

# HOLENOTES

The Official Publication of the MGCSA  
V. 59, #1 February 2024



MGCSA Grant  
Program: Mankato GC

MN Allied Golf  
Associations

UMN: What's Next  
for WinterTurf





**On the Cover:**  
Two Harbors Curling Club  
Outreach Event  
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Assistants Pro Forum at TopGolf

# HOLE*NOTES*

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February 2024

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# Presidential Perspective

By: Mark Michalski  
Chisago Lakes Golf Course



## February Presidential Perspective

Hard to believe we're already in the second month of 2024. The days sure seem to pass by quickly. My family's winter has been filled with lots of basketball and to my kids' chagrin, not enough snow to cross country ski in our field. I'd have to agree with them, as a child I would have been quite disappointed in a winter that contained hardly any snow. I try to counter with well you've had your bikes all winter so doesn't that make up for it? They just look at me and say dad,

there's supposed to be snow on the ground. I suppose guys, I suppose. Hate to break it to them but I have to admit it's rather nice to not have had to do much for snow removal this winter.

I hope you were able to enjoy the education and trade show at this year's Northern Green at the RiverCenter in St. Paul. I spoke with quite a few of the attendees and received a great deal of positive feedback. I'd have to say I enjoyed my time down there and am looking forward to next year's event.



Thanks so much to Nikk and the education committee for putting the speaker lineup together.

The deadline to register for the Minnesota Golf Day on the Hill is February 21st with the event taking place on March 12th. Please make sure you register yourself and hopefully some of your staff members, golfers, pro shop staff, anyone who can help tell the good story of golf. We serve our communities by providing outdoor recreation and exercise to a wide demographic. Our facility has cross country skiing in the winter, maybe not this year, but we did open for golf

last week so there's an out of the norm winter activity for us. Our facility sees folks who never golf who are here almost every day in the winter. We need to tell our representatives this story.

In closing, if you have any ideas or suggestions for the association, I'd love to hear from you. Feel free to shoot me an email or let's chat at an event soon. The association is only as good as the participation it receives from its members. No one thinks you should be at every event, I can't make every event, but try to make it a point to participate whenever you can. Looking forward to chatting soon.





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# MGCSA Stewardship Grant Program

2023 Grant Recipient Project Review

Mankato Golf Club

Mankato, MN

Members: Chris Carpenter, Matt Marzinske







## Mankato Golf Club Pond Edge Rip-Rap Project: Hole 18

**Overview:** The existing pond adjacent to the 18th green serves both as an aesthetic and a penalty hazard for golfers while adding a scenic water feature for dining guests at the clubhouse. Adding a limestone rip-rap border to the pond will reduce soil erosion from the soil perimeter of the pond, reduce the amount of sediment carried through the overflow structure which eventually flows to the Minnesota River, and add clarity to the water.

**Scope:** The project entailed draining the pond completely. A 1' wide sod cut around the perimeter will allow for erosion fabric to be laid from the sod cut area and extending approximately 5' into the pond. Once the fabric was in place, the sod was then re-laid in the same cut area directly over the edge of the fabric, stabilizing the fabric. Staples were inserted through the fabric



and into the soil to hold the rest of the fabric in place. Once the fabric was installed, Class 1 limestone rip-rap from SMC was placed on the fabric, extending from the edge of the re-laid sod to approximately 5' into the pond. In an attempt to reduce sediment from flowing through the pond fountain, limestone was placed under the location of the fountain, approximately a 10' x 10' area.

#### Materials:

Fabric: approximately 2,000 square feet. We had about 60% on hand. \$100

Limestone rip-rap: \$1,800

Staples: \$100

#### Labor and Equipment:

Cut and remove sod = 3 man hours

Laid fabric, stapled down and re-laid sod = 9 man hours

Rock install = 42 man hours

Total labor hours = 54 hours x \$20/hr = \$1080

#### Timeline:

Work was completed November 10th, taking 3 days.











