

The Grass Roots

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About Our Cover:

The Wisconsin State Amateur and the Wisconsin State Open are hosted by two of the newer courses in Wisconsin. Jennifer Samerdyke has captured, in her very distinctive style, the favorite hole of each host golf course superintendent.

Jack Tripp's favorite golf hole is the seventh at LaCrosse Country Club. Amateurs at the State Am will see a picturesque 196 yard par 3 hole over water. The course opened in 1995 and was designed by Arthur Hills. The tournament is July 20-23.

Bruce Livingston is the course superintendent at Trappers Turn in Wisconsin Dells. The 1998 State Open will be played there, and Bruce is certain the competitors will be challenged by his favorite hole, the ninth.

It is a 504 par 5 hole that plays between an oak woods and Mystic Lake. Trappers Turn is an Andy North and Roger Packard Design.

*The hills untied their bonnets,
The bobolinks begun.
Then I said softly to myself,
"That must have been the sun!"*
- Emily Dickinson

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(Left to Right): Mark Kienert, Dave Smith, Dan Williams, Kris Pinkerton, Scott Schaller, Dave Brandenburg, Andy Kronwall, Marc Davison, Mike Lyons.

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WHAT IS AHEAD FOR US!!

By Scott Schaller



What is ahead for us this season? After talking with many of the experienced, veteran golf course superintendents in this business, they have shared with me that we all should be prepared, because we may be headed for another season like the 1988 golf season. I have to agree. That season was one that many of us have not forgotten about.

This spring has been unbelievable. The earlier warmer weather has brought more opportunities for golfers to get out to enjoy our golf courses. Most of the Wisconsin golf courses had experienced earlier openings, along with record rounds of play for April and May. This is great for all our facilities, but with this early summerlike weather in April, May and June, we have been

challenged by Mother Nature to just keep up with our normal maintenance practices with a smaller early seasonal staff. But, as always, we all find a way to get the job done and soon enough our summer staff arrives and all these thoughts of a lot of work and long days are soon to be forgotten. At that point, there will be just another different golf course turfgrass maintenance dilemma that we have to deal with.

A special thanks goes out the David E. Smith and Scot Spiers. These gentlemen were the hosts for our WGCSEA April and May meetings. The education, golf courses and the entire golf facilities we enjoyed for the day were just outstanding!! Thanks again guys. It's appreciated.

I ask all of you to please mark your calendar to attend the WTA Summer Field Day at the O.J Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility in Madison on August 12, 1998. The WTA puts on a great day for all of us. Come and see first hand where some of the WGCSEA research donation dollars are being spent and put into quality research by the professors and staff of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Well, I ask the question again. What is ahead for us this season? We will have to just wait and see and be prepared. By the time we receive this issue of *The Grass Roots* we all should have an idea. Take care and I hope to see you at one of our monthly meetings. 🍷

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He gives us something to laugh about

By Lori Ward Bocher

Let's have a show of hands here. How many page through *The Grass Roots* to look at the cartoons before reading any articles? Let's be honest. I know my hand is up.

There's so much stress in normal, everyday life that we're all eager for a bit of humor to lighten the load, to loosen those tense muscles with a good laugh. And how lucky we are to have cartoons that speak directly to the readers of *The Grass Roots*. Who could better appreciate the humor in grass heights, green speeds, demanding golfers and a shop dog named Putter?

Steve Scoville, a high school physics teacher, is the man behind the cartoons. How he got his start with *The Grass Roots* is a testimony to the fact that editor Monroe Miller always has his eyes open and his mind on this award-winning publication.

How it all began . . .

In the fall of 1993, Steve was working as a waiter at Blackhawk Country Club where Monroe is superintendent. There was a dry erase board in one of the small meeting rooms at the clubhouse. "One day after Halloween I drew a cartoon on it about how the scariest thing from Halloween is the rotting pumpkins," Steve recalls. "Monroe saw it. Since he liked the idea of having cartoons in *The Grass Roots*, he asked the manager who had drawn the cartoon, and then he contacted me."

Steve has been drawing for *The Grass Roots* ever since. "Usually I get a call from Monroe a week or two before the next deadline, and he invites me in for a meeting," Steve explains, adding that they collaborate on ideas for the next issue's cartoons.

"Sometimes he has written down a couple of ideas that have occurred to him during the past two months," Steve says. "Sometimes his ideas are very specific, like the time he



Steve Scoville

said, 'There's this guy delivering gold-plated toilets and he's trying to deliver them to the shop. The guys at the shop tell him he must want the clubhouse which is up on the hill.' So he's got this vision of what the picture looks like and what the general message will be, and he needs me to put that down on paper."

Steve continues, "For other ideas, Monroe will say things like, 'You know, there's this continuing rivalry between the GCSAA and smaller golf courses – this whole thing with dues and money being a problem.' He'll gripe about a particular aspect of the

job, and I come up with an image or cartoon to express that."

