



Spring Green-Up Day at Glenbogle Golf Club

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

"Meet me in front of the Sale Barn Restaurant on the north end of town," Alex Mereworth instructed me over the phone. I was at Tom Morris' course early on a Saturday morning, helping him load the big Ransomes rotary mower he had sold to Alex. When the phone rang, Tom yelled from the tractor seat, "Answer that."

Morris took good care of his golf course machinery and always found a market for it that was better than the trade value distributors gave him. And he had a trailer that allowed him to deliver whatever he had sold to a colleague.

"Sometimes I think you should have been a trucker, Tom," I suggested to him as we were hooking up the trailer to his Ford F-250. "To me, it seems like one big hassle."

"Well, it is fun when done in small doses like I do," Tom replied. "And there is nothing like windshield time behind the wheel of a Ford truck!"

Alex was the golf course superintendent for the Glenbogle Golf Club in Huntly, Wisconsin, a small town with strong Scottish and Irish heritage. The village loved its Catholic and Presbyterian churches and its sporty little golf course.

Huntly was a neat small town. The intersection of the state highway and a main county trunk brought everyone to the village green. It was a park with a bright white bandbox in the center, majestic oaks and maples scattered about, and lots of park benches facing the sidewalk and surrounding the park. The churches occupied opposite sides and the remaining two sides faced the business district on one and the town offices on the other. It was an inviting scene, reminiscent of those captured by Currier and Ives in the 1800s.

We had a pleasant ride there, Tom and I, visiting and speculating about the upcoming golf season. Our courses, like most of those in the state, were open, but play was slow. "Good thing," Tom said. "We have a lot of work to do before we are really ready for full golf activities."

"Same for us," I echoed.

We met Alex at the Sale Barn, just as instructed. "Come on in and we'll have a little breakfast," Alex invited after we had exchanged handshakes.

The restaurant was warm, and we were greeted by a sign in the vestibule that said, "Where the food is cheap and the BS is deep."

"My kind of place," Tom commented with a smile.

A waitress behind the counter poured three coffees and commented, "No business here this morning, Alex - everybody in town must be at the golf course."

I ordered the Auctioneer's Special - thick-cut bacon, two fried eggs and toast. Tom and Alex ordered the Sale Ring Special - pork sausage and scrambled eggs.

"What did she mean when she said everybody must be at the golf course?" Tom asked Alex.

"Today is our annual Spring Green-Up Day at Glenbogle. I hear the same thing every year - businesses in town think **everybody** belongs to the club because business is so slow."

I didn't say anything. Tom was lost in thought for a few minutes before he finally commented, "that must be pure hell."

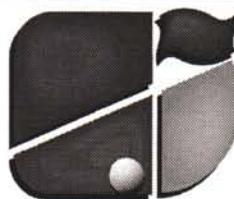
Alex smiled. "That is the general consensus, Tom: what could possibly be worse at work than having a big group of members nosing in my business? I thought the same thing my first year at Glenbogle. How can I handle having them meddle in the shop or on the course, doing things their own way, possibly doing poor or sloppy work, ignoring my requests or wishes? I dreaded dealing with it.

"As it turns out, we would experience significantly reduced conditions on our golf course without the work our players do for us on Green-Up Day."

"You have got to be exaggerating," Tom said.

"No, really, I'm not. You'll see why when you drop that big rotary mower off at my shop."

We finished breakfast and followed Alex to the Glenbogle Golf Club.



**GILL
MILLER** INC.
Golf Course Architects

122 North 2nd Street • River Falls, WI 54022
715-425-9511 • e-mail: info@gillmiller.com
visit our website www.gillmiller.com

**Design • Renovation
Master Planning • Practice Centers**

Member: American Society of Golf Course Architects

The spring air was fresh and the beautiful Wisconsin landscape had turned almost completely green. Trees were leafed out for the most part, although the leaves themselves still had that pale green that new leaves have for a while after bud break. Farmers were in the fields, sowing oats and getting ground ready for corn planting. The air smelled good.

We pulled into the Glenbogle parking lot - it was packed full. Alex had Tom pull up and unload near the range tees. Almost immediately there was a crowd of members, anxious to see the "new" mower Alex had purchased from Tom.

Clearly they were happy to add this mower to their equipment inventory, and at a good price, too. One of the men offered to drive it down to the shop.

The club was a beehive of activity. We went with Alex down to his shop. Inside were a dozen people, painting tee blocks and rake handles and other miscellaneous tee and green equipment. Somebody was scrubbing water coolers while another person was cleaning what appeared to be tournament flagsticks.

We visited a bit and took Alex up on his offer for a quick golf course tour. The number of people working on the golf course was surprising. "Why isn't anyone playing golf?" Tom wanted to know.

The course and the driving range are closed today," Alex responded. "No golf on Green-Up Day!"

There must have been 75 people around the course, hand raking leaves and twigs and other debris into piles to be picked up by a couple of older members with an 8N Ford tractor and trailer. It seemed they were all having a good time, but they were working pretty hard, too.

"Amazing," was the only comment Tom could make.

There was a group - men and women - getting flower beds ready for planting, and another gang was putting up the tee signs.

Alex took us to the far corner of the course where a number of men were limbing a tree that had been dropped. Some were cutting up the body wood while others fed branches into a chipper. Not far away a sky-worker was trimming trees around the 14th green. A couple of guys were splitting the body wood and pitching it into the back of a Cushman. "That will make some nice fireplace fires in the clubhouse next winter," Alex noted.

The clubhouse grounds were getting a good going over. "At noon we all head to the clubhouse and have lunch together," Alex said. The chairs of the various work committees report on their progress and we reallocate labor to places where more work remains.

"This might be the ultimate team effort you will ever see in golf," Alex offered. Tom added, "That is a certainty."

We accepted an invitation to stay for lunch and

enjoyed ourselves immensely. The conversation and banter and good feeling filled the clubhouse.

Obviously, the members at Glenbogle enjoyed the feeling of community, the camaraderie and the satisfaction of investing some good old-fashioned sweat equity in their club and golf course. One of them was snapping photos of the affair, to be put in the club's photo album for this year.

They shared a common pride in the golf course, their golf course - on this day the bank president and the plumber, the doctor and the dry waller, were all the same in every way. They were working hard on this one day and would see the fruits of their labor all season long.

"Alex was right," Tom contemplated as we drove home. "Spring Green-Up Day probably is his best day of the season. And he IS a lucky man to be part of it. That's golf for you." ♻



Deep Drill Aerification



Drill & Fill Aerification



TURF TIME

AERIFICATION SPECIALIST

Deep Drill and Deep Drill & Fill

Midwest Regional Manager

Eli Witt 727-415-3680

Toll Free 1-877-388-8873