



Good Turnout to View Hawk's View

By **Dave Van Auken**, Golf Course Superintendent, Royal St. Patrick's Golf Links

The Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association Meeting for April was held at Hawk's View Golf Club in the beautiful Lake Geneva area. Host superintendent Jeff Townley provided a spectacular venue for the day and many of us throughout the state made the effort to attend. Nearly 115 participants gathered in the Red Tail ballroom to hear Hawk's View course designer Craig Schreiner speak. Afterwards we enjoyed a hearty meal and viewed a marvelous golf course from a player's advantage.

Craig delivered an informative presentation that I'm sure many superintendents related to quite easily. When speaking of the design criteria for putting green construction, Craig focused on drainage, drainage and then drainage. Calling upon not only the artistic side of drainage as it is integrated into a design, Craig also elaborated on the stringent testing measures required to meet certain specifications for a root zone mix. I also found it interesting that Craig touched upon several other critical factors when surveying a property including, but not limited to, sun angle, tree value and routing. Of particular interest to me was the grouping of putting green complexes which I thought odd until I realized the efficiency brought about by reducing travel time around the property when focusing on greens maintenance. Whether top-dressing, fertilizing or just routine mowing, I couldn't help but wish that I had this distinct advantage.

Shortly after Craig's talk, lunch was served and served well. I don't know about the rest of you, but if I had visited the desserts, I would have been looking for a place to nap. We owe our thanks to general manager Dave Hills and his staff for easily filling any superintendent's appetite.

Now on to the event that generated more dialogue about wind than any I can remember. My favorite wind story was playing two consecutive holes that paralleled each other, one into the wind and the next with the wind. Each hole presented our team with 135 yard approach shots. As we put our collective heads and golf skills together, we narrowly made the putting surface hitting 7 and 8 irons on the first hole. The following hole tested our finesse with a sand wedge and we were lucky to have one of four attempts not go long. A challenging golf course without the wind was punishing for most of us.

There were a select few who somehow managed these difficult conditions to post outstanding scores. They are either very practiced in such conditions or received more than their fair share of fortunate hops, bounces and rico-



Doug Hellman, North Hills' Randy Dupont and Craig Schreiner. Hellman is VP of Schreiner Golf; Craig designed Hawk's View.



Craig Schreiner talked about golf course architecture and the practical issues important to superintendents.

chets. Winning the event with a round of 62 was the team of Brad Johnsen, (Klein Creek GC), Jim Knulty, (Big Foot CC), Robert Kronn, (Woodstock CC) and Al Pondel (Rockford CC). Finishing second with a score of 64 was Mike Handrich (Racine CC), Charlie Shaw, (Waukesha County), Jim Shaw, (Chenequa CC) and Mike Skendandore (Waukesha County - Wanaki GC). Five individual hole event prizes were also awarded.

My personal thanks go to Chuck Dammeir for handling all the tournament details. I don't know about you, but Chuck and his staff didn't hold anything back in my eyes. With individualized scorecards, cart badges and a nice selection of merchandise for the winners to choose from, it was hard not to feel special. I also want to thank each and every one of you who attended this meeting. The strength of an organization is never more evident than in the numbers that support it with a willingness to participate. I trust you enjoyed yourselves and hopefully we'll see you next month.

And remember to thank Jeff Townley when you see him or better yet, return the favor by hosting a meeting at your facility. Thanks Jeff. ♡



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A Few Keys to Longevity

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

Joe Kunze, president of the Badger Turf and Grounds Club, invited me to campus on a spring evening to talk to the members of the club at their monthly meeting. I am always glad for such an invitation, maybe subconsciously pleased that someone is interested in what I might have to say.

Which, obviously, is the first dilemma - what to talk about. Since Joe didn't give me much lead time, I decided the easiest topic to prepare for would be to share with them a few of the things I have learned on the golf course over my thirty-plus year career.

There are entire sections in bookstores dedicated to this general subject matter. Many of them are full of clichés and tend to the very trite. And I could be assured that a group of college age men didn't want to hear the likes of "It's easier said than done," or "A fool and his money are soon parted," or "Water always runs downhill."

But you have to learn something when you are on the job as long as I have been, and mostly it is good advice, albeit obvious in some cases.

