

Former Dentist Takes The Reins At WSGA

By Lori Ward Bocher

After writing my 10th anniversary column in the last issue, it's fresh on my mind that Gene Haas, former executive director of the Wisconsin State Golf Association, was the second person I interviewed for this column. Now, 10 years later, I'm interviewing his replacement, Tom Schmidt.

This former dentist has been executive director since November 1, 1999. A native of Wisconsin, he was born in Mukwonago and lived there through high school. He graduated from Ripon College in 1966 and Marquette Dental School in 1970. He was a dentist for almost 25 years in Waukesha, where he's also been an active member of Merrill Hills Country Club for many years.

Let's join the interview.

Why did you leave the dentistry profession?

I had an elbow problem, degenerative arthritis in my right elbow. It got too painful to work. The arthritis is sports related. I injured it playing football in high school and basketball in high school and college. It slowly degenerated on me.

So how did you end up with the WSGA?

I had been on the board of directors since about 1973 - right up to the point in 1997 when they were looking to fill a new position, tournament director. They asked me if I'd be interested, and I accepted. I was tournament director for three years.

What were your duties when you were hired as WSGA tournament director?

I ran the 25 to 30 tournaments we put on each summer. I was in charge of finding the sites and running the tournaments on site. We'd try to spread them around the state. For



the most part, courses were pretty willing to host them.

When did you start as executive director?

On November 1, 1999. It was a pretty smooth transition since I had already worked here three years and had been a part of the organization

before that. And Gene (Haas) still works here part time.

Are his shoes pretty big to fill?

Absolutely. He was certainly one of the best.

Are you an artist like he is?

No, I am not an artist.

No more caricatures from the head office then?

No, not from me. But Gene still draws them. He still likes to work on those.

In your first year as executive director, what has surprised you? What have you learned?

Since I've been around the WSGA for so long, there really haven't been any big surprises. But one of the things we've learned is that we need to improve our communications with our clubs, especially some of the clubs that are outlying. We have not been as good in the past at getting our people out to visit some of the courses that are farther away

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from our office in Brookfield. We've hired a person to do that.

(Tom explained that there are seven full-time people on staff at the WSGA. In addition to Tom there's a director of rules and competitions, a director of handicapping and member services, a director of rating, and a director of communications. There's also a secretary/receptionist and a book-keeper. In addition to doing administrative work for the WGCSA, they also work with the Wisconsin Women's State Golf Association and the Wisconsin Women's Public Links Golf Association.)

What are some of the goals you have? You've already mentioned that you'd like to improve communications with outlying courses.

Right. And I think the next thing we want to do is to try to get more handicapped competitions for peo-

ple who aren't such accomplished golfers. Right now we have only one series of tournaments that is for handicapped players. Otherwise, most of our other tournaments are championship matches for very proficient golfers. So we'll try to create more tournaments for our handicapped players who represent a large segment of our membership.

What does someone like Tiger Woods do for the game of golf? I'm not a golfer, but I find myself paying attention to it because of him.

He brings the interest in golf way up. People like you, who normally would not watch golf, follow it. Certainly some of those people will end up trying it and getting hooked on golf like most people who play it do. And I'm sure he's a role model for young people, just like Jordan was for basketball.

How does Wisconsin fare in the big picture of golf, in terms of

the courses, the tournaments?

We're right up there with the elite. We're as good as any state. We certainly run a number of competitions. And our golf courses are as good as they are anywhere.

Do you think that's well known across the country?

I think it's getting better known. Anybody who has ever been here knows it. Wisconsin hosted the U.S. Women's Open at Blackwolf Run in 1998. In 2004 the Men's PGA Championship will be at Whistling Straights. And the American Juniors Golf Association has had numerous tournaments in the Lake Geneva area. I think Wisconsin is reasonably well known.

As a golfer and executive director of WSGA, how much do you know about the role superintendents play?

I understand very well what they do, how important a link they are.

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What about the average golfer?

I'm sure that average golfers are probably not as aware as they should be.

Do you see that as a role of your association - to help them become more aware?

We do have in our *Wisconsin Golfer* magazine a column that

Monroe Miller writes for every issue (The Greenside). We're trying to use that as a vehicle to put more light on the golf course superintendents.