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# 2024 MGCSA Member Event Rebate Program

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The MGCSA Board of Directors is working hard to reduce limitations to participation. In-person events are essential to the growth of our industry and the professionals within it. MGCSA has the opportunity to support those engagement efforts by implementing a member rebate program this year for all class members. We are offering an event registration rebate of up to \$35 to all class members. This will allow for free or reduced entry into one of our association events!

## Use Rules:

- Must be active MGCSA Class member. Use will be monitored and recorded. One time use only, regardless of event registration costs, no redeeming cash value.
  - If using credit, the individual must register separately by choosing that ticket option when signing up for an event and entering the promo code below. Member cannot use credit within a group registration.\*\*\*
  - Credit use window has been extended through November 1, 2024.
  - Applicable to most MGCSA events, except Don White Match Play, The Wee One, and The Scramble.
- 

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# Minnesota Golf Community Meeting

By: Chris Aumock

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Last month, the allied golf associations in Minnesota met at Hazeltine to discuss the future of our local industry. Other groups present included the USGA, MGA, MN PGA, CMAA, MWGCOA, the 3M Open, the First Tee, and adaptive golf representatives. This event was put together by the

USGA, and our regional affairs director, Jake Miller. This was an effort that the MGCSA has been working towards for the last several years and are grateful to have finally had this event take place.

It was a wonderful opportunity for each group to discuss the opportunities



and challenges that we each are facing. The discussion often focused on the recent successes of golf, and the continued growth of the game post covid. One main theme that was mentioned before my turn to speak was collaboration amongst our groups. This was music to my ears, as that was the whole basis for my time. All of this opportunity we see in golf has to be shared, and the challenges that we face must be done so together.

Moving past this event, I met with the new ED for the MGA, Jon Mays. It was a great chance to learn more about Jon and how he views the golf industry in Minnesota. I was excited to learn that we share some similar perspectives and am hopeful for continued collaborative efforts.

When I was brought into this role, improving our collective work amongst allied groups was one of my goals, and am excited to say we are starting to see progress. We will be working on creating additional structures to ensure more collaborative

focus on all of golf's issues.

Much like our advocacy day this year, we are starting to look at the broader industry of golf, and we must realize how each issue affects us all. For instance, during my first year representing the Owners Association as well, I have learned many new perspectives and insights. As Superintendents, we do not often think about taxes or labor laws, but I can better understand how those affect operations even further.

We have talked about how water access, or lack of access, could cripple golf courses in the future. With that, some of the legislation passed last year is putting real pressure on small businesses such as golf courses. Hopefully, you have heard about the earned sick and safe time policies and expanded FMLA that support you as an employee, but are you aware of mandatory retirement plans for 2025? These are significant efforts for employees (hopefully your employer already takes care of these things for you). Going forward, there will



be significant additional costs for all employers to operate these programs, usually at the business owners expense. Even those part time cart kids and range pickers could have access to increased opportunities. These costs will add up for the golf course.

The point is this, if one side of the operation fails, whether that is the Superintendent, owner, or the pro, the entire operation could fail. That is why we must see things from

a larger perspective. We are an allied golf industry, and we must support each other when able. That is our mutual goal as we work to establish framework for working together to address golfs outreach efforts, including education, advocacy, and promotion. When we are all at the same table, we can address any conflicts of interest between our singular objectives, and work together to guarantee a successful future for all of Minnesota golf.



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# **The Jewel Outreach**

Thnak you to our host Superintendent, Lucas Grieves,  
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about Lucas in this months Get to Know Em!)













