

HOLENOTES

The Official Publication of the MGCSA
V. 57, #7 August 2022



Legacy Scholarship
Recipients

When the Grass
is Browner

Cultivating Turf-
grass Education



On the Cover:
2022 3M Open, TPC 18th Hole

On this page:
TPC Twin Cities

HOLENOTES

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Presidential *Perspective*

Mike Sonnek, Royal Golf Club

Growing the Game

I can't remember back to when I started playing golf, but my parents shared a good story about it. My golf adventure started out at mighty Wells Golf and Country Club in Wells MN down by the Iowa border. A nine-hole gem stretched out to 2044 yards. As the story goes, my parents gave me a club and I followed behind them smacking the ball around. This lasted for a few trips until I managed to hit my father in the back of the leg with the ball. After that I was out in front of them. Our house was only one block from the golf course. We had a family membership when I was growing up, so I spent a good portion of my summers out on the golf course.

Not everyone has the easy access to the game of golf that I did. The owners of Royal Golf Club have made a strong commitment



to bringing youth to golf and growing the game. This is one of the main reasons why I was drawn to the superintendent position. Growing the game of golf is something I wanted to be a part of. Here at Royal Golf Club, the owners made a substantial commitment to kids, families and growing the game by providing a 6-hole short course that kids 17 and younger can play for free. The longest hole is 90 yards with bentgrass greens and hitting mats for tees. I always get a big kick out of driving by the short course and seeing the families out there having fun.

Along with the short course we have a thriving junior program

under the direction of Brandon Sigette. In the three years of the junior program, enrollment has increased from 80 kids to over 300. Brandon shared with me some of his keys for a successful program. He and his team create a fun, comfortable atmosphere that makes the kids feel welcome on the golf course. Lots of games and energy are necessary as well to hold those little attention spans. If I can pull the back in my day card, my only golf instructor was my high school coach. We used to hit whiffle golf balls in the gym in the spring while

waiting for the snow to melt and the golf course to open.

We also had the privilege this week of hosting the Minnesota PGA Junior Golf Tournament of Champions. Fun to see so much terrific play and wonderful swings from the boys and girls. Going out on a limb and guessing that their instruction goes beyond hitting whiffle balls in a gym.

I want to circle back to Brandon's comment about making kids feel welcome. I venture to say that a golf course is viewed mainly



as an environment for adults. Making kids feel welcome and that they belong in my mind is a key to growing the game.

We are on the back side of summer with the state fair in our sights. Best of luck to you all as we continue to march through our golf season and as always, please reach out if there is anything the MGCSA can do for you.



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2022 Joseph S. Garske Legacy Scholarship Recipient:

Maggie Taylor



2022 MGCOSA Legacy Scholarship Recipients:

Parker Wood



Sophia Kelly





The Joseph S. Garske Legacy award, named after the founder of Par Aide Products Company, Joe Garske, is committed to further the education of children and grandchildren of MGCSA members through financial contributions. This is the 24th consecutive year for these awards. Par Aide is located in Lino Lakes, Minnesota and owned by Steve Garske, son of Joseph.

The late Mr. Garske, who died at the age of 76 in 1982, started Par Aide in 1954 with plans to make a “good” ball washer. A foundry man and avid golfer, he knew

little about the golf business, yet tried to sell his ideas for design and tooling to two accessory companies, was turned down by both and so began Par Aide Products Company. Steve Garske started The Legacy Scholarship in his father’s honor in 1996.

Selection of Recipients:
Scholarship recipients are selected on the basis of academic record, potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, work experience, a statement of education and career goals.

Maggie Taylor

Maggie will be starting her senior year at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania in August 2022. Maggie recently returned from a volunteer trip to Guatemala where she was involved with teaching science classes to school age children, and then acted as a translator and aid for a U.S. medical team providing care to Guatemalan residents. Her 2021-22 academic year was spent studying abroad immersed in the culture and language of Ecuador during Fall semester and Spain during Spring semester. Maggie is majoring in International and Hispanic Studies, with minors in Politics and Environmental Studies.

