

Rob Panuska Enters Second Term As MGCSA President

By JACK MacKENZIE, CGCS
North Oaks Golf Club

The Waseca Lakeside Club is a private 18-hole facility located on the north side of Clear Lake in Waseca Minnesota. It is also home to our current Minnesota Golf Course Superintendent Association President, Rob Panuska. Originally conceived as a 9-hole loop in 1922, the Lakeside Club took itself to "the next level" twice in the last 35 years.

The first step began in 1969 when leaders of the membership pushed hard to expand the club from a 9-hole layout to an 18-hole track. This included the purchase of property, design layout and construction and perhaps of most importance, the upgrading of the clubhouse. Originally not much

al green staff in 1987. At the time Rob was a horticultural student at the University of Minnesota, Waseca Campus

*"Rob gets fired up
and is passionate in
what he believes in."*

— Seth Langager

under the tutelage of Brad Peterson, Director of the Turf Management program.

"I owe my whole career to Brad," Rob confides. "He saw my potential as a turf manager, encouraged me to attain work at Waseca Lakeside and helped guide my education."

Timing is Everything

You could say that Rob was at the right place at the right time. Upon graduation, our current president was provided full time employment at the Lakeside Club with the idea that he would replace soon-to-retire superintendent Ray Bloemke. Day to day time management skills were passed down from Ray to Rob, but his personal turf mentor prior to taking over the superintendent's position was seasoned employee Earl Byrne.

It was Earl, employed at the club since the expansion years, who took Rob under his wing and gave him the "hands on" education necessary to make a well-rounded turf manager. All of the common sense lessons Mr. Byrne learned through experience he passed onto Rob.

"Although he never told me exactly what to do or when to do it, Earl would intimate tried and true and more often than not conservative techniques that I should learn," Rob explains. This really helped limit the learning curve as he transitioned into the superintendent's position in 1991.

Water Remediation

It was also at this time that the Waseca Lakeside Club, now 350 members strong, contracted Joel Goldstrand to massage the layout of the 69-year-old golf course. Some of the design work Rob was responsible for implementing included the additions of bunkers, the rebuilding of several tees and even some green reconstruction. But of greatest impact was the creation of an all-inclusive drainage plan.

As was typical at many courses, the property developed in the early '70s tended to be very low terrain. In fact, the course lies in the flood plain of the surrounding agricultural land. When even a minor rain event occurred, the club would be overwhelmed by water and have to close for several days until Rob and his staff could pump it away.

To help Joel create a comprehensive plan a familiar name was hired. Rob's brother John Panuska, then Water Management Engineer for the Wisconsin DNR, was brought on board for his design expertise.

The implementation of this project kept Rob and his team busy for over two years. Catch ponds were constructed including intimate relationships with vast drainage systems and interconnecting culverts. The final flow empties into a three-acre holding pond. From there the water is lifted nine feet to nearby Rice Lake. The pump is capable of moving over 1,500 gallons of water per minute in an effort to keep the club playable, even after a five-inch rain. Of the project's end result, Jeff Richards Golf Pro/Manager of Waseca Lakeside Club says, "Rob is a perfectionist and likes to do the right thing the first time. He took charge of the very successful project and dedicated himself above and beyond what could be expected of most."

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*MGCSA President Robert Panuska
looks forward to a second term.*

more than a large screened porch, the new facility was designed to accommodate large member functions and include a pro shop. It was a definite concerted effort to take the club to "country club" status.

But of more importance to the club and current membership was the second step, the addition of Rob Panuska to the season-

Panuska—

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The membership acknowledges their seasoned super as well. "All of us appreciate Rob's efforts to keep the course healthy and playable, especially on such a limited budget," says Club President Jeff Juberien. He continues, "It is truly HIS course. He takes great pride and really seems to enjoy his job."

A Mentor and a Friend

Membership satisfaction is important, but equally so is the development of relationships with others. Seth Langager, Assistant Superintendent at Waseca Lakeside Club, considers Rob a professional mentor.