I would love to see a similar list from guys like Tom Harrison, Wayne Otto, Danny Quast, Randy Smith, Carl Grassl and a dozen others in that age range. Maybe they'll take a hint and send me such.

Missing from the list will be the obvious - agronomic advice. My starting point in this is that if you are a golf course superintendent you had better have plant and soil issues in hand. For most of us, solving cultural problems is the most fun part of the profession.

Anyway, here's the advice I gave that class of future golf course superintendents, in no particular order.

- Use common sense. It seems so simple, but too often people over think problems. When you have a farm background like I do, learning common sense was part of growing up.
- Work hard, all the time and everyday at the golf course. Players/employers will notice and respect you for it.
- As a complement to working hard is working smart. This sounds like a cliché, but it isn't. You can work hard at planting a tree, for example, but if it is in the wrong place you'll get to do it twice.
- Do what you are told to do when you are told to do it. Don't be offended; remember, everyone has a boss.
- Be honest to the extreme with everyone you deal with - employers, your employees, the DNR, colleagues, everyone. I once witnessed a golf course superintendent's attempt to blow smoke in the green committee chairman's ear. It didn't work and was a big mistake. Honesty pays big dividends.
- Set high standards and goals. Overreach. Strive for excellence. If you don't at least aim high, you can be assured you won't get there.
- Listen. Being a good listener is essential if you are going to turn out the kind of conditions expected of you. You must listen to complaints and criticisms, but it doesn't hurt to listen to compliments, either.
- Do no harm. Sometimes doing nothing is better than doing something that could have a negative impact. The job is tough enough as it is without shooting yourself in the foot.
- Function with enthusiasm. Nothing great was ever accomplished without it. And you will find it is contagious to those around you.
- Practice neatness in everything - the shop, your equipment, your golf course. It sets a good example for staff, and if you are sloppy the chances are staff will be too. Neatness presents a good first impression. Neatness can help carry you through tough periods due to weather or other conditions out of your control.
- Look forward, not back. The great things you may have done last year or ten years ago don't matter much. Today and tomorrow are what count.
- Fix small problems before they become big ones. Procrastination is a terrible disease and it can really hurt you.
- Although it goes without saying, it commonly isn't done: cultivate a good relationship with your colleagues at your course - golf pro and clubhouse manager. They see the customers first and last and can be a help to you. It may not always be easy, but it is the smart thing to do.
- Realize early on in your career that learning never stops. Continuing education should be a top priority of yours until you retire. You have to always try to get better - it is more than just a matter of keeping up.
- Support the land grant institution in the state where you work, even if it isn't your alma mater. Science is the solution to many of the problems we face,

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and agricultural research mostly goes on at our land grant colleges. You can still cheer for the football team fielded by the college you attended, but local problems are solved locally.

- Give something back to your profession. Be an office holder, serve on a committee, host a meeting, attend the phosphorus ban hearing, participate in some way. Don't always let the other person do it.
- Don't ever forget this: your security depends on the turf product you turn out each day, NOT on degrees, CGCS, awards, golf scores or anything else.
- Communicate on all levels within your organization. This is not the same as socializing.

- Fiscal responsibility is paramount. Not many of us work where a budget doesn't matter. In fact, the superintendents I respect most are those turning out a quality golf course with a modest amount of money. They get the maximum for the money they have because they must.
- Be a good representative of your organization. Make them proud of you.
- Understand golf and its rules. This, of course, does not mean you have to play golf, just understand it. Many of us do not appreciate a busman's holiday and shouldn't have to suffer such because someone thinks we should.
- In all things and all matters at work - sincerity. It is easy to

spot a disingenuous person.

- Do your part in helping train the next generation of golf course superintendents. Provide the practical and vocational training they need and the mentoring that can be so important. As Professor James R. Love always said, this is the best way to repay those who helped you along the way.

It took an invitation from some college guys to precipitate my thoughts about longevity. Maybe this list will be a catalyst for you to do the same. If so, let me know. We can share advice with others, demonstrating that to some extent golf course superintendents are all fairway philosophers. ♣

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With Solutions That Work

Snowflakes Usher in May

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

We had enough snow on Sunday, May 2nd to close the course for a little while to allow it to melt. Our town had somewhere in the one to two inches range of snow, enough for kids to build snowmen and guys like me to stand in wonder and awe as the green grass and pink crabapple blossoms and the yellow daffodil blooms were covered in white. The snowflakes were as big as silver dollars.

