

Changing Places

By Jake Schneider, LMD Production Manager, The Bruce Company

By the time that this article gets distributed, I will be a few weeks into my new position (listed above) at The Bruce Company. It all happened quite suddenly, and I would have never know of the job had it not been for an automatically-generated email from the website LinkedIn; that's how things work sometimes. As it has been since shortly before my 16th birthday, my name will still be on the payroll at a golf course, and I told Chad that his consolation for losing his assistant in the middle of summer is gaining a fairly well-qualified weekend employee.

For much of the past dozen or so years,

it has been my goal to become the superintendent at a high-caliber course in Wisconsin, and there were a few times that I was close to realizing that goal. But, the stars never did seem to align, and here I am. I can honestly say that I am not disappointed to be moving on and to have not reached this goal. While I have enjoyed working on golf courses, it's awfully tough to have a normal life in the summer. When you add in the fact that my wife works every other weekend as a nurse, finding time to getaway during the golf season has been nearly impossible.

When it came down to it, my decision to pursue and accept this position was as much about the increased responsibilities and salary as it was about a different lifestyle. Plus, I will still be able to get outside and use the knowledge of maintaining top-notch properties that I've hopefully accumulated through my years at North Shore and Blackhawk. I don't expect it to be a cakewalk and now have to manage 50 seasonal employees as opposed to 15 at Blackhawk. While there are some unknowns going into this new role, I believe that it will be a change for the better.

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Here's what I won't miss: handwatering when it's 95 degrees (or 70 degrees for that matter), worrying about grass dying in summer or winter or anytime in between, spraying, not leaving the Madison city limits from June-August, dealing with bunker washouts, hauling rollerbases to keep the rough from entering dormancy, and irrigation pump failures at 2 am.

On the flip side, here's what I will miss: providing golfers with a great golf course in spite of the obstacles that are faced, sunrises over Lake Mendota, Monday golf at a really nice courses, free golf balls, attending the Golf Industry show with some of the industry's finest (and Mike Bremmer), the Symposium, the immediate satisfaction that comes with a job well done, and working with a truly outstanding staff at Blackhawk.

Besides being a golf course superintendent, I always hoped that I would follow in the footsteps of my mentor, Monroe Miller, and serve as the WGCSA president and as the editor of The Grass Roots. Those plans are obviously on hold for now, but who knows what the future will bring. Two years ago, I never thought that I would be in the position that I am in now. Although I will likely not be a stranger to the association, I am grateful for the many outstanding individuals that I've had the chance to meet and to collaborate with, and my time serving as the assistant superintendent committee chairman and on the PAR 4 Research committee were not only rewarding, but they helped me grow as a professional.

As Tom Harrison said while accepting his distinguished service award at the Spring Business Meeting, please involve yourselves with the organizations and facilities that have made Wisconsin a vibrant state for turfgrass and its research. Without dedicated service and servitude, things can quickly change. Change, after all, is constant.



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