"Other times he'll just say, 'Spring is coming. Draw me some cartoons about spring,'" Steve adds. "And some ideas I come up with on my own based on my experience of working at a golf course and from seeing what happens around a shop."

Good old Putter . . .

The idea for "Putter," the shop dog, came from one of Monroe's "Tales from the Back Nine" fictional columns. "I picked up on the idea, gave the dog a name and a personality, and tacked on the specifics of what kinds of things he'd be doing," Steve points out.

Putter is the only named character in Steve's cartoons for *The Grass Roots*. "There are other characters who appear frequently – the dumb, irate golfer who complains about everything; the golf course superintendent; the young, novice crew member. But none of those characters have a well-defined personality, except for Putter," Steve explains.

Steve averages two or three cartoons per issue, and it takes him one and one-half to two hours to draw each cartoon, from coming up with the idea to finishing the art work. "Monroe and other people have told me they've seen my cartoons crop-

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ping up in other publications," Steve points out. "It's nice that they're being picked up. And I've received calls from other people who have seen my cartoons and want to know if they can use them. One of my cartoons about miscommunication was used to illustrate a point in a language training program."

A diverse life . . .

Cartooning is just one side of Steve's multifaceted life, and I enjoyed delving into his short life history a bit. The diversity in his life began when he was born to an American father and a Japanese mother. "How did they meet?" I ask.

Steve explains that his father, a college math professor, met his mother while he was on sabbatical in Japan for a year. She's been in the U.S. for 30 years now, working as a mom, as a Kindergarten and pre-school teacher, and as the owner of a company that helps Japanese people who are coming to the U.S. or Americans who are going to Japan — mostly for work or study purposes.

Steve was born and spent his

childhood in Durham, N.C., where his dad taught at Duke University. He graduated from a private high school in 1987 and then attended Williams College in Massachusetts where he received degrees in Asian studies and studio art in 1991.

"Asian studies and studio art seem to be an unlikely combination," I point out. "How did you choose those two majors?"

"I was a coxswain on the crew team. I also did a lot of theater. And I had a cartoon strip in the campus newspaper," he answers, leaving me to believe that he's ignoring my question. But the answer is forthcoming. "So there were all of these other things that I wanted to do. I needed a couple of majors where I could set my own schedule and make room for all my extracurricular activities.

"Looking at my freshman grades, I did the best in Asian studies and studio art," he continues. "I knew that I really enjoyed cartooning and that it was a possible career path for me. I tacked on the Asian studies as a fall-back major in case I couldn't be gainfully employed as a cartoonist."

Move to Wisconsin . . .

As it turns out, he wasn't gainfully employed in either major. His first year after graduation he stayed at Williams College as coach of the women's crew team. He also became engaged to Jennifer Cartier, a native of Maine, who subsequently was accepted into graduate school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "So that's how we ended up in Madison in the summer of 1992," Steve explains, adding that they were married on New Year's Eve of 1993.

"The plan was that I would go back to school to get certified to teach physics," Steve recalls. "To do that, I needed to establish residency. In order to do that in Wisconsin, you have to work for a year before applying to any schools. Looking through the paper one day, I found an ad for a job at Blackhawk Country Club which was very close to where we lived in Eagle Heights. I could walk to work, and I thought it would be nice short-term employment. That's how I ended up at Blackhawk waiting tables."

Steve continued to wait tables at Blackhawk when he started taking

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classes in the fall of 1993. He received a bachelor's degree in physics education in the summer of 1997, and in the fall of that year he became a physics teacher at Middleton High School. He teaches five sections of a general physics class to mostly juniors and seniors.

"How do you like your new career choice?" I ask.

"I love teaching," Steve answers. "I love to explain things that folks have been wondering about. I like watching the lights go on when students realize that they're able to solve a problem. I like interacting with the kids."

"Middleton High School students are, as a whole, a great group of kids," he continues. "I have very few discipline problems. Of all the fears I had about teaching, none of them have been realized. Except for the fact that it just eats up your entire life as far as time commitment, especially in the first year."

Cartooning is part of life . . .

But he still manages to find time for cartooning, something that has been with him for most of his life. "I

was one of those kids in school whose notebooks always had little pictures all over them," Steve points out. "I did some cartooning for the yearbook in high school. But college is where I started getting paid for my work. I didn't make much. But just the idea of getting paid to draw was appealing to me."

For about two and one-half years he drew a weekly cartoon strip, "Sea Minos," for the campus newspaper. "It was about a kid with a dragon living in his room," he says. "I wanted to write about things I was familiar with, so it was about college life."

"How do you come up with ideas for cartoons?" I ask Steve. "Is it easier for you to come up with the image or the words first?"