A lot of superintendents tell me that when golfers watch the big tournaments on TV, they end up wanting their own courses to

look as good. Do you see that happening?

Of course. But what those golfers fail to realize is how much money goes into making those courses look like they do - money for agricultural inputs and for personnel. And, I'll tell you, we've got a lot of courses that don't take a back seat to anything you see on TV.

Any messages that you'd like to convey to the golf course superintendents?

I hope they're well aware that the WSGA door is open to help them in any way we can. Anything that's going to promote golf, we want to be a part of it.

What are some of your outside interests and activities?

Most of my activities revolve around golf. I've been golfing since I was 12. Now I golf mostly on weekends. And when I'm on vacation I usually get around to golfing somewhere. Over the years I've probably played in 30 some states. I also run a little bit. And I do some reading.

What is it that you like about the game of golf?

I think golf is a tremendous challenge. It's a game that is a challenge at any level. You can set your own standards. You can play with anyone. Players with different skill levels can play together and have a great time; you don't see that in many other games. I just think it's a terrific game. Plus, you get to be outside.

Do you have a family?

Yes. My wife of 29 years, Linda, works at Schwartz Book Store in Brookfield. We have a daughter, Alison, who is 26; and another daughter, Amy, who is 23.

Has the transition from dentistry to the WSGA been a good one for you?

Yes, it's been good. I enjoyed dentistry, and I'm enjoying this. I'm fortunate that I've been able to do two things that I like. ♣



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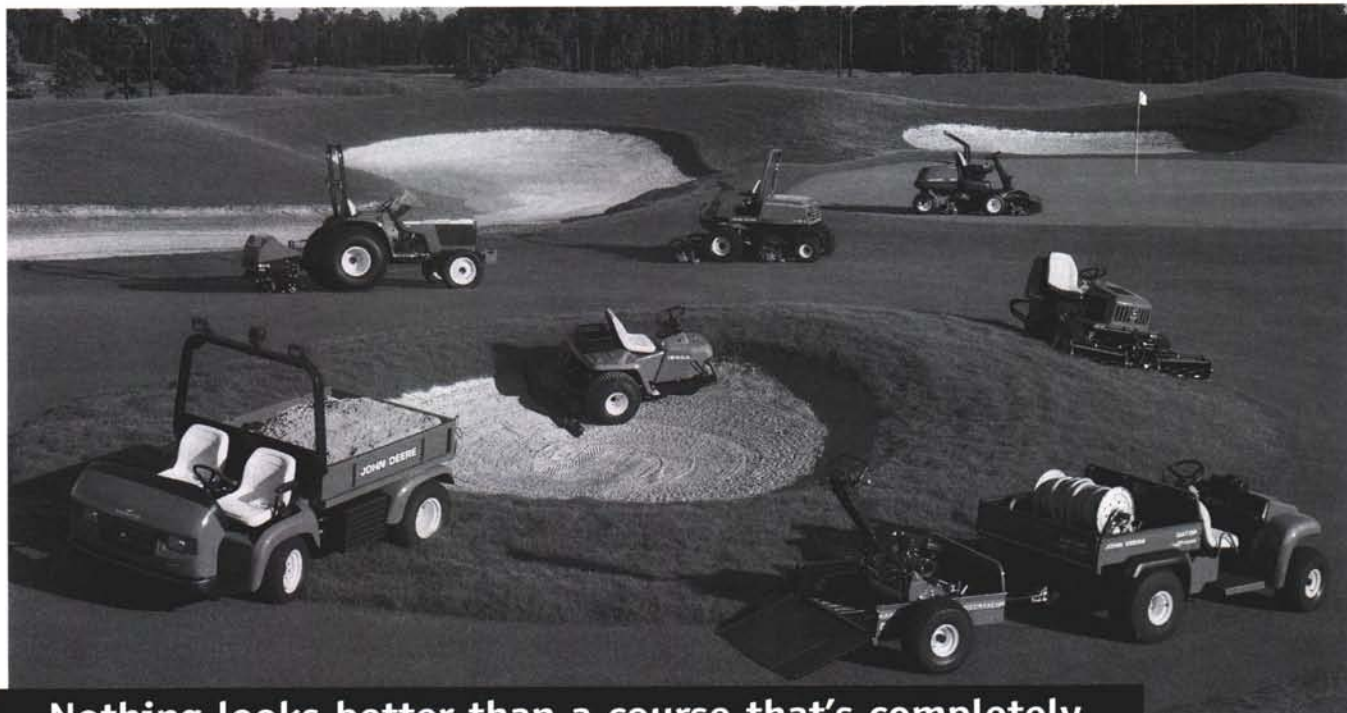
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DELAYED by WEATHER

