



# My J-O-B

By **Jake Schneider**, Assistant Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

If I were to question our golf pro if he's ever been asked if he was really good at growing grass or if he could mow straight, wide passes when he told someone what he did for a living, I suspect that he'd look at me quizzically, say "no", and ask me if I'd been drinking. Why is it, then, that one of the most common responses (next to "What do you do in the winter?" and "Did you have to go to school for that?") that people give when I tell them what my job is is, "So, are you a good golfer?" Oh, the looks of disappointment when I tell them that I usually shoot within five strokes of 90. Once, just once, I'd like for someone's initial response to be something that at least pertains to growing grass; that person will receive \$5 and a firm handshake. However, to be honest, some of the more recent interesting queries to my career choice are a whole lot better than the first time that I was questioned on the subject.

About 10 years ago, my dear mother and I were driving to LaCrosse to take a campus tour at UW-L. At the time, the sports fanatic in me had me thinking about pursuing a career in Sports Management (which undoubtedly has a much cooler ring to it than Horticulture and Soil Science). On this drive, I decided to tell my normally mild-mannered mom, who's drank approximately 6 beers and said 3 profane words in her 50-something years on this planet, that after years of being brainwashed by Scott Schaller as a summer seasonal at North Shore I was thinking about pursuing Turf Management. Her ultra-supportive response? "What the hell is that?"

Don't get me wrong, I love what I do, but it is kind of any odd job that we have. And from my experiences, it's one that isn't very well understood by the general public, or mothers of children who worked on a golf course crew for 3 years before deciding that they wanted to go to school for it, for that matter. Mostly, I blame the word "superintendent." When most people think of superintendents, my guess is that school superintendents, police superintendents, and construction superintendents pop in their minds. While I do agree that superintendent is an appropriate term for what it is that we do, I sometimes wonder if this term hasn't made it more difficult for us to become well-recognized for the vital role that we play in creating memorable golf experiences. To me, golf course superintendent sounds too synonymous to golf course general manager. But, I'm sure that someone who knows a whole lot more about public relations than I do (which wouldn't take much) decided that "superintendent" was our best bet. If I were to tell

someone that I'm the assistant golf course greenskeeper or the assistant director of grounds at Blackhawk C.C., the questions about my lackluster golf game would likely be minimized, and I would no longer have to tell people that I simply "grow grass."

But, for now, I guess that it is what it is; I'm an assistant golf course superintendent, and I'm damn proud of it. At least my mom now knows what that entails, and she hasn't cussed at me about it in years. So, I've got that goin' for me, which is nice. 🌱

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