"Usually I go with the words first," he answers. "With a single-frame cartoon, I have to get the meaning tied up in one picture and one caption. With a four-panel format, I generally start with the last panel – the one with the punch or twist. Then for the first three panels, it becomes a question of how I set up the reader's mind for the twist at the end."

Besides his work for *The Grass Roots*, Steve has done a limited amount of cartooning on a professional basis. "But I'm certain I'm going to continue cartooning for the rest of my life," he says. "I'm hoping that, once I have enough experience in the teaching field, that experience will coalesce into something that I could turn into a pictorial story. Teaching could be a cartoon-generating experience."

"I'm willing to draw for *The Grass Roots* as long as Monroe wants to publish my cartoons," Steve continues. "It would be nice to have more places where I could be published. But I'm not going to be actively seeking those outlets right at the moment."

A matter of time . . .

Time, or lack of it, is one reason he's limiting his cartooning. Steve and Jennifer have two young children, Delia Jane, 3, and Owen Phillip Arthur, 1. After earning an MS degree in biochemistry, Jennifer is now working toward her PhD in science education.

(Continued on page 9)

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(Continued from page 7)

"Do you have other outside interests?" I ask. "Or isn't there enough free time?"

"Ideally I'd like to get out and play more," Steve answers, then pauses. "It's been so long since I've considered what to do with free time that it's hard to imagine. But I do enjoy writing. I write in a journal which I e-mail to a lot of friends."

"Any goals?" I ask.

"I haven't really been one who's much for goals," he admits. "I'm always happy with what I have. So when anything extra comes along, I'm ecstatic about it. I never really set my sights too far ahead."

With the interview about to come to an end, I ask Steve if there's anything else we should know about him.

"This is the most thorough outpouring of personal information I've given in a long time. I can't even imagine what's been left out," he laughs.

And, thanks to Steve and his cartoons, we all get a few extra laughs out of life. Those laughs are much appreciated. ♣



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An Incredible Love/Hate Relationship

By Pat Norton
Nettle Creek CC

I preface these remarks by first stating that all of us down here in JordanLand are really, truly, and totally enjoying the heck out of the NBA Finals between *our* Chicago Bulls and those Mormons from Utah. We transplanted Wisconsinites had to endure the humiliation of the Packers losing the Super Bowl back in January...in the middle of a totally anti-Packer group of guests...in our own home! So, in some twisted way, the Bulls winning the NBA this year...*for only the sixth time*...makes up for the Packer episode.

This remark also dates this column, which is being written on or about June 10, way beyond *The Grass Roots* deadline! For that, I have only myself to blame...and for all of you out there who consider yourself to be procrastinators...you are now reading the words of the king of all procrastinators!

The Packers and the Bulls, as we all know, are two great examples of sporting success and excellence. As we also all know and understand, one of the key ingredients of their success is certainly team talent.

Another element of a sporting career, or any other type of success, is the willingness to work hard and make necessary sacrifices in the quest for success...right? Isn't that what almost all of us believe as we

make our way through this life?

There were a lot of things that my father was not able to teach me during my years under their roof...but one value that definitely rubbed off on me from the paternal side was the idea of the strong work ethic. I can still clearly remember my Dad being generally supportive of my high school sporting activities...while insisting that all of us have part-time jobs also. I also remember the hay baling gigs that he used to get me into...usually much to my chagrin.

My best memories of those years were the many days spent golfing from about age 8 through until about age 22...lots of time for golf...and coincidentally, lots of time spent on golf courses!

Those teen years were the formative ones for all of us that now find ourselves in an occupation that requires quite a bit of hard work and sacrifice for the best three seasons of the year in the upper Midwest.

I'll bet that there's quite a bit of commonality amongst golf course superintendents in their journey from those early years of working life to the hectic lives in which we all find ourselves engrossed.

Which brings me to the point of this story. I am engaged in a bitter love/hate relationship. Better yet...we are all engaged in bitter love/hate

relationships. Some of us, myself probably most of all...are engaged in multiple love/hate relationships of varying types and degrees.

For example,

I love being a father...but sometimes resent the responsibility.

I love my wife dearly...but I know that at times she'd like to throttle me.

I love having some money...but hate people who love money too much.

By far the biggest and most encompassing love/hate relationship that I have is with the golf course.

In an honest moment, I'll admit that every golf course that I've ever worked at was a definite love/hate relationship. Thinking back on all of the great times at golf courses is easy to do...since people naturally wax nostalgic about the past. It's those nasty, hateful memories that need to be brought to the surface and mulled over in the mind in coming to grips with this fact.

While other people...the golfers that play here...consider the golf course to be their haven...their home course...I just shudder and wince. I shudder because once in awhile I feel the mild desire to grab somebody by the throat...usually one of our well-meaning, elderly volunteer



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