



92nd PGA Championship

By David Brandenburg, Golf Course Manager, Rolling Meadows Golf Course

The Straits Course at Whistling Straits Golf Course hosted the worlds best golfers for the 92nd PGA Championship August 9-15th. It was the second go around for the Pete Dye designed layout as it also hosted the 2004 PGA won by Vijay Singh.

You really have to visit the Straits Course to obtain an appreciation for the incredible Pete Dye design. Words cannot describe the elevation changes and the natural "seaside links" look the property features. It is fun to watch spectators as they crest the first hill and get a view of the course and how it seems to fall into Lake Michigan. It really is a jaw dropping experience.

The Kohler Company owned links is designed along two miles of Lake Michigan shoreline in Haven, WI just a few miles north of the 36 hole Blackwolf Run complex in Kohler. Ranked number 3 on Golf Weeks 2010 Top 100 list, the Straits Course is under the care of Michael Lee, Manager of Golf Course Maintenance for the Kohler Company and Christopher Zugel, Golf Course Superintendent at the Straits Course.

The par 72 course is unique to Wisconsin as it features fescue fairways and rough along with its bent-grass greens and tees. The Dye design opened in 1998 and plays to 7,362 yards from the black tees with a challenging rating of 76.7 and slope of 151.

From the 2004 Championship the course has been refined to enhance player strategy. Some new tees were added not for length but to provide different angles into holes along with new chipping areas around the third and sixth greens. The par 4 sixth hole also has a new bunker that cuts into the middle front of the green that appears to split the green into two distinct sides.

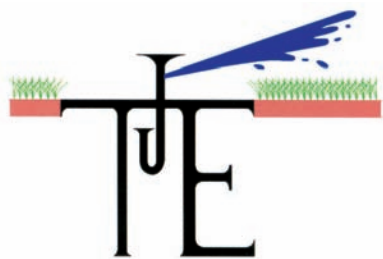
The most talked about changes were to the par-4 500



A small group of the bunker crew works on hole 10 with buckets, shovels and rakes.



The squeegee crew walked from hole to hole to prepare for Wednesday's practice rounds.



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yard eighteenth hole where Dye added a second fairway to the left of the creek that runs down the hole. Players looking to make up strokes can take out their drivers and bust one 300 yards over bunkers to a narrow landing area leaving a shorter approach shot. Players comfortable with their score can hit to the right fairway but that does leave a noticeably longer approach shot to a well guarded green.

The tournament does an excellent job handling the crowds with easy access and shuttle buses to get in and out of the tournament. I came in as a media member and just a regular spectator and both trips were quick and easy.

The event was my first experience with press credentials. I appreciate Michael Lee helping me obtain the press badge and allowing me to feel like someone important.



Host Superintendent Chris Zugel on hole 18 after the bleachers were removed.

I must say the press is treated well by the PGA with two air conditioned tents and a constant supply of food and beverages.

From the competition side of things it was a great championship with both young and veteran players making a run at the



Barrals of shovels and rakes at the ready for the bunker team.

Wanamaker Trophy. In the end Germany's Martin Kymer won the event with a score of 11 under 277.

Local favorite Steve Stricker always draws a large gallery and his 68 on Saturday had him in the hunt. However a up and down Sunday

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Dennis Robinson from Horst Distributing and Chad Harrington from Autumn Ridge GC volunteered for the week.



Rusty Boldrey from Riesterer & Schnell helps to set up and stage walking mowers for the evening shift.

ended with a score of 72 and a tie for 18th place. Tiger Woods generated the largest crowds and conversation but he also struggled after having some hope for a comeback with a 73 on Sunday to finish with a tie for 28th.

American Express provided spectators with single channel receivers to listen to live play by play action from SiriusXM. I was unsure of the value of golf play by play at first but really enjoyed the updates in my earpiece on Sunday as players climbed and fell off the leader board.

As managers of our own facilities most of us understand the stress of a member guest or the local club championship. Try multiplying that stress by 1000 and that would describe Christopher Zugel's year.



One of two sand sculptures near the entrance.



Par 3 17th Hole

As superintendent at the Straits course Chris is given the task of preparing the unique course for the worlds best players regardless of what curveballs mother nature or the PGA throws at him.

Fescue fairways are designed to play dry and firm but as we all know this summer has provided ample rainfall for Wisconsin Golf Courses and tournament week was no exception. Wednesday brought early and midmorning thunderstorms and when I arrived on the course after the lightning stopped I counted 40 staff members and volunteers on the 10th hole alone with

buckets, shovels and rakes walking though the back 9 bailing and preparing bunkers for the days practice rounds.