When Maggie returns to Juniata this fall, she will be a Campus Tour-Guide for prospective students and parents, New Student Orientation Leader, First Year Foundation Facilitator, and will work in the office of the Center of International Education. Maggie is a former member of the Juniata women's volleyball and track and field teams. For her leisure endeavors

this year, Maggie plans to join the dance team and the college choir.

During her summers, Maggie has enjoyed working as a server at a lakeside restaurant near Mankato. Maggie has supported the golf industry through her participation in the We Are Golf activities in Washington D.C. Her plans after graduation from Juniata include teaching English abroad and attending law school. Maggie is extremely grateful to the MGCSA, its Board of Directors, and the Garske family for providing her with this generous scholarship!





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Parker Wood

Son of David and Connie Wood, Oxbow Country Club, Oxbow ND Parker is a 2020 graduate of Moorhead High School. He participated in three sports and graduated as a salutatorian. He now attends Minnesota State University Moorhead and is pursuing a degree in elementary education with a 4.0 GPA after two years of college. Parker works as an AmeriCorps

reading tutor at an elementary school in Moorhead. Parker coaches' football, basketball and track at Horizon Middle School. In his free time, Parker enjoys fishing on the Red River, frisbee golf and volunteering with the River Keepers organization. Thank you to the MGSCA for this generous scholarship to help further my education.

Sophia Kelly

My wife, Margaret, and I are very proud of her accomplishments both inside and outside of the classroom. Sophia has passion for working with people. During high school she worked with the elderly at the local nursing home. In the summers, Sophia is the head counselor at Minnesota Elk's Youth camp. This camp gives an authentic experience to children with less fortunate home lives. Sophia continues to be a figure skating coach for kids in the St. Cloud area. Additionally, since starting

college, she has become the head of marketing for Extending the Link, a student lead social justice documentary making team.

In school, Sophia maintains a 4.0 GPA with a major in sociology and a minor in psychology. She plans to study abroad in Italy this fall followed by Australia in the spring. There is no doubt these experiences will help her to gain a more worldly perspective.

The financial assistance the association has given Sophia is greatly appreciated.





*2022 MGCSA Championship
Thursday, September 15th
Chisago Lakes Golf Course
Host: Mark Michalski*

Cost per person is \$80 and includes golf, cart, range, prizes, and lunch.

9:30 - Registration & Range

10:30 - Shotgun Start

3:00 - Awards & Cash Bar

Championship Flight - 8 & under- Low gross (1st \$100, 2nd \$75)

First Flight - 9 & over - (Low gross \$100 & low net \$75)

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Registration deadline: September 9th.

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WHEN THE
GRASS IS BROWNER

*Brent Richards, The Preserve at Oak Meadows
Addison, Illinois*

**Originally published in On Course, the official publication of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents, July 2022.*

Over the last couple years, I've experienced some exciting and interesting opportunities. It seems we are always looking to improve ourselves... the very nature of golf turf maintenance demands that we look to make things better every day. We are open to trying new products, equipment, and methods that will improve playability even when the customers are seemingly happy. It's in our blood. When it comes to our employment status, especially in this golf rich Chicago area, there will be opportunities that have us seeking out the Greener Grass.

I'd like to share one such example. I was born and raised in southwest Wisconsin and decided to relocate to the Chicago area to advance my career. After a couple stops, I was lucky enough to be hired as the Golf Maintenance Specialist at The Preserve at Oak Meadows in 2017. The position was exactly what I was looking for: Award winning renovated course - Municipal Benefits - Work/Life Balance. I had Luke Strojny for a mentor with 40+

years of industry knowledge to learn from. I love my job and the only true thing that would have me consider leaving would be the chance to be a Superintendent back near my hometown and family. The small town feel and community was something I cherished. So, when I caught wind of an opening at one of the courses, I was naturally curious. The more I thought about it, the more enthused I became. I took a site tour and it left me feeling nostalgic.