"Rob has taught me three very important things. Number one, look at the big picture; how is one little change going to impact the whole. Second, be flexible and willing to adjust. And third, you can never have too much drainage on a golf course!" Regarding management Seth praises, "Rob is very active with the crew. Although he is the superintendent, he is

always willing to jump into the trenches and get the work done. No matter how dirty or tough the job is."

Fred Taylor, CGCS, and Superintendent at Mankato Golf Club, echoes Seth's accolades. As a good friend with Rob at the University of Minnesota, Waseca Campus, Fred found him to be

"My service to the MGCSA has been an honor and a privilege to me personally"

—Rob Panuska

compassionate about life in general. Regarding agronomic ideas and political diversions, Fred sums up his relationship with Rob, "He is a good listener and gives good, level-headed advice. That is what great friends are for."

An Articulate Leader

Level headedness is what being a leader in the industry is all about. And it helps to be articulate. A participant in

Toast Masters, our association president is always available for presentations, meetings and sometimes debates. In fact once Rob had a "one on one" with then President of the University of Minnesota, Neils Haselmo regarding the closure of the Waseca Campus.

Although the school was closed, Rob's opinion was heard loud and clear. As a leader in the turf industry, his all encompassing vision has been no less obvious.

Rick Fredericksen, CGCS at Woodhill Country Club and past President of the MGCSA, has great respect for Mr. Panuska and all of the initiatives he has brought to the Board of Directors attention. "Rob has been so active in all aspects of the Association management, especially in Research, that to pinpoint one attribute would be difficult. He has been especially instrumental in helping the Board redirect monies generated at state events to promote local research. Rob was also key in the search for University of Minnesota faculty including Dr. Brian Horgan."

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In his tenth year on the Board of Directors, President Panuska has witnessed many association changes. They have included the development of an Environmental Guide and CD, a stronger relationship with the University of Minnesota through the creation and funding in part of the TROE Center and a great improvement in the *Hole Notes* publication. During his extended term the MGCSA has grown from 765 members in 1996 to 902 members in 2005. And currently Rob is working closely with Tom Ryan of the Minnesota Golf Association pushing for the creation of a State Turf Agronomist.

The business of promoting our industry has been huge in Rob's life. With a busy schedule at his club, attending BOD functions and being consumed with turf in thought, word and deed, one would never guess that Rob's true passion is his family.

Down on the Farm

This March, Rob and his bride Sherry will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. Introduced through an interest in goat farming, Rob and Sherry took their

***"Rob is an extremely honest
and moral person.
I respect him
tremendously for that."***

-- Sherry Panuska

hobby to a grander scale. Their mild dabbling has expanded into a 160-goat commercial dairy farm. This enterprise keeps both wife as manager and husband as hired hand to clean pens, haul animals and move hay, busy producing milk for distribution. They also raise research animals, which require special care. Along the way the couple also reared two fine children.

Daughter Brittania is currently a freshman at Wartburg College in Iowa. Her

primary interest is music; in fact she participates in the Colts Drum and Bugle Corps. Their 13-year-old son Ryan is active in dirt biking, videogames and working with the family's computer.

All the energy Rob uses at the course and all of the effort Sherry puts into the farm leaves the family with limited time together. But what time there is Sherry thinks of as, "precious moments."

And so does daughter Brittania. "My dad is involved in many things, work is of course a full-time and then some job. But in addition he is involved in the church and most importantly what we as a family do. My parents make it a point to be there for my brother Ryan and me in all of our activities. Perhaps some of our greatest family times stem from sitting around the campfire roasting hotdogs and marshmallows."