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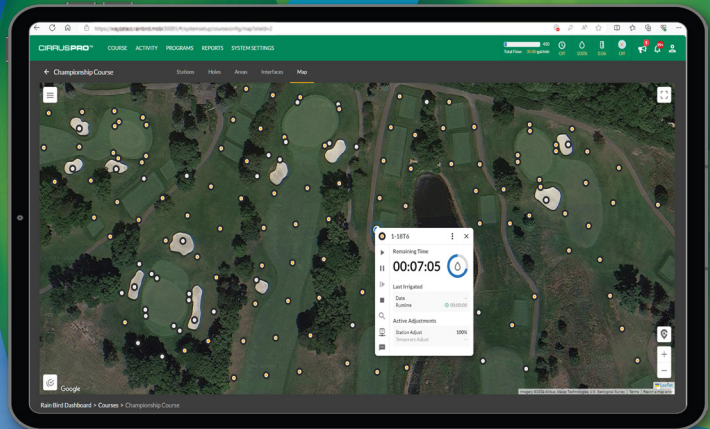
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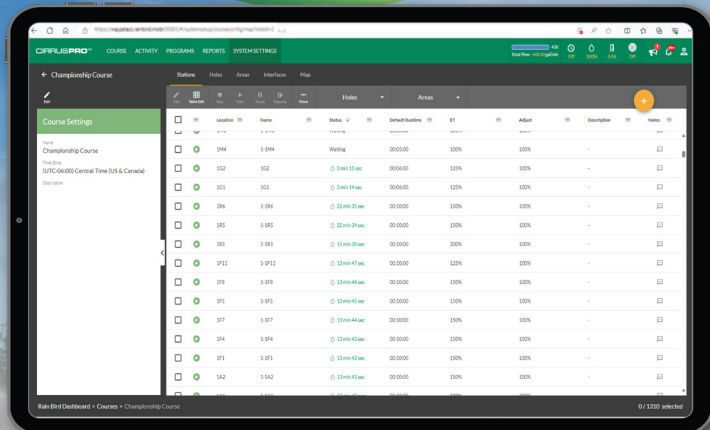


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# Two Harbors Outreach

Thank you to our host Superintendent, Norma O'Leary for a new idea, and Two Harbors Curling Club for putting up with some Superintendents curling.





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# Roll It *Forward*

By: Matt Schmid

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I was nominated by a good friend, Sam Bauer. Thanks man. This industry is amazing. Since I started on a golf course maintenance crew at the age of 15, I have seen many changes, some good, some bad. However, some things remain the same: tight-knit relationships, turf managers wearing many hats,

and all of us teaching and learning from one another in some aspect to help us all grow professionally. I am originally from Miltona, MN, where I learned the game of golf from my parents at Lake Miltona Golf Club and Alexandria Golf Club. In 1991, we moved to north-central MN to the small



Photos provided by Matt Schmid



town of Sebeka. The golf boom started with the construction of golf courses. My brother had gotten a job on the grounds crew with the grow-in project at Blueberry Pines Golf Club in Menahga, MN. Before he left his college summer job, he got me a job there. Lee Kirchgatter was the superintendent at the time.

When I came back the following season, Lee had left Blueberry Pines to go grow-in Longbow Golf Club in Walker, MN. Keith Mueller and Jeff Youngbauer became the co-superintendents and helped me love the work. These two guys taught everyone, every job that goes into maintaining a golf course to its



highest level. What great mentors Jeff and Keith were! I decided to go to college for Golf Turf Management at Anoka Technical College, completing their 2-year Golf Turf Management program.

I still tell the story from time to time about finding an internship. The year 2000 job board at Anoka Tech was insane, as in, countless job opportunities. You could pick anywhere! I love the mountains, so I was looking to head west. When I came across the Country Club of the Rockies in Edwards, CO, the heart of the mountains, my thought was “I’m in”. I had a couple of phone interviews with Kevin Ross, the Superintendent there at the time. Kevin realized I would be there from April-September, and with a couple of good references, offered me the job over the phone. (Like Sam said in the prior article, we came from the CCR clan). What an intense summer of learning a new property. Poa control measures were a priority. We prevented encroachment by resodding 9 holes of collars every spring, had poa picking parties, and the intern Olympics!







The six holes that were assigned to each of us were an intern's dream! We definitely learned the "Eye for Detail" as you were the "superintendent" for those assigned holes. Working there that summer, I met my good friend Brian Boll, who is now the Director of Golf and Grounds at Interlachen CC. He helped me learn the area and the golf course, and in return, I took him fishing and taught him a little more about fly fishing.