After performing some more due diligence I was tentative because I knew there would be challenges. I asked for input from friends, family, and industry professionals on what they thought. I was torn on what to do. Could I potentially be moving away from my role at The Preserve? The thought of being a head Superintendent in my hometown sure was alluring. If I didn't act on it now, I might be forever wondering if I passed up the opportunity of a lifetime. Let's cut to the chase... After declining 2 offers for the position,

their 3rd offer had a significant salary increase and housing provided so I accepted the offer. I started there at the end of September - Unfortunately I was looking for a way out shortly after Thanksgiving!

So, what happened? Golf was having a banner year, but the pandemic had crushed the property's other areas of revenue. Management made a decision to cut all salaried employees compensation pay by 20%. This decision coupled with deficiencies of staff and appropriate resources left me shocked and wondering what to do next. I had kept in touch with Luke so it was easy for me to reach out and let him know what was going on. His mentoring through the process

proved invaluable. He understood and supported my professional leanings. As luck would have it, The Preserve was in the process of creating a new position to bolster the current full time staff. I went through the application and interview process with the hope of being able to return to The Preserve. Ultimately, I was offered and accepted the Golf Maintenance Coordinator position – it couldn't have worked out better for all involved! I was able to return to an awesome facility with a great career path ahead. I can continue to learn and build a resume of experience with this organization.

In hindsight, I can see that I was overlooking some issues in order to pursue a path back home. What was definitely a stressful



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time on me and my family, turned out to be an extremely good learning experience.

The bottom Line is the Grass Isn't Always Greener on The Other Side!

I have some recommendations for those considering the same: Keep your options open. Don't fall in love with a place because of emotional reasons.

Know your limitations on what challenges you will be able to take on.

Don't be afraid to ask for big bucks!!! You may never get the opportunity down the road.

Have current salary surveys on hand but remember, it's not all about the cash... be creative about benefit requests:

Uniform Allowance / Additional Vacation or Personal Days / Spouse Attendance at GIS

/ Meals / Pro Shop Credit / Deferred Compensation... etc. Maintain communication with former employers. Use their willing knowledge and advice. Keep them apprised throughout the process. Don't believe what you want to be true over the reality.

Do your Due Diligence!

I can't over emphasize this. Gather as much information as possible: Ask former employees about their experience / talk to equipment and soft good salesmen and see if they pay their bills / talk to Golf Pro's and Managers / make unannounced visits to facility / what is the history of capital and operational spending?

Resist FOMO (fear of missing out). If it feels right, make the move but don't panic. If it's open now, more than likely it'll be open again down the road.



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Renovating TPC Summerlin

By: Duininck Golf





Duininck Golf lends a constructive assist to TPC Summerlin in preparation for hosting the PGA TOUR's prestigious Shriners' Children's Open

(Las Vegas, Nevada) Duininck Golf's portfolio of TPC Network projects continues to expand, this time at a private, southwest desert oasis known for its beautiful setting and historic connection to Tiger Woods.

TPC Summerlin's highly acclaimed, Par 72, 7,243-yard

Bobby Weed and Fuzzy Zoeller collaboration is surrounded by mountains that meander through flower-lined arroyos and canyons. Widely recognized as the site of Woods' first professional victory, the course continues to improve annually and is extremely proud of its relationship with the PGA TOUR and The Shriners Children's Open.

With a focus on re-grassing the main playing areas, there will also be improvements to the putting green surfaces to increase

playability and consistency. The fairways will be converted to a Bandera Bermuda grass with the greens being upgraded to a durable Dominator Bentgrass.

Duininck Project Manager, Chris Kleinsmith, was asked about the significance of this project both to the property and to himself. "It's always a pleasure to work with (PGA Tour's Project Manager) Rich Brogan on these TPC Network projects. They are always well organized with clear visions and goals for each project, and a very flexible, approachable group that excels in communication and in providing definitive instructions. This specific project has a short window of opportunity for completion with the Shriner's Children's Open taking place in October. Fortunately, Duininck has the experience and resources to move quickly and finish these projects right."

Duininck has worked with the PGA TOUR on several high-profile projects, including the recent completion at TPC San Antonio. Leslie Claytor was the architect for the PGA

TOUR design team there and on this project. With the same individuals in the same roles at both projects, and the relationships between all parties well established, there is an easy and steady flow to progress.