A small dirt bike park situated upon their seven-acre farm is a work in progress for Ryan and his father. With pride Ryan states of his father, "My Dad is hard working and when a job needs to be done,

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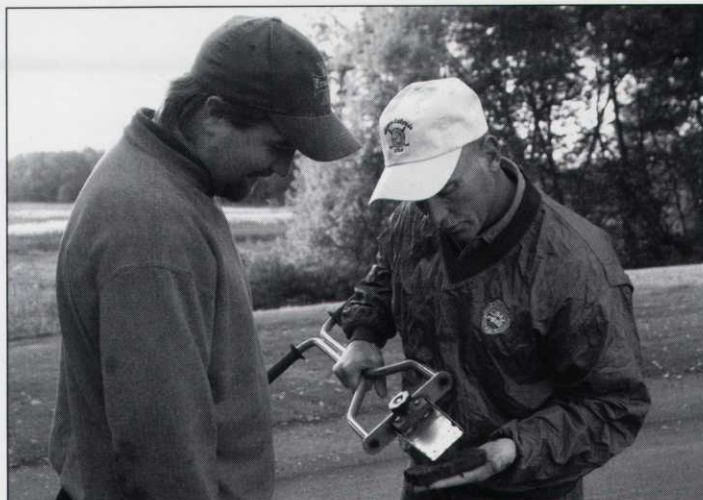
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he gets it done, and done right the first time."

Through the years there have been family trips to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, volunteer work cooking with Britannia's Colts Drum and Bugle Corps and commitments to the Vista Covenant Church Board to keep Rob busy away from the Waseca Lakeside Club. And according to Sherry his upcoming summer project around the house, when not working with the animals, will be to complete a landscape plan complementing the water pond and fountain they built last year.

Yes, Rob Panuska, President of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendent's Association enjoys a full life. A dedicated family man, articulate in debate, a faithful friend and employer and committed to his profession. What more could be asked of him in the prime of his life?

Perhaps another run for the Board of Directors?



Rob Panuska, right, with his assistant Seth Langager.



GCSAA Show Attracts 20,000 Golf Industry Professionals

The first-ever Golf Industry Show wrapped up in February, with projected attendance and exhibitor numbers that were

slightly better than expected. Projected attendance for the GCSAA Education Conference, NCGOA Solutions Summit and Golf Industry Show is approximately 23,000.

The number of "qualified buyers" or those that can influence purchase decisions is an important number. At the GCSAA Show last year in San Diego, there were approximately 6,200 qualified buyers. It is estimated the number of qualified buyers will exceed 8,000.

The GCSAA Education Conference ended the week with 7,329 seminar seats processed, marking the second highest total since 7,903 seats were sold in New Orleans in 2000.

Showcased on the floor were seven "solution centers" focused on a particular area of golf facility management, each offering interactive demonstrations, presentations and case studies by industry experts and informative displays.

In the featured Solution Center, The Building of the Green, an actual golf course green was built in the center of the trade show floor.

The Range Solutions Center featured an indoor driving range, while the Electric Vehicle Test Center allowed attendees to take the latest electric golf vehicles for a spin on the indoor driving track.

Attendees found a full-scale irrigation

pump demonstration in the Water Solutions Center.

The Agronomic Solutions Center, which was designed as a peaceful golf course sanctuary, complete with a pond, amidst the bustle of the trade show floor.

The MGCSA hosted its hospitality night at Adobe Gilas restaurant in Orlando on February 10. The informal gathering attracted more than 100 MGCSA members.

In the GCSAA Golf Championship,

the team from Minnesota finished tied for 28th place in the gross division, 78th in the net division, no sandbaggers on our team. The team consisted of Tim Johnson, Spring Hill CC; Scottie Hines, Windsong Farms; Michael Brower, Minnesota Valley CC, and Thomas Schmidt, Hillcrest CC of St Paul. Tim Johnson finished tied for 40th in the Championship division shooting a 78-79--157. Hines fired an 80-83--163 and Brower shot an 89-87--176. All three participated in the championship division. Thomas Schmidt finished tied

for 25th place in the 2nd flight. John Malloy, Bearpath CC, finished tied for 24th in the fourth flight.

GolfWeek's SuperNews Team Golf Championship was run in conjunction with the GCSAA show. MGCSA members Jim Johnson, Rich Spring GC, and Tom Notch, Bent Creek GC, teamed up to finish second with a gross 67 and a net 63. The winners fired a 65 and a net 59. They played at Shingle Creek GC in Orlando.

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