



Spring Business Meeting

By David Brandenburg, Golf Course Manager, Rolling Meadows Golf Course

You could only guess after the winter we had that the annual WGCSA Spring Business Meeting would be affected by the weather. A quick little storm iced up the roads just enough to make the trip to Fond du Lac miserable for many. Education Chair Chad Harrington had a great education program lined up for us.

Dr. John Stier, University of Wisconsin-Madison started with a talk on his research into velvet bentgrasses. Can this grass help us in our goals to develop environmentally sustainable golf courses in the future? Historically not a lot of research has been done into the velvets in due part to the early success of the colonial and creeping bents.

Dr. Stier covered some of the commonly held misconceptions about the velvets that have been around for years. So far the positives for velvet are its ability

to produce and keep carbohydrates (sugars) to allow for better drought tolerance. It also has the ability to compete with *poa annua* and is tolerant of Acclaim (fenoxaprop-ethyl) applications when compared to creeping bents.

The negatives are the velvets have not done well at the NTEP trials and the varieties do not mix well with creeping bent varieties which always seem to show up in the plots. The velvet bents are so fine in texture that any amount of creeping bentgrass in the stand looks extremely out of place. Dr. Stier also thought it is possible the NTEP plot managers may be maintaining the velvet just as they would creeping bentgrass, causing the velvet to be over-watered. His research shows the velvets prefer to be irrigated at 60 to 70% ET (evapotranspiration).



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In conclusion Dr. Stier is not ready to recommend full scale velvet conversions in our area as he is still in the research and data collection stage of his study. This study is partially funded by the WGCSA research dollars. This and similar studies will be important as governmental regulations and environmental common sense may cause us as turf managers to reduce our management inputs.

Next up was Bob Vavrek, USGA Green Section Agronomist with his ever popular "Year in Review". With travels around the country and world Bob is able to give us the highs and lows of the year, along with what has worked and what has not worked for turf managers.

One of the keys Bob hit on was the benefits of having a proper infrastructure through aerification, topdressing and fertilization. Root anthracnose is becoming a larger problem as we push greens to the limit with mowing heights and intense management. Bob considers lower application of topdressing sand to be a major factor in turf problems on greens.

Last year was a banner year for fairy rings throughout Bob's region. Some formally reliable treatments did not seem to work as well as in the past. Bob explained sometimes that is because superintendents are not doing the aerifying needed to get the fungicide where it affects this soil fungus. Also the trend of dollar spot becoming more prevalent during warmer or colder times is continuing.

Design issues in regards to trees ruining architecturally marvelous holes or shading greens and tees to the point proper turf cannot be maintained continues to be an issue at many clubs where trees are protected like children. Bob showed some great examples where tree removal programs did wonders for the turf along with



WGCSA President Dustin Riley accepts a check from Reinders Representative Tom Wentz for \$46,475.00 from their Daconil/Heritage sales program.



WGCSA Members Mike Handrich (25 years), Reinders Bros, Tom Wentz (50 years) and Bill Knight (25 years) were on hand to receive their member plaques.

improving the visual effect and playability of a golf hole.

After lunch the business of the association was conducted with President Dustin Riley leading the meeting. The association hopes to start moving towards more electronic communication with the members through e-mail and the website (WGCSA.com). Brian Zimmerman's last act as Treasure before turning the checkbook over to Jeff Millies was to give the report

on last years financials. The board again did a great job holding down expenses and supporting the turf industry through research donations while having a profitable year.

WGCSA honored its 25 year and 50 year members. At 50 years Reinders was represented by Tom Wentz. The 25 year members honored were Mike Handrich (Racine CC), Bill Knight (Ozaukee County Parks, retired), Dave Butz (Maple Bluff CC), Randy Van Fleet (Merrill

Hills CC), Steve Wasser (Lesco) and Ed Witkowski (Pendelton Turf Supply). Congratulations to you for your long term commitment to the association.

Dan Quast gave an update on the Wee One Foundation and the good work it has done for persons in need. The Wee One Foundation was developed as a tribute to Wayne Otto to assist golf course management professionals (or their dependents) who incur overwhelming expenses due to medical hardship without comprehensive insurance or adequate financial resources. Through the foundation's work, Wayne's legacy will never be forgotten.

The Wee One Foundation in the process of hiring an executive director to enhance its ability to help others. More information on the Wee One Foundation and its activities can be found at www.weeone.org.

The first golf meeting will be held at Geneva National Golf Club in Lake Geneva on April 21st. Kevin Knudson is our host. This will be the third consecutive year the 54 hole Geneva National has hosted the WGCSA for our first meeting. Be sure to thank Kevin and the staff for their commitment to our association. 🌿



Wee One Foundation President Dan Quast gives a update on the foundations activities.

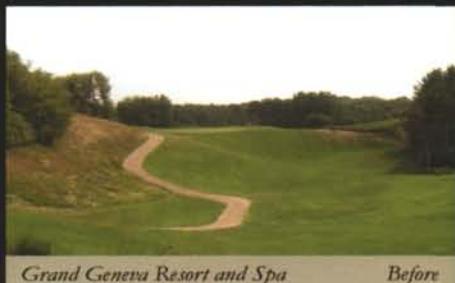
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Eligible organizations include:

- Wee One Foundation
- Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association
- Wisconsin Landscape Federation
- Wisconsin Nursery Association
- Wisconsin Turfgrass Association



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A Golfers Comments!

