



Junior Agronomist

By **Jacob Schneider**, Senior Turfgrass Student, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The opportunity to travel with one of Wisconsin's premier turfgrass experts was even better than it sounds.

Thanks to the USGA, I was afforded the chance to accompany Bob Vavrek for a week's worth of Turf Advisory Service visits and other, informal visits.

Each year, the USGA Green Section selects eighteen outstanding students to travel with their agronomists on visits to courses throughout the United States.

As part of the selection process, universities with turfgrass programs nominate one student to compete for the regional internships. In my case, I competed against students from the University of Minnesota and Michigan State University, respectively.

The goal of the program is to broaden students' perspectives of the turfgrass industry and the path that they take with their educations and careers. I can tell you that it does exactly that.

During the week of travel, the USGA picks up all hotel and meal expenses, and the students also receive a small stipend to make-up for lost time at work.

My week with Mr. Vavrek brought us to courses from Browns Lake to Chenequa Country Club. With this, I was able to learn about a variety of challenges that superintendents face on a daily basis.

With a relatively easy summer throughout most of southern Wisconsin, many of the problems that were discussed had nothing to do with agronomic issues or with turfgrass at all. It should come as no surprise to most of you that shrinking budgets and political dealings were frequent topics of conversation. Moss and algae seemed to be the peskiest agronomic issues that we hear about.

When we weren't making official advisory visits, Bob showed me some of the perks of the job. In mid-week, Mike Lee was gracious enough to show us around a post-PGA Whistling Straits. Later in the day, Tim Venes treated us to a round of golf at Blue Mound. That certainly was the icing on the cake.

Overall, the internship was an unbelievable experience. It was great to be able to visit courses that were so diverse in terms of both quality and ownership. My week with the USGA taught me a lot about what it takes to be a superintendent, and I'm grateful to them for providing students with this unique opportunity. ♣



Jake Schneider, 2004 recipient of Green Section scholarship, North-Central Region.



A view of Lake Michigan from Whistling Straits.



The beautiful Blue Mound Golf and Country Club.