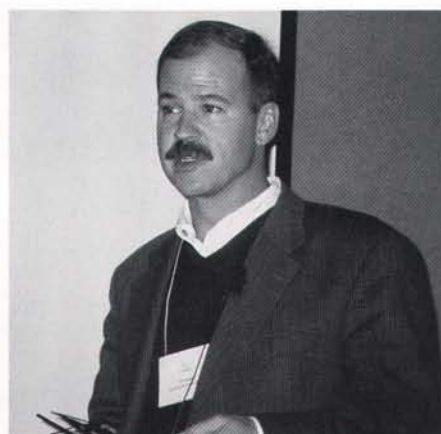
**Tim Venes did a great job of pinch hitting for Carl Grassl on the discussion panel.**



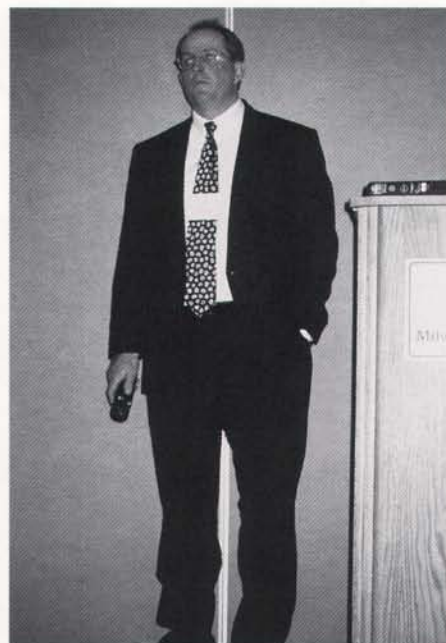
**Ron Forse is especially qualified to speak about the history of sand bunkers in golf.**



**Well known golf architecture author Geoff Shackelford.**



**Journalist & Golfdom editor Pat Jones.**



**Mike Morris did a complete inhouse bunker renovation at his course, Crystal Downs.**





**Scott Austin worked with the Hartman Co. to update bunkers at Midland Hills.**



**Tom Meeks gave a very interesting lecture on Rules as they relate to sand bunkers.**

designers qualified him to give the excellent lecture he did.

Superintendents in Wisconsin seem to love the panel discussion format, and the subject of bunker renovation was thoroughly discussed by Mike Morris, Tim Venes and Scott Austin. Mike did a complete in-house restoration of the bunkers at the famous Crystal Downs Golf Club in Frankfort, Michigan. Scott contracted with the Hartman Company to rebuild the bunkers at Midland Hills in St. Paul. Jeff Hartman sent a letter to the WGCSA that talks about the Symposium and adds some advice based on his bunker experiences. And Tim spoke about Bluemound's remodeling using Bruce Hepner as the designer and the contractor. It was a popular format again this year.

Pat Jones, a good friend of many WGCSA members, led off the second day with a look into his golf turf crystal ball as he spoke about what he saw as seven megatrends in golf. Pat's latest venture is the highly successful reintroduction of *Golfdon* magazine. His perceptions added greatly to the Symposium.

Bruce Hepner, who worked on the Bluemound bunker project,



**Aaron Goninen UW-Madison senior in turf-grass management, gave a superb talk on choosing a good bunker sand.**

talked about design and construction, and he accompanied his lecture with some excellent slides. I hadn't met Bruce previously and was glad for the experience. It was a pleasure to talk with a man who does 100 – 150 bunkers a year!

The program continued with a strong, basic lecture from Dr. Jim Crum, a soil scientist from Michigan State. Jim reviewed some of the basic principles that govern the performance of sand in bunkers.

The USGA's Tom Meeks took a look at the Rules and how they impact a bunker maintenance and conditions. Tom has a good voice,



**Jon Tucker talked about bunkers in the land where golf was born.**

great sense of humor and deep knowledge of the Rules. His lecture was excellent and very educational.

My pride was showing when Aaron Goninen spoke to the Symposium audience about the "search for sand." It was work he did on our course as part of his capstone project at the UW – Madison. Aaron graduated in





**Symposium week is a busy time for Bob Vavrek: a one-half day seminar, a lecture at the end, and two days as chief A/V engineer!**



**Dave Brandenburg expresses thanks to Louis Miller for his contributions to the 2000 Symposium.**

December from Dr. Kussow's program and today is Chad Ball's assistant superintendent at Conway Farms. There was a lot of praise for his presentation.

I haven't yet learned how or who arranged for Jon Tucker to speak, but Milwaukee is a long way from England and his presence was a plus for us. He's a turf agronomist across the pond and a "fellow sufferer in mud holes." His presentation on sand bunkers was so interesting and added a perspective that only someone from golf's birthplace could offer.

Louis Miller, a superintendent from Louisville, has appeared at the Symposium previously and spoke to the subject as both a superintendent and as a golf course builder. Good slides accompanied his folksy, easy style of speaking.

Filling the role he has carved out of many previous Symposiums, Bob Vavrek took time to summarize each speaker's message and, as we have come to expect, did it perfectly.

Compliments and congratulations are due to the Symposium

committee of Rod Johnson, Wayne Otto, Bab Vavrek, Gordy Waddington, Al Nees, Bruce Worzella and Shelley Biro. It has

always been a singular event, but the changes brought to this year's meeting will put it at the top. Thanks from all of us. ♻️



To the Members:

Tom, Mark and I would like to thank your association for allowing us to attend your symposium on the Ins and Outs of Bunkers. It was fantastic! We were very impressed on how well the symposium was presented and on the selection of guest speakers on the very appropriate and well-needed subject of bunkers. You should commend your association officers for a great job. "The Minnesota boys would have been jealous."

Since I wasn't able to stand up in front of a room full of strangers, I felt guilty about not being able to pass along some words of wisdom to you. We have been working on golf Courses for over 28 years. In the past two years we have built or restored nearly 500 bunkers. We have had the privilege of working on the nicest golf courses in Minnesota that are ranked very high in the country. We restored two of Seth Raynor's courses, two Tillinghast courses, a Donald Ross course, and a Robert Trent Jones Sr. course. They are all different with many challenges.

If I were to give any advice to your staff on the subject of rebuilding or restoring your bunkers, it would be to "Never Cut Corners" on any aspect of the project no matter what the expense. "Do it right the first time or don't do it at all". Band-aids only work on scraped knees.

We cannot stress drainage enough. If you want low maintenance and long lasting bunkers make sure the surface water doesn't enter the bunkers. We have seen surface water that was designed to enter the bunker or the attempt to divert the surface water was not sufficient. Surface water from a short mowed, very firm green and slopes that vary from 1% to 4% are the worst. Even after a lite to moderate rain fall on a sand faced bunker, major erosion and contamination will occur. This will shorten the life of a bunker dramatically.

We go out of our way to redesign the surface drainage even if it means moving the bunker or getting into the green.

Grass faced bunkers have less erosion problems. Surface water should still be avoided to slowdown the contamination of the sand. This will also reduce the stress on the subsurface drainage. Good common sense goes a long way.

Again, I can't thank you enough for your hospitality and the opportunity to meet some of your members. If I can help in any way, please give us a call.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Hartman

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