By Gene Haas, Retired Executive Director, Wisconsin State Golf Association

Editors note: Gene Haas is well respected as a leader in Wisconsin Golf History and shows his passion for playing the game in this letter I received. Gene was Executive Director of the WSGA when it was agreed that the WSGA office would perform the business-office duties of WGCSA. He graciously authored and edited the WGCSA history in the book "Caring for The Green" in 2005.

I often wondered how George Alexander Selkirk felt when he was called upon to replace the inimitable George Herman "Babe" Ruth in 1935 as the New York Yankee's right fielder, when the Babe was released from the Yankees, before he signed on with the lowly Boston Braves as a player-coach. Gosh, how could

anyone fill the shoes of one of baseball's all-time great players, especially one who wore the pin-stripes of the Yankee's famous "Murderer's Row." Well a recheck of the statistics showed that he did not fare too bad - though, who could replace the Bambino - the Sultan of Swat?

Selkirk, who was known as "twinkle toes" because of his very noticeable manner of dancing on his toes while running the bases, performed exceptionally well in 1935, batting .333 and banging out 11 homeruns. He batted over .300 for four of his next five years, and was selected as an All-Star in 1936 and '39. But, the big draw in baseball is the proclivity to produce homeruns, whereas Selkirk in his career produced a homerun at the rate of only one for every twenty-six times up to the plate. He Babe hit one every eleven time at bat - quite a difference. The ooohs and aahs continue to go to the power hitter.

Selkirk remained with the Yankees until he joined the military in 1942, at the age of 34. Upon his return from WWII, he retired and became a manager for the Yankee farm system. HE then joined the Milwaukee Braves and managed their AAA farm club for a number of years. Later, he became the General Manager of the "new" Washington Senators (now the Texas Rangers) until being fired in 1968 by the new owners. He continued as a baseball scout for the Yankees until his death in 1987 at age 79.


What does this all have to do with *The Grass Roots*? Well, I like the position that George Selkirk inherited in 1935 when he

replaced Babe Ruth with that of Dave Brandenburg, who took over the reins as *The Grass Roots* editor from the legendary, long-time editor Monroe Miller. Dave should receive numerous accolades and gold medals just for volunteering to assume the chores relinquished by Monroe. If Dave's first issue (Vol. XXXVII-Jan/Feb 2008) is an example of his capabilities, then the WGCSA is in great hands. Not a blip appeared on the radar screen - the transition was as smooth as the putting surfaces of the late Wayne Otto's (the Wee One) Ozaukee CC greens. It appears the future of *The Grass Roots* is in great hands.

While reading *The Grass Roots* most recent issue I enjoyed Dr. Jon Stier's article "*Late Season Golf: to Play or Not to Play*". I am skipping over his explanations of the "drain on the carbohydrate supply of the leaf plant," because as a golfer during the early and late golf season, I rarely view the condition of the turf leaf. I have a difficult time just hitting the ball. I also question Dr. Stier's analysis that "a course is in need of a traffic cop during seasonal changes." From my experience only the hearty play during these periods - but they do play. I recognize that frost is dangerous to golf course traffic and play has to be avoided during this period, but other conditions, let the people play. The Rules of Golf allow the golfer to move a ball whenever conditions are in question - so move the ball and continue with the game.

In my opinion, a golf course should NEVER be closed, at least to walkers (frost excepted). I have never seen a course RUINED by

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allowing play during difficult conditions; obviously, cart restrictions have to be applied when necessary – they ALWAYS seem to recover. So, let 'em play!

I also read Dave Brandenburg's review of the Milorganite Turf Symposium entitled "Why Close at All." A majority of the symposium attendees seemed to agree that Henry should remain in the grillroom during the "off-season," but many agreed this policy is not always feasible, due to business restraints. I strongly applaud the course managing philosophies of Bill Rogers at Evergreen GC in Eklhorn, who allows his course to be open for the entire season. John Wagner at Spring Valley CC in Salem has done the same for the past 50 years, or so. The WSGA

has held early season golf tournaments at both of these courses and the conditions have been very acceptable. Some clubs, such as Westmoor CC, allow all-year play, but reverse the hole-locations to the tees, which just happen to be all bentgrass. When the "official" season opens, it can be noticed that the course conditions are no different than if winter play had not been allowed.

Another suggestion is that the next time a panel is assembled to discuss golf course playability conditions; a positive approach would be to include an active golfer on the panel. Your panel included some top-quality people, but was not represented by an active, paying playing golfer. It may help to diversify the discussion. 



