

# A Rising Star

By RICK TRAVER, CGCS

If you had the opportunity to read the Editor's column last month, you may have noticed quite a few congratulatory statements. One of those was directed toward Jeff Johnson, the new golf course superintendent at The Minikahda Club. Jeff is among the many young professionals that are beginning to fill the ranks of the MGCSA.

Jeff kicked off his career as an intern at St. Cloud Country Club, while attending the U of M Waseca. In '91 he graduated from Waseca and Scott Austin hired him as a Technician at Midland Hills Country Club. As Jeff puts it, "He was the only one who called me after the mass mailing of my resumes. Thanks Scott!" While working at Midland Hills Jeff returned to the U of M, St. Paul Campus, to work on a Bachelor's degree. The summer of 1993, Jeff went work for Chris Hague at Crooked Stick Golf Club, site of that years U.S. Women's Open Championship. In 1994 Jeff completed his Bachelor's degree and filled the Assistant Superintendent position at Midland Hills.

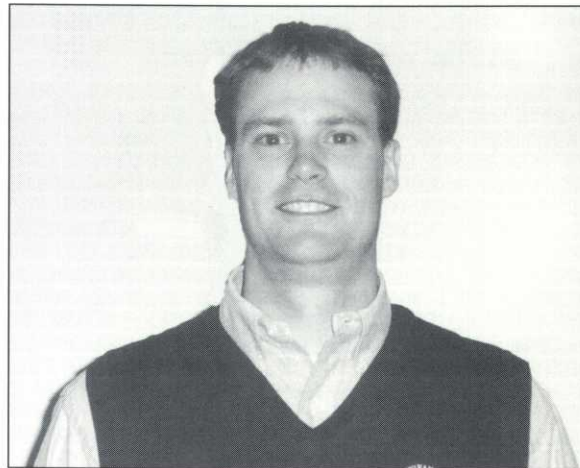
In 1996 he began his Minikahda Club career, as the

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Assistant Superintendent. There he was involved in preparations for the 1998 Curtis Cup Match. Just recently Doug Mahal left to pursue a lifelong dream, and Jeff was promoted to Superintendent. "I consider it an honor to be only the ninth Superintendent in the club's 104 year history", says Jeff.

The Minikahda Club was formed in 1898, with Willie

Watson being the original course architect. In 1917 Donald Ross was hired to redesign the course. Slight changes have been made throughout the years, and this year the course will be undergoing a complete restoration. Ron Prichard specializes in classic golf course design, and has been retained to head the restoration process. The restoration will include all aspects of the golf course as well as the removal of many trees and the addition of a new irrigation system. The Minikahda Club has played host to many major events. The list includes the 1926 U.S. Open, 1927 USGA Amateur Championship, the 1957 Walker Cup, 1988 USGA Women's Amateur, the 1998 Curtis Cup, the Trans-Mississippi five times as well as many local events and others.



**JEFF JOHNSON**  
Superintendent, The Minikahda Club

Jeff has been married for six years to his wife, Sue. Sue is a Third grade elementary school teacher at Highlands Elementary in Edina. They currently have no kids, but are the proud owners of one cat, Smokey and their goose dog, Pepper.

When Jeff looks at our future as an industry, he sees what a lot of us are looking at, a legislature that is becoming increasingly involved. As Jeff said, "We as superintendents have done a super job dealing with the environmental issues, but it would be nice to see some more help from the owners, club officials, members and golfers. This would help us insure that they will receive the product that they desire without so much influence from the government."

Jeff has been a member of the MGCSA Board of Directors since 2000 and has headed the Scholarship Committee for the last couple of years. It has been great working with Jeff. He has recently resigned from the board to concentrate on his new position and would like everyone to know, "I will miss being a part of the board, and I would like to thank those of you who have supported me". He also left the door open to run for the Board of Directors again once he completes The Minikahda Club's restoration and he expands his comfort zone with his new title.