

A Golfers Comments!

By **Gene Haas**, Retired Executive Director, Wisconsin State Golf Association

Editors note: Gene Haas is well respected as a leader in Wisconsin Golf History and shows his passion for playing the game in this letter I received. Gene was Executive Director of the WSGA when it was agreed that the WSGA office would perform the business-office duties of WGCSA. He graciously authored and edited the WGCSA history in the book "Caring for The Green" in 2005.

I often wondered how George Alexander Selkirk felt when he was called upon to replace the inimitable George Herman "Babe" Ruth in 1935 as the New York Yankee's right fielder, when the Babe was released from the Yankees, before he signed on with the lowly Boston Braves as a player-coach. Gosh, how could

anyone fill the shoes of one of baseball's all-time great players, especially one who wore the pinstripes of the Yankee's famous "Murderer's Row." Well a recheck of the statistics showed that he did not fare too bad - though, who could replace the Bambino - the Sultan of Swat?

Selkirk, who was known as "twinkle toes" because of his very noticeable manner of dancing on his toes while running the bases, performed exceptionally well in 1935, batting .333 and banging out 11 homeruns. He batted over .300 for four of his next five years, and was selected as an All-Star in 1936 and '39. But, the big draw in baseball is the proclivity to produce homeruns, whereas Selkirk in his career produced a homerun at the rate of only one for every twenty-six times up to the plate. He Babe hit one every eleven time at bat - quite a difference. The ooohs and aahs continue to go to the power hitter.


Selkirk remained with the Yankees until he joined the military in 1942, at the age of 34. Upon his return from WWII, he retired and became a manager for the Yankee farm system. HE then joined the Milwaukee Braves and managed their AAA farm club for a number of years. Later, he became the General Manager of the "new" Washington Senators (now the Texas Rangers) until being fired in 1968 by the new owners. He continued as a baseball scout for the Yankees until his death in 1987 at age 79.

What does this all have to do with *The Grass Roots*? Well, I like the position that George Selkirk inherited in 1935 when he


replaced Babe Ruth with that of Dave Brandenburg, who took over the reins as *The Grass Roots* editor from the legendary, long-time editor Monroe Miller. Dave should receive numerous accolades and gold medals just for volunteering to assume the chores relinquished by Monroe. If Dave's first issue (Vol. XXXVII-Jan/Feb 2008) is an example of his capabilities, then the WGCSA is in great hands. Not a blip appeared on the radar screen - the transition was as smooth as the putting surfaces of the late Wayne Otto's (the Wee One) Ozaukee CC greens. It appears the future of *The Grass Roots* is in great hands.

While reading *The Grass Roots* most recent issue I enjoyed Dr. Jon Stier's article "*Late Season Golf: to Play or Not to Play*". I am skipping over his explanations of the "drain on the carbohydrate supply of the leaf plant," because as a golfer during the early and late golf season, I rarely view the condition of the turf leaf. I have a difficult time just hitting the ball. I also question Dr. Stier's analysis that "a course is in need of a traffic cop during seasonal changes." From my experience only the hearty play during these periods - but they do play. I recognize that frost is dangerous to golf course traffic and play has to be avoided during this period, but other conditions, let the people play. The Rules of Golf allow the golfer to move a ball whenever conditions are in question - so move the ball and continue with the game.

In my opinion, a golf course should NEVER be closed, at least to walkers (frost excepted). I have never seen a course RUINED by



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allowing play during difficult conditions; obviously, cart restrictions have to be applied when necessary – they ALWAYS seem to recover. So, let 'em play!

I also read Dave Brandenburg's review of the Milorganite Turf Symposium entitled "*Why Close at All.*" A majority of the symposium attendees seemed to agree that Henry should remain in the grillroom during the "off-season," but many agreed this policy is not always feasible, due to business restraints. I strongly applaud the course managing philosophies of Bill Rogers at Evergreen GC in Eklhorn, who allows his course to be open for the entire season. John Wagner at Spring Valley CC in Salem has done the same for the past 50 years, or so. The WSGA

has held early season golf tournaments at both of these courses and the conditions have been very acceptable. Some clubs, such as Westmoor CC, allow all-year play, but reverse the hole-locations to the tees, which just happen to be all bentgrass. When the "official" season opens, it can be noticed that the course conditions are no different than if winter play had not been allowed.

Another suggestion is that the next time a panel is assembled to discuss golf course playability conditions; a positive approach would be to include an active golfer on the panel. Your panel included some top-quality people, but was not represented by an active, paying playing golfer. It may help to diversify the discussion. 



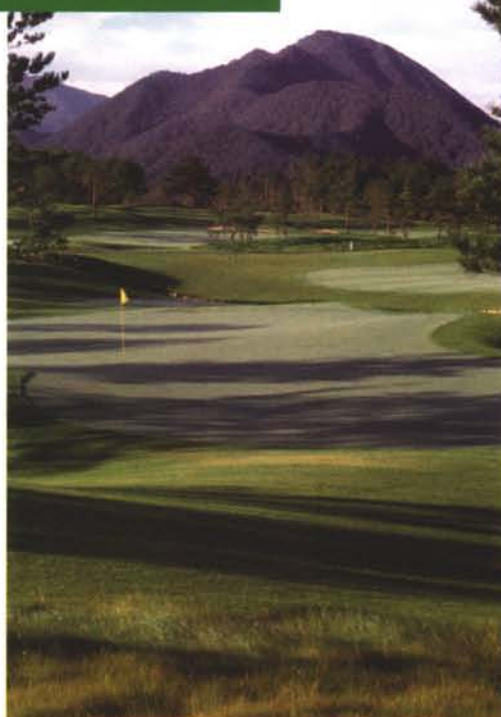
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