My last year at Anoka Tech was interesting, as U of M Crookston came to Anoka Tech to talk about schools joining up. If you

transferred all credits, you would need is just 2 more years to get a B.S. in Turf Management. My buddy Jordan Manor and myself took the leap and were the first to go through the hoops to get it done. We met some great turf dudes that are still rocking it to this day. Jeff Fjosne (Perham Lakeside GC, MN), Ryan Blechta (Spanish Peaks, MT) just to name a couple.

At that time in 2001, I had already accepted the 1st Assistant Superintendent at Pheasant Acres GC in Rogers, MN. Superintendent Scott Weltzin, CGCS, thought this





was a great opportunity for me to go for the 2 years to get my B.S. He graciously held my position knowing I was leaving in late August to head back to school. I worked with Scott for 2 years, loved every day enjoying new challenges and working with many great people.

Early in 2003, I left Pheasant Acres for a Lead Assistant position at Majestic Oaks in Ham Lake, MN to take on the challenge of a 45-hole complex. Working with Superintendent Dan Hanson trying to develop an agronomy program around all the play (double shotguns on

both sides 2 times a day!) was almost impossible. Very early mornings to late nights were how it got done. It just about killed me, but hey, when you love what you do, you find a way!

It was a short stint at Majestic Oaks, an Assistant opportunity came about at Wayzata Country Club in early 2004. I jumped at it, as I knew one of the assistants (Steve Roxberg) from our days at Anoka Tech. I was eager to get back to the private club, and joining Superintendent Bob Distel was the perfect opportunity. This is where I met Jesse Trcka, who is now the



Superintendent at Wayzata CC. Jesse and I worked next to one another many days, always trying to come up with the next big irrigation invention. We became good friends and spent as much time talking Harleys as anything! Together, Bob, Steve, Jesse, Julie, Wayzata CC grounds staff, and I worked to take Wayzata to that next level. We couldn't have had a better group of people to work with and learn from each other. We also had our fair share of shenanigans; (IYKYK).

During my time in the industry, and especially at Wayzata, I had gotten to know one of our

Fert/Chem sales reps, Larry Thornton. I called him regularly to learn about new products, old products, and also get different ideas. The man knew his stuff and had quite the background himself. In 2007, I felt it was time to get that head gig. I had a couple of interviews for Superintendents positions in the area, but there wasn't much job movement at this time. As some of you know, the golf industry was in a bit of a downswing. It was that winter at the Green Expo visiting Larry's booth that he mentioned he was looking to expand, I was interested. With a few gatherings and





beers, Larry convinced me to come work for him as a sales rep with Superior Turf Services and help grow the business.

I was a sales rep for 15 years, still working in a tight-knit industry with some great people growing turf in the upper Midwest. But 3.5 years ago, in August of 2020, Larry and his wife Jeanne decided to retire, and my wife Brianna and I had the opportunity to buy and take over their business. It has been scary and rewarding at the same time. We are very thankful for the opportunity and support Larry and Jeanne gave us. We are so lucky to have such a great team at STS.

We have Eric Counselman (VP of Sales), Jay Yonak (Sales), Kyle Benson (GM), and Brianna Schmid (CFO). I'm very blessed I get to travel, see many different courses, turf management strategies, and chat turf and life with golf course superintendents, assistants, their crew, along with other turf managers around the Upper Midwest.

My hobbies include fishing, fly fishing, hunting (deer, grouse, pheasant), being a competition dance dad for our two older kids, and if time, relaxing on an ocean beach. I am in my 25th year as a volunteer Ski Patrolter up at Buena Vista Ski Area in Bemidji, MN where I met my wife, Brianna. We have 4 children Liam (11), Autumn (9), and twins Mala and London (2). We are always on the go, trying to keep up with 4 kids and all their activities. Not much free time at the moment, and I wouldn't have it any other way. With that, I nominate Jeff Fjosne, Superintendent up at Perham Lakeside GC in Perham, MN. We met in college and stayed in touch through all these years, talking turf, life, family, & 3D printing (thanks, Jeff, for leading my son and I down that rabbit hole).