The rain and light winds provided for soft conditions and easy scoring for the first two days of tournament play before sunshine and wind firmed things up the way coastal golf is expected to be.

My favorite part of covering a tournament us sitting down with the superintendent and getting to know them and their course. I appreciate learning about families and how our WGCSA members entered the golf industry.

In my short time with Chris more than once he pointed out he felt honored by the attention he and the course receives but he gives the majority of the credit to the staff members and volunteers who make it all come together. He wishes that the staff members could be in earshot every time someone compliments him on the job they do.

Tournament week there were

135 workers available with a 50/50 split between staff and volunteers to make everything perfect for the event. Zugel gives credit to Assistant Superintendents Joseph Sell and Emily Shircel for providing leadership to the staff and keeping things running smooth. No golf course provides tournament conditions without great equipment technician staff members per-

fecting the quality of cut.

Christopher spent most of his childhood in the Atlanta area where he played golf but soccer was his sport of choice. With the majority of his family in the business world Zugel was not sure what he wanted to do when he entered college but he knew he did not want to put on a suit and tie every day.

He was sure he wanted to head west for college and he picked Colorado State University in Fort Collins to start an education in history to perhaps become a teacher but quickly switched to landscape architecture.

As he spent his time drawing landscapes he was intrigued by the turf students who were learning to maintain a variety of landscapes. Working with the plants seemed to interest him, so he settled on horticulture major with a concentration in turf management, graduating from Colorado State in 2000 under the guidance of Dr. Tony Koski.

His original goal was sports turf management but right out of college any job in your field will do. Zugel was an Assistant Golf Course Superintendent at Blackwolf Run in Kohler (02-05), the Senior Assistant Golf Course Superintendent at the Straits Course (05-08) before following a dream of working at a Major League Ball Park as the Grounds Manager for the Milwaukee Brewers.

Chris's Grandfather worked for the Milwaukee Brewers from 1969 when he helped unload trucks when the team moved to town from Seattle until his retirement in 1984. His position with the ball team helped guide Zugel's interest in sports turf management. Zugel enjoyed his time working with Gary Vandenberg and being part of a major league baseball team, although the field of play is obviously smaller.

Zugel rejoined Whistling Straits in 2009 and brought major tournament experience to this year's event as he previously was on staff for the

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Wisconsin Favorite Steve Stricker walks from the 17th tee.



The Zugel family; Elliot, Haiden, Jennifer and Chris.

2007 US Senior Open and 2004 PGA Championship at Whistling Straits along with the 2002 Honda Classic at the TPC Heron Bay in Coral Springs, FL.

Before work responsibilities cut into his training time Chris was very interested in bicycle racing and entered quite a few road races around the world. He still enjoys riding but on a more casual basis for the time being. He is helping to coach soccer for his daughter Elliott's team which has been an eye opening experience dealing with a large number of young future soccer stars.

Chris lives in Kohler with his wife Jennifer who works in the Human Resources Department for the Kohler Power Group. Along with daughter Elliott who is 5 the couple has a 2 year old son Haiden.

From talking to Zugel it is clear he enjoys the uniqueness of Whistling Straits fescue fairways and the excitement that comes from working with the Pete Dye design and championship golf. "It is fun to be part of the excitement," he explained.

Looking back at it tournament week brought weather challenges no one wanted but the staff accepted them as part of their responsibility and handled the extra work smoothly.

Congratulations to Zugel, the staff and volunteers for providing a great venue for the world's best players. The bleachers are gone, the extra bridges removed and cart paths buried under mounds until 2015 when the PGA Championship Returns to Whistling Straits. 🌱

Member 9 With Christopher Zugel

1. **What was your first vehicle?** 1972 Volkswagen Karman Ghia
2. **Favorite piece of golf course equipment?** Scottish Blackface Sheep
3. **18 hole Handicap?** 14
4. **What is your current vehicle?** 2009 Ford Ranger
5. **Favorite TV shows?** Formally Lost, now a tie between 30 Rock, Modern Family and Wipeout
6. **Favorite professional sports team?** Boston Red Sox
7. **Favorite main course meal?** Anything that you can get at a Mexican restaurant
8. **Pets?** German Short Hair: "Lucky"
9. **Favorite thing about working in the golf industry?** Every day is just a little bit different than the next