By Dr. R. Chris Williamson, Turfgrass and Ornamental Specialist, Department of Entomology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

As a whole, in Wisconsin, everything seems to be about 2-3 weeks behind this year. When is the last time you have seen your turf in the condition that it is now? Based on averages, temperatures this year have been considerably below the expected "normal" (i.e., approximately 8 degrees Fahrenheit). In addition, we have had nearly 20 inches of rain in the Dane county area during the months of May and June. As a result, insect activity has been quite unpredictable as well as delayed this year. In fact, the flight of adult Japanese beetles is considerably different this year compared to 1999. Last year, beetle flight occurred earlier and lasted for a rel-

atively short window (i.e., approximately 21-28 days) of time. This year the beetles emerged several days later (i.e., approximately 10 days) and the flight appears to be prolonged by nearly 18-21 days with beetles continuing to emerge, fly, mate, and lay eggs. This occurrence could signify prolonged grub feeding and subsequent late-season turf damage.

A steady stream of phone calls from various parts of the state this year indicate that Japanese beetles are slowly expanding from areas where they have previously been over the past couple of years (i.e., Eau Claire, Rock, and Walworth counties). This year, they were

reported in Dane, Grant, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Milwaukee, Racine, Waukesha counties. And, to their benefit, the needed rainfall that we have recently received will do nothing but aid in the survival and expansion of Japanese beetles. It is likely that we are on the upward side (i.e., beginning) of the curve for Japanese beetles, thus we can expect to experience their continued presence and subsequent destruction. Since this turfgrass pest is relatively new to Wisconsin, and its presence is likely to increase, the next issue of *The Grass Roots* will feature an article on budgeting insect control for 2001. ♣

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Another Great Day - Field Day 2000

By Tom Schwab, O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The 2000 Wisconsin Turfgrass Field Day is now history. This was the 17th in a long list of memorable field days. Attendees' comments were all positive about the day's activities and education. There were so many new things to see and do that they couldn't help but have a good time. Attendance totaled 384 turf managers and 117 sales representatives that descended on the Noer Facility for the big show on August 8th.

The day was perfect but almost became a disaster. The grounds were already soft from a two-inch rain three days before field day, and the weather stations were predicting another inch or more the night before. Everyone was relieved on Tuesday morning to see the ground dry. We all had enough rain disasters for one year! The prediction for rain has to be the reason that attendance didn't beat the previous year's record because the research tour, trade show, and numerous special events should have helped to break records again.

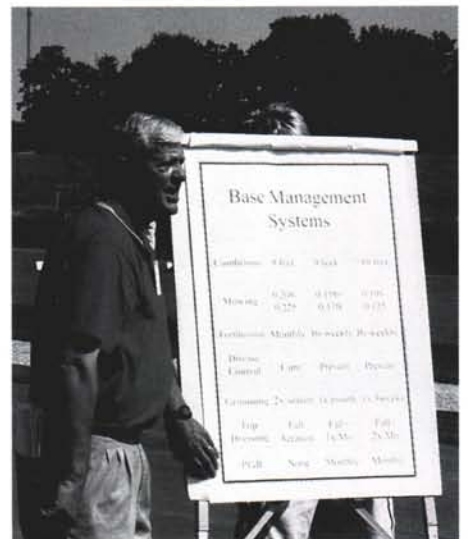
The research tour that the professors and staff put on is second to none. So much information can be gathered from this tour to help those who manage turfgrass do it better. There were talks for golf turf managers on breeding better bentgrass, resisting insect problems, choosing the best chemicals to manage turf diseases, and exploring the use of fine fescue for fairway turf. Additionally golf turf managers explored the use of supina bluegrass for shaded tee boxes, learned about a study that will compare whether fungicides work better on different bentgrass cultivars, and looked at various management options for both above and below ground

putting green management.