Thank you.



# GOLF COURSE MUSINGS

Share your strange, funny, and unique  
photos from your time on a golf course?  
Send your images to [chris@mgcsa.org](mailto:chris@mgcsa.org).



Unusual sight in MN, winter tree spading. What new  
opportunities did you find with this snowless winter?



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# Northern Green Expo

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The first year of the updated Northern Green Expo was a success. The golf education room saw approx. 100 people for sessions, the single day trade show on Wednesday was well received by attendees and vendors alike, and St. Paul was a great host site.

Mark your calendars for the additional NGE Demo Day, outdoors at Aldrich Arena in Maplewood, on October 8th!





# MGCSA NEW MEMBERS - *January/February 2024*

Griffin Bjerke	Northland Country Club	Student
Alex Bryngelson	Dodge Country Club	Class B
Matt Bailey	Owatonna Country Club	Class C
Robert Wekenman	Craguns Legacy Courses	Class B
Rob Weber	Victory Links	EM
Travis Dykstra	Van Wall Equipment	Affiliate
Kirby Robb	Pheasant Country GC	Facility
Erik Gustafson	Somerset Country Club	Class C
Jack Slattery	Woodhill Country Club	Class C
Martin Fogarty	River Oaks Golf Course	Student
Jamie Schultz	New Ulm Country Club	Class B
Joel Maleska	Old Course Sauk Centre	Class A
Kyle Martin	Worthington Golf Club	Class B
Kadyn Mulder	Dodge Country Club	Student
Robert Glavas	Links at Northfork	Class B
Caden Ridder	Riverwood National GC	Student
Seamus Walsh	Vineland Tree Care	Affiliate
Jeffrey Simmers	Minneapolis Golf Club	Class C



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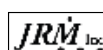
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Lucas  
Grieves

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*The Jewel  
Golf Club*

## FACILITY INFO

**Public or Private:** Public

**Number of Holes:** 18 Holes

**Full time employees:** 6

**Seasonal employees (not including full time):** 14

**Types of grass:** Dominant Xtreme, Blue/Fescue

**Greens acreage:** 3.4

**Tee acreage:** 3.5

**Fairway acreage:** 32





## **PERSONAL TURF FACTS:**

**How many years have you been in your current position?** I just finished my 4th year as Superintendent.

**How many years have you been in the turf industry?** ~15

**Where else have you worked?**  
Le Sueur Country Club, Iowa  
State Stadium, Minnesota  
Vikings Winter Park.

**Turf School Attended (if any)?** Iowa State, SDSU.

## **INDUSTRY THOUGHTS:**

**What is one “master plan” thing you would like to change at your golf course?**  
The biggest thing is a bunker renovation. I can almost guarantee our tile is plugged. I can tell the complaints are

coming, and washouts are pretty extreme. Would like to improve the consistency.

**What concerns do you have the turf business and the future of golf?** Finding good help, there are great jobs out there that aren't getting filled. Other industries are more appealing to younger kids, and its tough to convince them that this job has perks.

**What is needed to bring more young professionals into the industry?** Trying to advance some of this technology, like drone spraying, and robotic things. It seems like we will have to push hard into tech. Try to get kids in to use these devices. Look at schools that







have robotics teams and video game classes. Lets show them the cool technology that might pique some interest.

**What piece of equipment do you want? Not a need, a want.** I have heard some great stories of GPS sprayers. That would be a blast, definitely a want vs a need.

**Do you have any unique techniques or approaches you do at your course?** Its tough to find improvements when the previous program was so good. I'm slowly learning how to get comfortable with yellow greens.

## **FUN FACTS**

**Have you ever met a celebrity?** Who? Not like movie screen, TV, but working with the Vikings,

they provided meals with the team. You don't interact unless they do first, but eating with the team was definitely fun when I was younger.