"We're all easygoing perfectionists," Chris says with a smile, a humble sidestep to the mutual praise offered up by Brogan and Claytor. "We know the expectations associated with hosting the best players and biggest events on the PGA TOUR and we look forward to every one of these opportunities. I am confident the professionals will love what they find here in October, and the members will be even more proud of their everyday playground."

About Duininck Golf

Duininck Golf is part of the Duininck Companies established in 1926 based in Prinsburg, MN. A member of the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA), Duininck Golf has completed new course, renovation and irrigation installation projects throughout the United States working

alongside many well-known golf course architects, many who are members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA). With offices in Minnesota, Texas and Georgia, Duininck Golf has the resources and regional expertise to provide uncompromised service and attention to detail to its clients.

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Roll It Forward

By: Tim Johnson



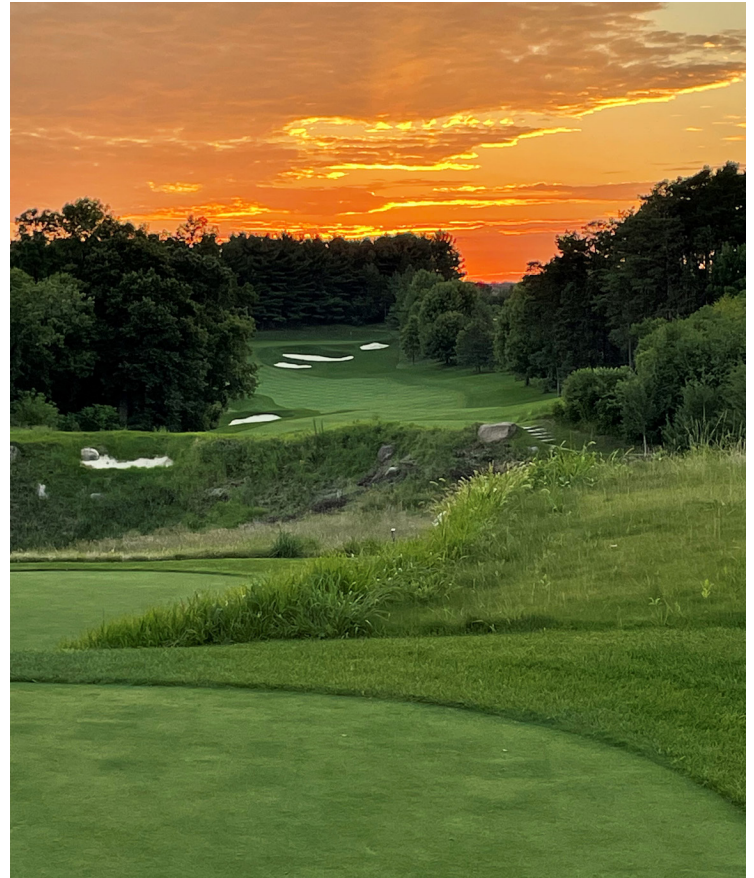
First off, I'm a little concerned that the MGCSA has hit rock bottom if they want to add my story to the Hole Notes. Snell- I'll get you back for nominating me in the middle of the summer.

My love of golf began with a set of Pete Cooper golf clubs hanging in the garage when I was growing

up. No one in my family played so I'm still not sure where they came from. I was not allowed to use real golf balls, so it was with the plastic whiffle balls that I learned the game. A small group of buddies and I created a 9-hole plastic golf ball course and had tournaments weekly and our "Open" once



SPRING HILL
— GOLF CLUB —



a year. Then came the garage sale when I found a Wilson R-90 wedge for \$.50 that came with three real golf balls. This inspired me to grow better grass in the yard for my short game practice and begin a lawn mowing service in town.

My college schooling started

with studying Architecture and Landscape Design at Iowa State University. After completing three years of all the difficult math classes, I switched to Horticulture and Landscape Architecture because of a summer job at a small 27-hole golf course in Des Moines Iowa. I was the night waterman at a course with one

quick coupling valve at each green, three hoses with roller base sprinklers, and a pump I had to manually prime and start nightly, all while driving a three wheeled Cushman with no lights other than a flash light duct taped to the steering column. I would start at 9:00 PM, work through the night, and then open the pro shop, start taking green fees, and pouring beers at 5:30 AM for the night crew from the Firestone plant down the street. I fell in love with the golf business. To this day, this was my favorite job.