Lawn, landscape, sod industry, and athletic turf managers learned about many other interesting subjects on their tour. They learned about attempts to establish turf quicker, use of new herbicides for better post-emergent control of crabgrass and broadleaves as well as herbicide tolerance of supina bluegrass, and they looked at an idea to increase sod shelf life. Other presentations focused on pesticide runoff from urban landscapes, how to properly align a pitcher's mound and rubber, and cold weather tolerance and demonstration of ornamental grasses.

The research tour and education all took place in the morning. An exceptional trade show and many other special events took place in the afternoon. You had to be there to believe all that took place. There was a dunk tank, putting contest, and silent auction to raise turfgrass research dollars. A presentation about attracting bluebirds and a picture-tour of the Spring 2000 Noer facility flood were interesting. The

equipment demonstration also drew lots of attention. And before lunch the most prestigious event took place. Professor Wayne Kussow was recognized for his many years of turfgrass research and assistance to the turf industry. The WTA used the field day to announce a new program that will help support turf-



Dr. Wayne Kussow explains the latest findings in the WGCSA - sponsored putting green management systems research.



An early morning view of some of the Wisconsin turfgrass research at the Noer Facility.



Pat Richter, UW-Madison Athletic Director, joined the welcome to the Noer Facility, which is adjacent to University ledge.



Dr. Geunhwa Jung explains some of his research at the Noer Research Facility.

grass graduate students. It will be called the Wayne R. Kussow and Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in Turfgrass Research Program.

All these factors made Field Day 2000 a huge success. The planning committee should also be commended for this achievement. The committee, which is made up of Jim Trzinski, Chris Wendorf, George Magnin, Bruce Schweiger, Conrad Stynchula, Randy Smith, and the professors and staff at the Noer facility, were dedicated to making this the best field day ever.

The trade-show exhibitors should also be thanked. They always do a great deal to help raise research dollars through their registration fees and their contributions to the silent auction. Plus they make it interesting by introducing all the latest innovations in turf care equipment and products.

And last but not least, you, the attendees are what really made Field Day 2000 a success. You brought vitality, good questions, dedication, and the drive to make turf management better by participating in this annual event. Another great WTA Summer Field Day is completed! 🌿

A list of field day exhibitors is shown below. Be sure to give them a call any time you need supplies or equipment to grow better turfgrass.

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Golf Courses Can Benefit the Environment

By Dr. John Stier, Department of Horticulture, University of Wisconsin - Madison



In the last issue I discussed the environmental issues faced by golf course superintendents in the Lake Tahoe region. The reason I was in Lake Tahoe was to provide two invited poster presentations at the 2nd annual National Natural Resources Extension Conference. One of the presentations was on the environmental impact of golf courses. I see many golf course projects hampered from the proposal phase through the permitting, construction, and occasionally management phases because of a lack of understanding of the environmental effects of golf courses. This article provides the gist of that presentation at Lake Tahoe.

Perceived problems of golf courses

Golf course construction is booming in the U.S. due to the strong economy. There are currently 16,069 golf courses in the U.S. with approximately another 879 under construction as of January 2000 (Source: National Golf Foundation). Golf courses require a high degree of manicuring to provide the necessary appeal and function for the game of golf. The public lack of understanding of golf course maintenance and environmental fate of fertilizers and pesticides results in golf courses being viewed as environmental pollutants without providing benefits other than golf. Much time, money, and effort are being spent at local levels for golf course permitting, and decisions may be made with little or no regard for research data. Permitting often requires water quality or other environmental monitoring for nutrients and pesticides though these data are rarely published. The lack of

shared information results in excessive reiterations of processes each time a golf course is permitted. The objective of the article is to provide examples of research that has been conducted on golf course environmental impacts and to discuss the implications of the findings.

Who's funding research and what research has been conducted?

Much of the research involving golf course effects on the environment has been funded by the United States Golf Association because they are one of the few large organizations willing to fund these types of research. Since 1991, the USGA has funded over \$3 million of environmentally-related research projects (Kenna, 1995). Other projects have been funded by state or local turfgrass or golf course superintendent organizations. Projects range from environmental fate of nutrients and pesticides to prairie restoration and wildlife ecology. The effects of golf courses on water quality have been a major theme across all areas.