**What is your favorite vacation spot?** I would say northern Minnesota. For our honeymoon we went to Grand Marais, just being on Superior was pretty awesome.

**What is your favorite memory of starting your turf career or a funny story?** I was with the Vikings, doing an entomology project collecting bugs on the field. The entire team was just staring at me coming down the tunnel, waiting for me to get off the field.

**What is your favorite job on the golf course?** I enjoy finding cup locations and cutting cups. Until I run out of spots, then it gets old later in the season.

**What is your least favorite job on the golf course?** Spraying. I do not like just sitting on the sprayer. Especially since I'm trying to answer phone calls and other things while doing it.



**Have you played any famous golf courses? Which ones?** I have not. I just don't golf that much. I haven't even done some of my area courses.

**Who is your dream foursome?** Old school Mickelson, Rory, Justin Thomas, John Daly.

**What is one piece of advice that you've received in your career that still resonates today?** Learn to shut it off. Tune out the course when you're not there. It didn't click until I got into a bigger role like this how important it is. You have to shut it off, even mid season trying to decompress is important.



*Don't miss the extended conversation with Lucas on this month's Hole Notes Podcast!*

*If you would like to participate in a future Get to Know 'Em, please reach out to [chris@mgcsa.org](mailto:chris@mgcsa.org).*



# 2024 MGCSA Event Calendar

Mark these dates now to join us at an event in your area.



## Winter Outreach

February 21st - Minnewaska Golf Club

February 27th - Bemidji Town & Country Club

## Golf Industry Day at the Capitol

March 12th - St. Paul

## Don White Match Play

First round begins May 1st

## Summer Exposure Golf

WI - June 3rd - Eau Claire Golf & CC (MN/WI Border Battle)

NW - June 10th - Detroit Country Club

NE - July 17th - Minnesota National Golf Course

SW - July 29th - Worthington Golf Club

SE - August 7th - Ma Cal Grove Country Club

## MGCSA Championship

September 9th - River Oaks Golf Course

## The Scramble

October 7th - Stone Ridge Golf Club

## The Wee One

October 14th - Brackett's Crossing Country Club

## The MEGA Seminar & Annual Meeting

December 4-5 - Braemar Golf Course

***Event Calendar***



# Topgolf Assistants Pro Forum





# What's Next for WinterTurf

By: Eric Watkins

Professor, Department of  
Horticultural Science  
University of Minnesota



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The WinterTurf project aims to find solutions to the problem of winter stress damage of turfgrasses. The project, funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, is well into its third year. As I write this, the winter of 2023-2024 looks quite meek, and thankfully very little winter damage is likely in Minnesota. Nevertheless, we can expect that future winters will bring damage, and it is important to be diligent in looking for solutions to the types of injury that are most common, especially on high value areas like golf greens.

The success of the WinterTurf project hinges on having golf

courses superintendents throughout the cold climates of the world assist by collecting data and installing environmental sensing nodes on their courses. To date, scores of golf course superintendents throughout the world (Figure 1) have given their time to aid our project--thank you to all who have chipped in!

So where are we with the WinterTurf project? What have we learned? What do we hope to discover?

*Discovering how plants experience winter*

Right now, data streams



from environmental sensing nodes (Figure 2) are being delivered wirelessly from golf courses around the world, hour after hour, all winter long, to a University of Minnesota database. These readings, which include soil temperature and moisture, air temperature, carbon dioxide concentration, oxygen concentration, relative humidity, and amount of light, are being paired with information about snow depth

(from superintendents), presence of ice (from superintendents), satellite imagery, and fall turf management data (fertilizer, fungicides, etc. as reported by superintendents). Agricultural modelers and computer scientists are analyzing this data to look for patterns that we hope will tell us why certain golf greens are experiencing winter damage, and others aren't. In some cases, the answer might be simple and obvious (creeping bentgrass