Year two I did get a four-wheel Cushman with real lights.

My internships and working at the Iowa State University course, Veenker Memorial, provided me not only the education but also the experience I needed to add to a tool box for the future. Both Veenker and Medina Country Club in Chicago, helped me find the passion for design and construction as both courses undertook some major reconstruction work during my employment. I was fortunate to be given some freedom in helping



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Following a five year stint in California managing tournament golf and endless resort play, I returned to Iowa where I built a golf course and housing community in Des Moines and then up to Minnesota where I got to wrap my arms around the entire project at Spring Hill. I was hired on the front end of a project where I had responsibilities from acquiring the property, to permitting (not sure that was ever fun), clubhouse construction, and

building the golf course. I was able to use just about every class I took in college on this project as well as the 25 years of operation of the club following the day we brought the dozers in. Today I remain as the Superintendent as well as I co-manage the day-to-day operation of the club.

On top of construction, I truly enjoy the variety of the day-to-day management of acres of turf. I don't remember many easy years, but I can't remember a year when I didn't learn something new to implement

the following season. Not many people get to go to work and be a scientist, a manager, a climatologist (“what’s the weather gonna do?”), an artist, and play in the dirt with big machines once in a while.

As with all of us in the golf course industry, it takes a supportive family and a dedication to put them first to make this work. Let’s face it, if you have young kids, a Superintendent Mom or Dad has the coolest job of all their friends. Not many places can

you take your child to work and show them a sunrise, up close wildlife, or a huge pile of sand to play in followed by a giant hot dog from the grill. My wife Trish, and our two boys, Christopher and Matthew, have enjoyed many good times with dad on the course. Both boys have also developed a passion for the game and learned a strong work ethic by working during summer breaks for Wayzata Country Club. Jesse Trcka is a very patient man with the cart kids.

Christopher graduated from Iowa



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State in Industrial Engineering and is in product development for Daktronics in the sports division. You'll see some of his work at Allianz Field in St Paul. Matthew graduated from Stout and works for a MEP firm in Des Moines as an electrical engineer. There are some clubhouse designs in his future, so I'm sure the cart and caddy rooms will be decked out with all modern tech equipment. Both boys are golf crazy, and our family vacations usually revolve around a golf trip somewhere.



In conclusion, to me, the most rewarding part of this profession is the relationships we make along the way. I have had the privilege to work with some of the smartest, most dedicated young men and women in the industry. I have learned so much

from each and every one of these professionals. As I look back on my early years in turfgrass management, I learned some very important lessons from some brilliant superintendents. Most of all, they taught me that this can be a very rewarding profession, but it has to be fun

or you'll burn out quickly. And they taught me that there's a step up in the industry for anyone with a passion for the business, but that path isn't always the same for everyone. I was helped by my mentors to develop that path so I now enjoy the process of helping young

professionals find their path.

Speaking of the smart people in the business, next up is Jeff Ische from the Toro Company. Jeff and I worked together back in the early days of Spring Hill. Toro is fortunate to have him in their product development division.

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Get to Know 'em: *Dan Ament*

By: Joe Berggren, Hole Notes Editor

FACILITY INFO

Golf Course: Hiawatha and Fort Snelling Golf Courses for MPRB

Public or Private: Public Municipal

Number of Holes: 18 Hiawatha & 9 Fort Snelling

Fulltime employees: 2

Seasonal employees (not including full time): 10

Number of employees of entire facility at peak season: 35

Types of grass: Bent/Poa greens, Tees/Fairways/Rough is a little of everything bent, poa, Kentucky Blue, Rye, Fescues, crabgrass. If it survives and plays well it stays.

Total course acreage: 140

Greens acreage: 2.07

Tee acreage: 1.72

Fairway acreage: 38

Rough acreage: 60

Driving range acreage: 6

Range tee acreage: 1.16



Personal Turf Facts:

How many years have you been in your current position?

