



# City Life

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

When I started at Blackhawk C.C. as a know-it-all (cough, cough) intern seven years ago, I expected the experience to be substantially different than the five years that I'd previously spent at North Shore G.C. in Menasha. Like many interns, I wanted to learn the nuances of another personnel and agronomic management system to further my real world experience. On the surface, both courses seem relatively similar—classic, tree-lined courses with great history and even better conditioning. But, there is one thing that definitively distinguishes the two courses from each other—location, location, location.

North Shore sits on a relatively large piece of property, tucked between Highway 114 and Lake Winnebago. For the most part, the course is surrounded by farm fields and woodlots, but there are a few houses adjacent to the 18th hole. Blackhawk, on the other hand, sits of few short minutes from downtown Madison, and the tight layout is surrounded on all sides by either residential or commercial properties. Additionally, two of Madison's most popular biking/running routes run along either side of the course, and Lake Mendota is 20 yards downhill from hole 16. Blackhawk's location keeps life interesting on a daily basis, and the following is an incomprehensive list of some challenges that city life on the course brings with it.

- 1) Unless you've been living under a rock or are a new-comer to Wisconsin, you're well aware that the political leanings of most Madisonians are shaded sharply to the left. Seemingly year after year, editorials in the State Journal discuss the unscientifically-based evils of turfgrass, and you're shunned if you don't own a Prius. Want to feel as if you are single-handedly destroying the environment? Try spraying the 7th fairway at Blackhawk while droves of commuting bikers glare at you from 100 feet away. While we rarely have any actual issues with said commuters and our ultra-liberal neighbors in Shorewood Hills, you feel a little bit like a lady of the night in church when you're spraying the course's perimeter.
- 2) In the early morning hours, Blackhawk Country Club magically transforms into Blackhawk Dog Park. I'm a reluctant co-owner of a seven pound chewing, barking, and general nuisance-causing canine and have nothing against dogs, per se. Some of their owners, on the other hand... So far, I've learned that unleashed dogs have a magnetic attraction for bunkers, especially if they're freshly raked, and that

the course's garbage cans are terrifically located for doggy doo-doo disposal. With the fertilizer prices these days, we may soon begin a new organic fertility program on our greens.

- 3) Recently, it's become obvious that the course's wildlife isn't very..well, wild. At least one of the turkeys that resides in and around Blackhawk has voluntarily come within feet of our crew members and golfers and even followed a triplex mower for about 300 yards. In years past, the red-tailed hawks would let you approach them without flying off. However, after having their nest taken down from the local smokestack amid a flurry of screamers, I have the feeling that they aren't going to be quite as friendly this year.
- 4) Noise ordinances are the worst thing to happen to work productivity since YouTube. We have seven greens that are affected by the Shorewood Hills noise ordinance. Because of this, no substantial noise can be made around these areas before 7 on the weekdays, 8 on Saturdays, and 10 on Sundays and holidays. Fortunately, we don't have very many early, early morning golfers, but it still creates challenges and necessitated the purchase of an electric triplex for Sunday and holiday mowing. On the positive side, starting at 5 in the morning isn't a viable option, which means I get an extra hour of beauty sleep.
- 5) Last, but certainly not least, you never know when you're going to have your life threatened by a psych ward escapee while mowing the 18th tee bank. It's a long, true story with too many details for this column, but let's just say that I now keep a protective turkey by my side at all times, just in case it happens again. 🦃

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