Key Projects

Water Quality: Nutrient Runoff/Leaching. Numerous studies have been conducted on the potential of turf management practices to contaminate ground and surface waters. The general finding is that turf systems filter out chemicals from water and inhibit water runoff and soil erosion as much or more than other plant systems. This is due to the high plant density, thick intertwining root systems, high microbial activities, and the absorbent thatch layers (Cisar and Snyder, 1996; Linde et al., 1995).

Thatch is a layer of dead and living organic matter above the soil which has high absorption capacity for water and chemicals. Contrary to popular opinion, research from many sites indicates turf readily absorbs the nutrients supplied in fertilizer, while runoff and leaching are minimal to nonexistent.

University of Wisconsin-Madison Turf Runoff Study (Kusow, 1997).

The purpose of the study was to quantify N and P losses from a turf surface constructed on a 5-6% slope at the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Facility in Verona, WI. The turf was maintained at 2.5 inch height, similar to a golf course rough. Treatments consisted of Scotts Turfbuilder 29-3-4, Milorganite 6-2-0 (a "natural" fertilizer from composted sewage sludge), and no fertilizer. Fertilizer was applied four times annually at 43 lb/acre. This is twice the amount that would be used on a typical fairway, and

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greater than twice the amount typically applied to a golf course rough. The turf was mulch mowed in half the plots and clippings were removed from the other plots. The experimental design was a randomized complete block with two replications and conducted over a six-year period, 1993-98. Weirs at the bottom slope of the plots col-

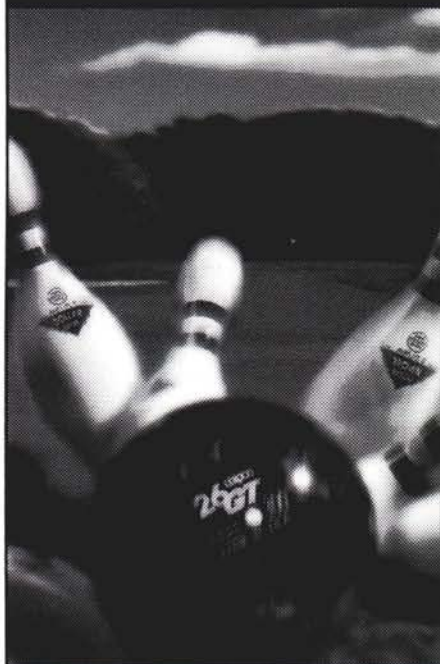
lected runoff. Lysimeters were installed in the plots to collect leachate.

Total runoff for the two year period averaged 1.32 inches for all treatments. Approximately 80% of the runoff came from frozen soil. These results indicate much of the potential P runoff comes from vegetation, not fertilizer, a conclusion also arrived at by an Illinois study (Northeast Illinois Planning Commission, 1983). Fertilized turf actually reduced runoff, including N and P, compared to non-fertilized plots. This was due to the greater turf density that resulted from fertilization which was able to extract the nutrients from the water and by increasing the infiltration of the water into the soil while slowing sheet flow. Nitrate-N in leachate was well below the EPA drinking water standard of 10 ppm. Miltner et al. (1996) showed similar results with 50% of the N staying in the clippings, verdure, and thatch two years after a single N application; 13.6% was found in soil and only 1.3% leached through a sandy loam

soil (the remaining 35% was apparently lost through denitrification and/or mineralization).

Water Quality: Pesticide Runoff/Leaching. Golf courses are often viewed as area of indiscriminate pesticide usage. This is not typically the case as pesticides are expensive and superintendents are typically educated, through seminars, workshops, and increasingly, through college degree programs. Putting greens, which comprise less than 2% of the acreage, receive the most frequent applications (primarily fungicides). In southeastern states insecticides may be applied at least once each year. Herbicides use is usually limited to spot treatments on areas other than putting greens. Compared to major U.S. crops, pesticide use on golf courses ranks in the 30th to 50th percentile (Cohen, 1995). Research indicates the turf ecosystem (plants, sunlight, soil chemistry, and microbes) readily latch onto and degrade pesticides with minimal amounts entering ground and surface waters.

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