Since May 2019. Hiawatha had a minor flood my first day on the job

How many years have you been in the turf industry?

17 years

Where else have you worked?

Meadows at Mystic, Burl Oaks, Minikahda, Maddens, Southern Hills

Turf School Attended (if any)? U of M Twin Cities

Industry thoughts

What is one “master plan” thing you would like to change at your golf course?

A modern HDPE irrigation system with Toro Lynx control. I’m still



running the VT2 clock in my office and my steel pipes are only 3” below the surface at their deepest. A new system would increase efficiency and allow us to aerify again for better plant and soil health then we could regrass in house. Irrigation is the lifeblood of a course, and a good system pays for itself with course conditions.

What concerns do you have the turf business and the future of golf?

Labor is the biggest issue at the moment. We must change the way we do the day to day to get people interested and to continue to work at our facilities. Next, is inputs and the image of golf. We are still looked at like we are killing the planet with the products we use even though being sustainable and environmentally conscience are huge priorities as Superintendents. I think pesticide bans and use limits are coming sooner than we think. Here at MPRB we already cannot use glyphosate and have self-banned some other products like Chlorothalonil and Iprodione to lower our EIQ and appease the community. We almost had all pesticides banned a couple of years ago here at MPRB, so it’s something we must start to think about and plan for especially Muni facilities. Chris Aumock and I did some fantastic work that we will be presenting at Northern Green this winter that will shock some people, so check that out!

Golf itself is in a strong spot, but we all know how quick that can change see 2008. I hope it doesn’t slow down so we all can profit and reinvest in our facilities to make it better for everyone in golf.

What is needed to bring more young professionals into the industry?

Flexible schedules seem to be a priority along with fair wages. The younger generation also wants to be “included” so just a simple asking what they think suffices. The day of the long tenured employee seems to be gone so we must provide equity for everyone instead of one shared plan to keep them from jumping ship. Matt Cavanaugh has some great tips and practices for getting and keeping staff that resonate with the younger generation,

and I believe he's had some want to get into the turf career. I also think we need more women in the field, and especially women who golf. I've learned more this year than any of my previous years how valuable a staff member that plays from the front tees is.

What piece of equipment do you want? Not a need, a want.
Air2G2

In terms of industry costs (equipment, pesticides, labor, etc.) are they too low, too high or just right?

Costs are costs. We can shop around for a better deal for goods or use off patent products. Inputs can be tracked in excel and costs can easily be compared. Everyone uses cost/Acre but you can dive deeper into cost/acre/day of control for fungicides and really see what a good option is. Equipment has gone up, but most of that is due to labor costs and other materials going up. Labor is high, but you need to pay that to get good help. Invest in good help and the job is much more enjoyable!

FUN FACTS

Have you ever met a celebrity? Who?

A few. At Mystic when they would come in many played the course. Darius Rucker, 3rd Eye Blind, many Vikings etc. They are just normal people like us.

What is your favorite vacation spot?

Arizona in January and February

MGCSA NEW MEMBERS - August 2022

Zach Sigglekow	B	Castlewood Golf Course
Christopher Keskitalo	Facility	Wyatt's Bay Golf Course

What is your favorite memory of starting your turf career?

Not knowing about the quick coupler and keeping the nozzle on before you pull out the coupler. I took many baths until it clicked! This still is my teaching moment when watching new staff try it the first time. Most have learned much quicker than me!

What is your favorite job on the golf course?

Tee Service then irrigation. I need to be moving otherwise I get bored

What is your least favorite job on the golf course?

Anything with riding mowing equipment.

Have you played any famous golf courses? Which ones?

Played a few that host Tour stops Scottsdale, Innisbrook, Twin Cities. Hoping to get over to Ireland/Scotland soon to play some original links courses.

Who is your dream foursome?

Lee Trevino, Kevin Kisner, and my brother. The amount of trash talking in this group would be made into an ESPN 30for30.

2020- What a year! Would you like to comment on how it affected you, and how it has changed your management approach now?

