



## INSIGHT:

# One Superintendent's Perspective

*Fred Taylor, CGCS, Mankato Golf Club*

Mankato Golf Club's first nine was designed in 1920 by Thomas Bendelow. The second nine was designed by William Langford in 1953.

### *Years in the Business*

I have been in the golf business since 1974. My first job on a golf course, however, was at age six when I was assigned to remove broadleaves from the greens at a small course that my folks had just purchased. Later, as a high school junior, I worked at that same course for a different owner, thus beginning my career in turf. I later attended the University of Minnesota-Waseca for turf and landscape development. I did an internship at the Mankato Golf Club and continued to work under Boots Fuller after graduation from UMW. Later, I went back to school at Minnesota State University - Mankato for a business degree, graduating in 1985. Soon after, Boots asked me back to help out at MGC for two weeks while he went on vacation in Europe. That was 20 years ago, and I've been at the club ever since.

### *Why did you enter the turf management industry?*

I really enjoyed small engines as a kid, so my mechanical background lured me to the golf course, where there were more moving parts and carburetors to be tinkered with than I could dream about. The love of turf management came after a few years of mowing and fixing.

### *Who was your professional mentor?*

Academically, Brad Pedersen at the U of M. His passion for his student's success and his love of the industry was a real motivator. Professionally, it was Boots

Fuller, a guy whose life and career were filled with pitfalls and shortcomings, but someone who lived life with gusto and bravado. We worked together for nearly 25 years, so his legacy of hard work and personal sacrifice still permeate our organization.

### *What was the highest point in your career?*

The chance to serve on the board of MGCSA has to rank as a high point. It's the opportunity to get to know fellow superintendents who share the goal of improving our industry and who work hard to afford that goal.

### *What has been your lowest point?*

Losing a good deal of fairway turf to pythium one hot, humid summer. The pain of looking at dead grass for several weeks was embarrassing and demoralizing. Thankfully, our membership was understanding, and the crew was very supportive. I learned some good lessons, though.

### *Are your greatest challenges political, agronomic or managerial?*

I think the challenges are relatively equal, and that the ability to juggle these three areas of responsibility is the key to success. You know how it goes; you find a turf problem in the morning and address it. The afternoon brings a complaint from the wife of the Board President, so you address her and then the problem. The next day it's the intern who is half an hour late for work, so you deal with that. Then it's the green chairman's favorite tree that needs to be removed.....

### *What is the most difficult disease to manage on your golf course?*

Pythium has caused the most anguish for me, but the phosphyte materials have given us a nice tool to help with this disease.

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

I have been blessed to have a great team to work with. Our full-time guys are the best, and we are able to get quality employees from the ranks of retired folks, to students from Minnesota State, and some good high school kids.

### *Do you have a dog on your crew?*

The dogs usually are weeded out after the first couple of weeks on the job.

### *Where will our industry be in 10 years?*

We'll be struggling with many of the same issues as today, but I think the urgency will be heightened. Water usage and conservation will be more crucial. Our struggle to man-handle nature in terms of pest control will become more futile as resistance increases, and new chemistries are more expensive to bring to market. The golf industry will struggle for numbers as people have more demands for their time. Superintendents will continue to be pulled in every which direction: use less, provide more; open earlier, close later; roll faster, hold better. The opportunities will lie in the areas of cost control and efficiencies of programs. The astute superintendents will prosper, but still won't garner the recognition and respect they deserve.

### *Where would you like to be in 10 years?*

In the stands of a high school volleyball match, watching my daughters play.

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

The MGCSA is a first-rate organization that has done a great job of bringing the state's superintendents together. Like anything, you get out of something what you put in, so if anyone feels they are getting short-changed by the association, then they should get on a committee and get involved. The experience is worthwhile, believe me!

### *Name your foursome, who would you play with?*

Robin Williams, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Buffett. The golf swings may not be sterling, but the yarns and tales would be unforgettable.

Quality since  
1972



Specializing in • Restoration • Renovation  
• Drainage Problems • Slit Drainage • Greens  
• Bunkers • Laser Leveling • Grading • Irrigation

Jeffrey Hartman  
952-443-2958

GOLF DIVISION

8011 Bavaria Road  
Victoria, MN 55386