



## In Play

By Jack MacKenzie, Jr., CGCS  
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Back in the old days when I traversed the great hills at the White Bear Yacht Club I would sing to myself songs dependent upon my mood and the weather. John Denver's *Sunshine On My Shoulders* was great to sing as I pulled a seven gang behind an old Toro General barely covered in a torn tee shirt and wearing cut off shorts that would be considered a thong today. My favorite tune for rainy days while mowing fairways with the Jacobsen F-10 bundled in yellow plastic was *Rain Drops Keep Falling On My Head* by B J Thomas.

Today, although I leave the "big rig" mowing to my amigos, I still sing to myself during my morning chore of cutting cups. Recently I have been doing lots of dreaming, thus Barry Manilow's classic *I Like Dreaming* has been playing in my head. You see, the future is exciting for our state turf industry and its relationship to the University of Minnesota. And I have been ruminating the possibilities.

Dr. Don White first began the Turf Program at the University of Minnesota in the mid 1970's. Since that time many great golf course superintendents and professionals in the turf industry have graduated under his tutelage, too many

to mention in fact. Also, discoveries have been made into the dynamics of top dressing, sod heating, turf covers and plant genetics. Of particular note is the development of Dr. White's own cultivated *Poa annua*, DW 184.

Until recently only four acres of property had been dedicated to the study of turf science at the U of M. Then in the year 2001, Dr. Brian Horgan joined the University staff as the Turfgrass Extension Specialist. With the enthusiasm and exuberance of youth, Dr. Horgan discovered a vacant 16 acres of property and convinced industry to back his concept of the development of a much larger turf research facility. Upon appreciating the magnitude of industry support, the Board of Regents approved the dedication of the property, soon to be called the Turfgrass Research Outreach and Education Center.

And thus the dream of taking Minnesota turf research to the next level has begun. Besides the dedicated plots that already have research being conducted on them, there are a vast number of opportunities ahead. Everyone knows about the USGA Green Section Turf Advisory Service, but how about the University of Minnesota State Turf Advisory Service?

Imagine having our own dedicated professional extension turf specialist (perhaps even Dr. Brian Horgan) who could visit state courses, confer with the players, management and owners regarding local issues. After a winter such as the last one, we could all have used a nonbiased specialist to help educate our clientele regarding the ravages of winter stresses. Personally I could care less what is happening in Montana, Ohio or even Alaska!

However, when we as a state experience native challenges be it weather, political or technological related, it would be very nice to have our own "big gun" to bring in; one with intimate knowledge of local rules, regulations, growing characteristics and management challenges. Someone who can manage a dedicated research facility that caters to our turf needs. Perhaps even, in time, a team of specialists including a turf pathologist and turf entomologist, to dedicate themselves to the preservation of turf management.

How great would it be to introduce "your specialist" to the President or owner of your golf course? A progressive Superintendent could even host an educational program for their membership with the "specialist" as a keynote speaker. All it takes is support from a strong association.

And by golly the MGCSA has done one heck of a GREAT job supporting the University of Minnesota recently. And it shows in the U's response to Dr. Horgan's request for more land. Yes the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents Association has been stellar in their contribution of over \$100,000 to the TROE Center and research at the University of Minnesota.

If you build it, they will come. Thus the creation of the TROE Center has spurred much turf research from NTEP trials to state mandated fertilizer run off studies. Two huge 25,000 square foot greens, one push up and one USGA have been developed for golf course research. A short hole is in the conceptual stage for the instruction and research of construction practices. A shade study program is underway as well as genetic studies. What an incredible accomplishment in less than two years. Thank you Dr. Horgan for your vision and thanks to each of us and previous BOD's for the professional dedication necessary to make this dream come true. - JM

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