2020 was tough all around. Covid turned the world upside down and I caught it early March. Once I recovered, we luckily were made essential so we could still work on the course. We didn't open that first weekend since we thought it would get shut back down again. Then George Floyd was killed, and Minneapolis burned down. I remember coming in those days to flaming ash raining down on the course. Then barricading the maintenance area not knowing if it would be there the next morning! That fall the drought started and I found the first European chafer in the city. 2020 was the most challenging year I have faced to date. I really haven't changed

much except for giving staff more time off and knowing the course should be there in the morning. My customers just want affordable golf and understand if things are not perfect, so I don't lose sleep if I have some wilt or weeds, or rough areas on the course. The only thing I can do is my best with what's available. Pride is infectious and your crew notices that and will follow your lead.



If you would like to participate in a future Get to Know 'Em, please reach out to Editor Joe Berggren at jberggren@golfthewilds.com



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*Dollar spot, brown patch, anthracnose, gray leaf spot and snow mold were the five most common diseases according to a national survey among golf course superintendents.

GOLF COURSE MUSINGS

Share your strange, funny, and unique photos from your time on a golf course? Send your images to chris@mgcsa.org.

Mike Sonnek and Matt Cavanaugh at our first MGCSA Family Day at the St. Paul Saints.



Cultivating new opportunities for turfgrass science education in Minnesota

By: Michael Barnes,
University of Minnesota

I never imagined a career of research focused in turfgrass. Nor had I even thought much about the turf that was under my feet as I played golf, soccer, football, or frisbee. It wasn't until halfway through my doctorate (in natural resource sciences), when I was invited to participate in a project related to low input turfgrasses, where everything changed. Through numerous interactions with turfgrass researchers, seed and sod growers, land managers, grounds workers and superintendents, I came to appreciate the intricacies and complexity that the world of turf holds.

I remember explaining what I was working on to friends, family, and even colleagues who would look at me with a bewilderment on their face and say, "you mean like...grass? That's what you study?" After I explained more about what I did, the stories would pour out. Stories about summer droughts, bad winters, a muddy soccer field or annoyance at a sizable divot on their last golf outing. People, once prompted, have fascinating stories to tell about their interactions with and views towards turfgrass. But I kept thinking...why does no one think about it the rest of the time, why is there so little

“You mean like...
grass? Thats what
you study?”



Engaging youg students in the industry

Michael Barnes

knowledge about turfgrass and the wide variety of careers that you can have that involve it?

This is now a critical question given a significant shortfall in the number of individuals wanting to pursue careers that involve grounds maintenance broadly. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects a 7.6% growth in the number of grounds maintenance workers needed by 2030; despite this, an estimated 173,000 positions remain unfilled currently. These official statistics are backed by numerous accounts from across the country and multiple industries about being unable

to find enough labor to fulfill demands in this area. While some of these shortfalls can be made up by the adoption of and improvements in technology (e.g., smart irrigation systems, robotic mowers), there will still be a significant demand for skilled individuals to manage and maintain turfgrass landscapes.

The current situation prompted me to want to understand if and when individuals get exposed to turfgrass science or management, and how we can go about exposing more people to turfgrass science to begin to remedy this issue. The first step is to understand the



scope of the problem. While there are many places to start, one of the most significant is formal education at the university level, as this is where students begin to solidify their career plans. An intervention at this point could be successful in directing students to careers involving turfgrass.

Through a grant from the USDA Higher Education Challenge program, Dr. Eric Watkins and I are pursuing research and curricula development work to start to understand the scope of the problem, and begin to remedy it via two objectives.

The first objective is to assess the current state of turfgrass science education within the state of Minnesota. This includes a systematic review of majors across 68 colleges and universities in the state, and takes a broad and inclusive approach by looking at both majors and courses that involve 'managed urban landscapes,' which could include parks, lawns, sports fields, and golf courses. This approach allows for the broadest possible sweep of

courses that already include turf-related content or *could* include it in the future across both natural and social sciences. This is critical, given that turfgrass management involves much more than biophysical elements, it involves socially driven preferences and expectations whether those are homeowners, park visitors, or especially golfers! This objective will set a baseline for what currently exists and where, to help us understand both the depth and breadth of education offerings. This data will help us answer questions related to the distribution and focus of institutional coverage, major coverage, and course coverage related to turfgrass science curricula.