The two days following that warmed up, but the spring has come along the way I like it to - slowly and deliberately. It has been a pleasure. We have been able to keep our course very playable with a small spring crew.

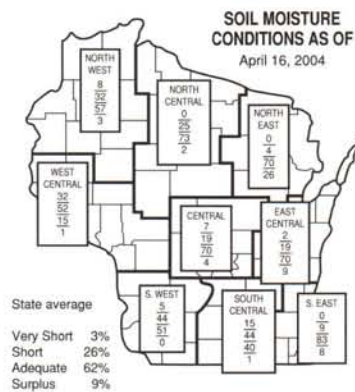
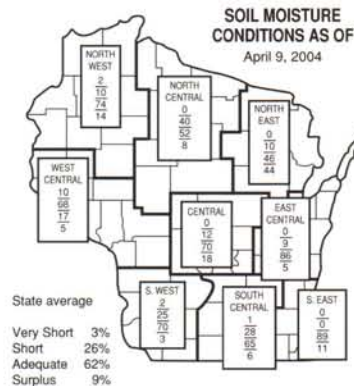
The college kids will be here soon and in a matter of weeks we will be on our porches and patios enjoying the warm and calm June evenings, watching the lightning bugs as dusk turns into darkness and thinking to ourselves, "isn't the earth a wonderful place."

Updates in soil moisture status around Wisconsin are here from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service for you to consider.

Memorial Day weekend is one of the biggest golf weekends of the year for Wisconsin golf course superintendents. Sometimes we forget to make note of the real reasons for the holiday.

My wife and I always attend the ceremonies at the State Capitol building downtown and notice the crowd seems smaller each year. I wonder if the war in Iraq will inspire greater attendance this year.

Decoration Day, as it was called when Americans actually knew what it was they were supposed to be honoring, was celebrated May



30th every year, regardless of the day of the week. The upstate New York town of Waterloo started the Decoration Day tradition in 1866, and two years later May 30th was designated "for the purpose of

strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion." The day was renamed Memorial Day after WW I.

Many towns, maybe even most towns, have a Memorial Day event of some description. In a year when we are again worried about young Americans in conflict overseas, this might be a time to attend one of those Memorial Day events as a way to honor them.

I heard from Steve Millett in March. He and Debbie are settled into their home in St. Louis. Debbie is a major personality in a major media market - 50,000 watt KMOX in St. Louis. KMOX is the home station of Bob Costas. The Milletts have found an old German Catholic Church they love and a neighborhood that fits them perfectly.

At the time of his letter, Steve was preparing to interview for a faculty job at Southern Illinois University in the botany department. I hope he lands it.

If you would like to know Steve's address, call me and I will give it to you.

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From the desk of Mike Lee comes the following advice, author unknown. Run it through your word processor and give a copy to your staff or post it in a prominent place. Work is an essential element to successfully managing a golf course.

If you are poor... work.
 If you are rich... continue to work.
 If you are burdened with seemingly unfair responsibilities... work.

If you are happy... keep right on working.
 Idleness gives room for doubts and fear.

If disappointments come... work.
 If sorrow overwhelms you, and loved ones are not true... work

When faith falters and reason fails... just work.

When dreams are shattered and hope seems dead... work.
 Work as if your life were in peril, it really is...

No matter what ails you... work
 Work faithfully... work with faith.
 Work is the greatest remedy available.
 Work will cure both mental and physical afflictions.

Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do which must be done whether you like it or not. Being forced to work, and forced to do your best will breed in you temperance, self-control, diligence, strength of will, content, and a hundred other virtues which the idle will never know.

Have you read about Fond du Lac's Jeff Krapfl? Jeff, by year's end, will have played 350 of Wisconsin's public golf courses and wants to play them all by his 50th birthday. He'll make that easy enough since he is only 43.

He might leave home at 3 a.m. and drive 2 1/2 hours for a 5:30 a.m. tee time! Needless to say, he often is playing alone.

Next on his list of goals - play at least one golf course in each of the 50 states!