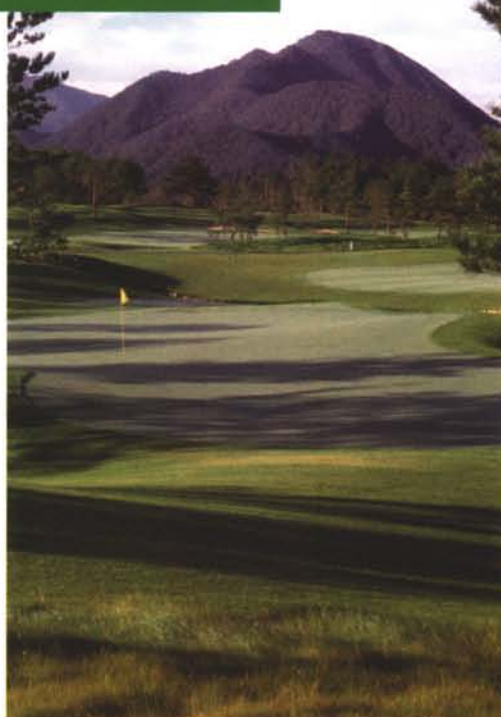
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A Great One Retires in Green Bay

By David Brandenburg, Golf Course Manager, Rolling Meadows Golf Course

I am sure my title got you excited to see if I had some new news about the Brett Farve retirement. Sure, 15 years leading a NFL team with no weeks off is a awesome feat. But it does not compare to another retirement in the Green Bay area.

Instead I am talking of Tom Schaller who served North Brook Country Club just north of Green Bay in Luxemburg as Golf Course Superintendent since 1969. I am sure many of you heard the comparison of how long number 4 served as the Packers signal caller when compared to the number of quarterbacks the Vikings or Bears have had over that time. But how many courses have seen 5, 10, 15 or even 20 superintendents over the 37 years Tom guided Northbrook.

I remember how impressed I was with Northbrook a few years ago when Tom hosted a WCSAA summer meeting. Those that were able to attend that meeting will not be surprised to learn Northbrook's members cared for Tom a great deal. They gave Tom a plaque making him a lifetime club member at his retirement party.

Tom was featured on the cover and with an article in Volume XXX no.3 in the May/June issue of *The Grass Roots* along with his nephew Scott Schaller, Golf Course Superintendent at North Shore Golf Club, his brother Fritz (Scott's dad) and his dad Hans. The Schaller family has been in the golf business for over 70 years. Hans and Fritz built North Brook and Tom became the first superintendent.

Good luck to you in your retirement Tom, you deserve the best.

I write this as we enter late March and I for one have never been more worried about the weather and how the golf course is faring under the unusual snow cover. We have been trying to clear our greens of snow to get at the ice, which varies from 1" to 5". Six years ago we cleared snow and ice in February and those greens were very slow to green up in spring due to desiccation, while the other greens were fine. Two years ago, we did little with the snow and ice and were hit pretty hard with ice damage. I guess there is no right answer because we as turf managers cannot forecast the weather.

This will be a great test for snow mold products throughout the state. For once Paul Koch will not need to travel north to find high levels of snow mold.

Our varied weather and winter conditions should remind us to consider using the United States Golf Association Green Section Turf Advisory Service (TAS). If you are not familiar with the TAS, it is a great opportunity for you as a golf course superintendent to have an independent review of your course management program.

Basically a USGA agronomist (for us in Wisconsin it is Bob Vavrek)



Tom Schaller receives aerial photos of Northbrook CC with signatures and well wishes on them from club manager Al Hoppe.

Tom Schaller receives a lifetime membership plaque from club president Melanie Wiezbiski and greens chairman Ray Birsall in appreciation for 37 years of service as golf course superintendent.



comes to your course for a full or half day visit with you and any other staff, owners or board members you want to come along. A tour of the course leads to discussion on any problems you may be having, and changes you want to make in your programs, and how best to implement those changes to provide the quality of course your golfers want and can afford.

Each USGA agronomist visits over 130 courses per year and have access to the latest in turf research and new programs. After the visit you and any other club officials you name will receive a written report regarding the items you discussed. The reports offer backup information and research to allow you to "sell" any changes to your staff or customers.

This year the service costs \$2,000 for a half day (\$1,700 if paid by May

15), and \$2,700 (\$2,400 if paid by May 15) for a full day visit. You can find more information and a registration form on the USGA web site.

You may be thinking the budget is tight and the service just is not possible for your course. Actually the Turf Advisory Service could save your club money as you find new ways to do things or validate the programs you already have. Our club has what I would consider a average to below average budget and we find the value I having a visit every other year. It confirms what we are doing right and gives us the newest in information into how we could improve and what that might cost.

The TAS is an investment worth making for the future of your club and in turn your career.

The WGCSA summer meeting schedule starts soon and it looks like

WGCSA Golf and Arrangements Chairman Jim Van Herwynen has assembled a great variety of events. Thank you to those superintendents and clubs who have opened their doors for us.

All of us are busy, and many of us do not play golf that often, but our monthly meetings are a great opportunity to expand our knowledge. I have never been to a meeting where I did not see a new method or way of doing things that I could use at our course. Just as valuable of seeing the operation of the host superintendent the networking with other turf managers around the state is a great way to stay on top of what products and programs are working.

You don't need to be a serious golfer to enjoy these meetings and receive an education in turfgrass management at the same time. I hope to see you there. ♣

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