

## Growing The Game

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

**G**olfers: can't get work accomplished when they're around and can't pay the bills when they aren't.

For an industry that clearly relies on attracting new participants to this great game, I am not so sure that we do enough to promote it. Sure, we provide ever-improving conditions on tracts of land that have more scenic beauty than your average piece of property, and aside from green speeds that are out of the comfort zone of most, the magic that we work on a daily basis makes golf a fair game for first timers and seasoned pros, alike. Many courses have junior golf programs, and for the most part, the success of these programs naturally relies upon golf pros' talents and enthusiasm. Just as golf pros don't develop fungicide programs, superintendents don't give lessons, and based on the games that most of us exhibit (present company included), this is most definitely a good thing. But, we can use our talents to help these programs thrive and that is exactly what we are aiming to do in 2013.

I am fortunate enough to chair the WGCSA's assistant superintendent committee, and during the 2012 spring meet-

ing that was held with the other four ambitious committee members (Joe Sell, Tim Schmidt, Brian Bonlender, and Jon Dippel), we tossed around the idea of doing a service project. Well, as you know, the rest of 2012 didn't exactly lend itself to accomplishing anything other than watching water fly from the end of a hose and nothing came of our ideas. This spring, we revisited the idea, and as I write this article, we have an exciting opportunity to help grow the game through The First Tee of South Central Wisconsin.

As the Wisconsin Golfer reported in their January/February 2013 issue, Nakoma Golf Club hosted a wildly successful fundraiser for The First Tee through the Champions 4 Kids organization. Sherri Steinhauer, Andy North, Steve Stricker, and Jerry Kelly were all in attendance, and the event raised nearly \$200,000. Obviously, this is an impressive amount of money that should go a long way toward growing golf in this area of the state, and with the momentum that this The First Tee chapter has going for it, they seemed to be a good fit for the type of project that we were looking for.

Now, we need your help. We have approval to develop a proposal for the construction of a chipping green at Monona Golf Course, where 150 kids are enrolled in the program. It is our goal to have this project entirely funded and performed by WGCSA members and affiliates. Constructing a green isn't cheap, but with our collective efforts, we can make this happen. While the exact scope and costs of the project have yet to be defined (approval came down the pipeline three days ago), Joni Dye, executive director of our local First Tee, is extremely enthusiastic about the prospects of this effort, and I hope that this grows into a yearly project.

If you or your employers are interested in being involved in this venture, please contact me at [jake@blackhawkcc.com](mailto:jake@blackhawkcc.com). Aside from monetary donations, we're going to need seed, sod, irrigation parts, greens mix, shapers, and everything else that goes into greens construction. Harassing phone calls will ensue if I don't hear from enough interested parties. Let's do our part to grow the game; our jobs might just depend on it.