The information from the first objective feeds into our second objective, which is to enhance turfgrass science curricula across the state of Minnesota to reach more students. This involves taking all the information about what exists already, and where it is being taught, and filling in the gaps with both existing and newly designed curricula that match the programs, courses,

students, and the industry. This work includes crafting curricula that can be inserted into courses where one might not think turfgrass science belongs, but where turfgrass can be used as a case study for theories, methods, and applications of those theories and methods on a landscape that is accessible to everyone. For example, an urban ecology course at a liberal arts college could utilize a golf course as a living laboratory to study a variety of topics from nutrient cycling to biodiversity. These curricula will cut across disciplines, and the natural and social sciences and vary from traditional knowledge transfer approaches to experiential learning using turfgrass as nature-based learning spaces. The curricula developed will be freely accessible and distributed to instructors via multiple avenues to enhance the reach of the modules.

While only the first step, we

hope that this project helps to start addressing the shortages being experienced across the industry, by exposing students to turfgrass science material earlier in their educational careers and cultivate an interest in careers involving turfgrass science broadly at all levels of the profession.

The research described above is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture Higher Education Challenge Grant (no. 2021-70003-35498) "Enhancing Sustainability Education through Managed Urban Landscape Curricula at Higher Education Institutions in Minnesota"



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From the *High Grass*

By: Chris Aumock

Last month, I was able to volunteer for a few nights at the 3M Open with our colleagues at TPC Twin Cities. This event is a great opportunity to show off the abilities of our industry professionals and the quality of conditions we can provide to PGA Tour players. Congratulations to Superintendent Joe Rolstad, Assistant Superintendents Riley Soderstrom and Max Kelly, and all the TPC staff on delivering excellent conditions for the players!

For the 3M, I was able to join the fairway divot team. I have never particularly enjoyed doing divots, but something about that Thursday night was just perfect. We had a beautiful evening, with warm temps and low humidity. Riding around with the crew talking about golf, the course, and a few laughs, it really brought me back to the beginning. Those early years on a crew, working with your friends and having fewer worries about your responsibility for the golf course. (I do think my divot work was of the highest quality)! It does



remind one of the joys this job has brought, and these volunteer shifts can reignite that ingrained passion.

Maybe there was more opportunity to work amongst my crews. I could have joined the divot or bunker team for an hour. Yes, they would be uncomfortable, but the more often it happens, the more relaxed and effective that task could become. If it was raining and I made my crew work through it, I made sure I was out there with them. To be out in the elements and not sitting at the desk. Working alongside the crew was essential to maintain that respect and credibility amongst the crew.

It was great to meet a few of our future superintendents at the TPC, to listen to their current perspective and relate that to my own experiences. That passion

to participate and grow in their careers is an admirable trait that will serve them well into the future. Perhaps we can provide more of these types of opportunities. Let's continue to find new ways to engage our young assistants and staff. Show them other sides of the industry, whether that's seeing a public course vs. a private club, or understanding the sales or distribution side, there are more opportunities to expose our young staff to all aspects of this industry.

Thank you to all the volunteers and sponsors that supported this event. One of the strengths of our industry is our willingness to step up and support each other. Whether that's for a tournament event such as this, or if someone really needs help. It's fantastic how readily we show up for each other. Just this year, our colleagues at Grand Forks Country Club lost their maintenance facility to a fire, yet almost immediately, the local community and industry

stepped up to make sure they were prepared for their season. Yet another great example of the support this industry provides. It's reassuring to remember that your colleagues will most likely be there, willing to help out when needed.

I hope you are all lucky enough to have an enthused, engaged individual or two on your staff. It is exciting to see, through all the talk of staffing struggles, that there are people out there interested in this profession. Getting that opportunity to spend some time on the golf course with a few of them, was a valuable experience. We will always need quality engaged staff members and finding different opportunities for them to expand their knowledge and experience, will only benefit the larger industry. Let's continue to step up for each other when needed, in good times and bad, and we will continue to be an industry worth joining.