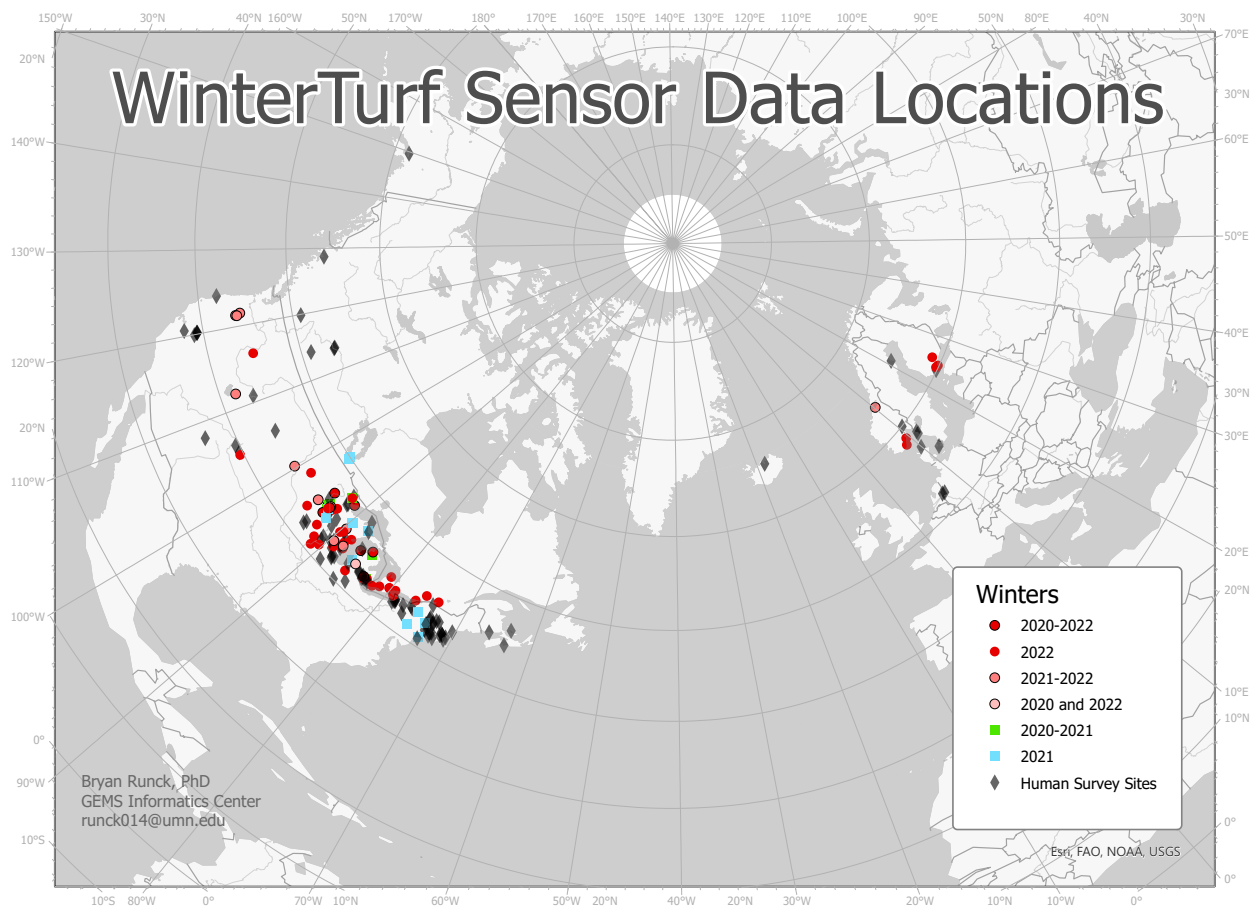


Figure 1: By collecting data on individual golf greens throughout the cold climates of the world, we hope to find solutions to winter stress damage of turfgrasses. This map shows those courses that have hosted environmental sensing nodes during the project. "Human survey sites" represents those courses where superintendents have been uploading regular observations on at least one green Image credit: Bryan Runck.



is better under ice than *Poa annua*), but in many cases, the answer could be unexpected--it's these surprising cases that will be important and impactful. If we can identify these, then we can figure out ways that turfgrass managers can reduce risk on their courses. We are hoping that the models that are developed from this work can

be used to tell superintendents when their green might be at risk, like how the Smith-Kerns dollar spot model works.