June is Dairy Month in Wisconsin, a time never forgotten by those of us who grew up in the heyday of dairying in Wisconsin. So in honor of that, I hoist a cold glass of nature's goodness and toast you all. There is a long way to go before this season ends, but so far, so good. Try to have a little fun along the way this summer! 🌿



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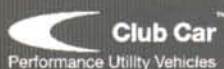
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The \$30.00 Golf Course

By **Pat Norton**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

During the entire month of May...we are the \$30.00 golf course. Depending on the time of year, time of week, and even the time of day...our pricing drops slightly below \$30.00 and climbs up during the summer to as high as \$49.00. We are definitely not up in the big leagues charging \$75-\$100...nor do we want to be there.

We are in a location in which anything west of us (more rural) charges much less...and anything east/northeast of us (ChicagoLand) generally charges much more... Golfers from the suburbs of Chicago think that we're a real bargain and drive to get here...while lots of the locals think that we're too expensive and patronize us only once in awhile.

Generally speaking though, being a \$30 golf course definitely limits what we can do with this big, very spread out 190 acre golf property. Almost all privately owned public courses are in this same boat...we all provide a quality golf course playing experience...but only to a certain level. Beyond that...it's just too much money being spent for that last 20% of quality.

We can provide high quality playing surfaces...not terribly high quality sand bunkers...and let certain things slide that would certainly not be tolerated at a private club. I see lots of things daily that make their way onto a written 'to-do list'...but never get accomplished...or even attempted.

I've been cursing out the dandelions and the seeding *Poa* for two weeks now...with no real progress in addressing either situation. I've been wanting to renovate about 6-7 acres of old wildflower area/fine

fescue area...and convert to 'Nebraska' switchgrass for quite a few weeks now. Between these very windy spring conditions and the desire on my part to curtail myself a little bit...I'm hesitating!

My spring fever has us involved in lots of projects which need to get completed without killing my budget...after which possibly we can attempt a prairiegrass reclamation project. I'd really like to regrass these Penncross greens into one of the newer bents...but for our level of golfer these Penncross greens are probably just fine.

On the other hand...a good superintendent never has to wait for ownership or membership to suggest changes to the course...he/she has already thought it through and makes rec-

ommendations before the board or ownership even realizes that there is or was a problem!

Our maintenance staff of 8-9 guys gets stretched and pulled in all sorts of directions...putting out fires on a daily...even hourly basis. Our guys are already being limited to 7.5 hours/day and one weekend AM shift...giving them about 40-42 hours per week @ \$7-8 per hour...no health insurance, or retirement contribution, or raises in pay. Lots of people that work here really do live on the financial edge. We are a totally weather dependent, \$30.00 public golf course...watching our pennies as we go.

These guys work March 1-October 31...which gives them four months annually in which they really struggle. And so who



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do you think that they all come to for that small cash loan to help them survive another winter? Don Patricio...that's who! And...for the record...I really do not like being considered anybody's benefactor, or *patron*.

All of these interesting factors make up the \$30.00 golf course. In fact, this \$30.00 golf course operation is a good study in sociology. We are multi-cultural, have rich folks and poor folks interacting daily, have a strong, sometimes volatile mix of opposite sexes, have different age groups, and distinctly different education levels. It all makes for some interesting daily happenings.

The \$30.00 golf course does see lots of common folk...either working to survive or out chopping it up on the course. There are very

few really talented golfers out here...but lots of average Joes.

Average Joes think that this place is always in really good condition...which is exactly what every superintendent reading this hears on a daily basis. I usually reply that the golf course owner needs to hear those little bits of positive reinforcement...as if that will loosen those salary purse strings. Ha!!

And while we all appreciate the compliments...don't you really want to ask them why they continue to patronize those other goat ranches...when this place could really use all of that extra business?

The average \$30.00 golf course just keeps rolling along...trying to survive...and never really seeing profitability. In fact, I'd pay good money to somehow learn all of the

tricks towards being truly profitable. I'm half contemplating letting these fairways go to hell...let them dry down this summer...and thereby eliminate all fungicide/insecticide/fertilizer applications. "So there," I'll say... "here is the true path to profitability. Let your fairways turn to crap...and let the average Joes have at it."

The only problem with that philosophy is that we'd have to then drop down and become a \$20.00 golf course...which would present us with a whole different set of golf course sociological problems.

Even for me...dropping down to a lower golf course conditioning level would be tough...unless it would prove to be profitable...and I was the golf course owner...and not the superintendent. ♣



Steven Scoville '85

"I HAVE ALLERGIES."