



INSIGHT:

One Superintendent's Perspective

By Dan Hill
Superintendent, Birnamwood Golf Course

Course and statistics

Birnamwood Golf Course, Municipal, 9-hole, Par 27, built in 1968 and purchased by the City of Burnsville in 1988.

Biography

I have been working in the golf industry for 16 years. I have been very fortunate in my work experience and I have had the privilege to work at a wide range of golf courses, including low budget daily fee courses, a resort course, a private country club and a municipal course.

I started in high school and worked for three years at Lakeview Golf Course for Barry Provo in Mound, MN. I then worked at The Pines at Grandview Lodge for Tom Kientzle while I was going to Brainerd Community College for my Associates of Arts Degree. After receiving my Associates Degree, both Tom and Barry urged me to go to Anoka Technical College for a turf certificate. I worked as Barry Provo's Assistant at Lone Pine Golf Course while going to school at Anoka. After Anoka I returned to The Pines as the Assistant Superintendent. I left The Pines after a year to work for Larry Mueller at Minnesota Valley. I was the Second Assistant for one year and then became the Assistant Superintendent. I stayed for two more years and then came to Birnamwood Golf Course, where I have been for six years.

Why and/or how did you enter the turf management industry?

It started as a summer job in high school working on the local golf course. With the teaching and mentoring of Barry Provo and Tom Kientzle, I fell in love with the field and never left it.

Who was your professional mentor and why?

Although I learned a lot from everyone I worked for, Larry Mueller is my profes-

sional mentor. I respect Larry not only as a superintendent but as a person. I learned more from him in those three years than I could ever have learned at any university. Larry taught me things that I will value for the rest of my life. Not only did he teach me about turf but he also taught me managerial skills, club politics and about life.

What has been the highest point in your career?

Becoming fully certified as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. Birnamwood became the first nine-hole course in Minnesota and the smallest course in the world to achieve full certification.

What has been your lowest point?

I think the lowest point is seeing how some superintendents that I greatly respect have been treated by their clubs over the years.

Are your greatest challenges political, agronomic or managerial?

I would have to say managerial. It is not the staff, but my own time that I have the greatest challenge managing. I not only take care of the grounds at Birnamwood but also run the clubhouse. It can be a challenge at times to decide if I should spend my time on the course working on projects, in the clubhouse doing paper work, or with the golfers and league participants. I feel that in the past six years I have greatly improved my time management skills and customer service skills.

What is the most difficult disease to manage on your course and how do you?

I would say that it is not a disease that I have had the greatest challenge managing but "localized dry spot." Although it is always an issue I have greatly reduced

its severity by the use of wetting agents, I use Primer and Aqueduct on a regular basis throughout the growing season.

Is it hard to find good help in your area of the state?

I have been very blessed with a wonderful staff. Most of my staff has returned from year to year so I have had to do very little hiring after my first year. My staff has been my biggest asset.

Do you have a dog on your crew?

No. But my staff is trained pretty well at chasing geese.

Where will our industry be in ten years?

I feel that it will continue to get tougher to manage turf with all the environmental regulations and water restrictions. But I also feel that State and Federal regulations makes our association that much stronger. I remember the big Calo-Clor scare of the '90s. What were we going to do without mercury chlorides to protect us from gray snow mold? In the end we came to learn that we really did not need mercury chlorides and we are better off without them. There are many other regulations that I do not agree with and think they should be fought. I do feel that regulations (whether I agree with a particular one or not) make our association that much stronger and our members that much more educated.

Where would you like to be in 10 years?

I love my position and can't see myself doing anything else.

What is your perspective of our state association and what would you change?

My favorite thing about our association is how willing everyone is to share information. It really seems that there are no trade secrets anyone is keeping to themselves and I love that. If I were to change something, I guess I would like to see more of our peers writing articles for *Hole Notes* to share some of their experiences and expertise.

Name your foursome. Who would you play with?

It would have to be my wife Jenni and my two boys Payton and Graden.