### *Reducing snow mold damage*

The snow mold diseases are a constant presence on turf areas in Minnesota. Deep and long lasting snow--then you'll likely



Figure 2: The GEMS sensing group at the University of Minnesota designed environmental nodes that are collecting millions of data points all winter long on golf greens in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Photo credit: Andrew Hollman.



get speckled snow mold or gray snow mold. No or little snow? Then pink snow mold will be your biggest concern. The WinterTurf snow mold team, led by Dr. Paul Koch is working to find ways to predict when and where snow mold will be a problem, and then cultural options (non-fungicidal) for control. We know that fungicides work well--but what if in the future public agencies begin restricting chemical control options? This is the case in the Nordic

countries, and this limitation is very challenging for golf course superintendents there. Ongoing snow mold projects for WinterTurf include investigating the ability of various fertilizer rate and application timings on snow mold severity, the efficacy of non-traditional snow mold control products, and the impacts of tree leaf mulching (Figure 3) on snow mold development and soil health in higher cut turf.

*Finding management solutions*



Figure 3: A leaf mulch study in Madison, WI. This image was taken in early April 2023 and shows that some treatments caused significant damage. Photo credit: Paul Koch.



While we hope to eventually to predict when and where winter stress injury will occur, we also aim to provide turfgrass managers with best practices to both reduce the risk of winter injury and recover from winter injury when it happens. This winter, we have plots at multiple university research locations studying how high rates of late fall topdressing changes winter survival. In St. Paul, we had hoped to cover this trial with ice for a few months, but a couple of weeks will have to do as our study suffered the same fate as backyard ice rinks did throughout Minnesota (Figure 4).



Ice levels on topdressing research plots in St. Paul, MN began to fall quickly in late January.

Beyond these examples, there are researchers working on climate modeling, metabolomics, light effects, plant breeding, and more. We are grateful for the MGCSA funding the initial exploratory research that got this project started.

***R4R Auction Begins  
April 7th!! Support local  
turfgrass research by  
donating certificates from  
your course today!!***

**Follow the UMN Turf Blog  
for project updates!**



***This issue is also available in audio format!! Subscribe to the MGCSA Hole Notes Podcast on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Amazon Music, or find it online at Buzzsprout.***

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# Hole Notes

Podcast



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# From the High Grass

By: Chris Aumock



## My “Active” Mind

I always have a hard time typing the words, cointues and opporutinty. For some reason, my mind can't get my fingers to type them in the right order, pretty much every time. Autocorrect hasn't even sorted this one out for me yet. Did you even notice those words were wrong. They say the mind fills in the gap, so if you see a word start and end with the correct letters, your brain will fill in the word based on the context you're reading, that's preuty coul if you axk me. My spell check gets a workout every day.

I spend a lot of time playing with my kids, fascinated by the way their brain works, develops, and how they view the world. Many times, though, I just wish they

could understand it the way I do. Much like a golfer, why can't they just understand what it takes to maintain this golf course, and why I don't want them to do that thing!

We, or not to assume, myself, make assumptions of people based on our personal understanding. But the way I see things is not the way everyone else does, unfortunately for me. I struggle when we are saying the same thing, just using different vernacular. Why can't you just understand what I am trying to say?

When we learn to better control that instinct, and learn to be more aware of other perspectives, we can become better managers and Superintendents. Look back on a recent conversation. While



talking with someone, were you both making the same point, yet just saying it in different ways. Eventually you realize, wait, I agree with what you're saying, we've been saying the same thing the whole time!

The same thing happens when asking questions. You ask something, the person hears it their way, and they continue to provide a similar answer, but not directly answering the question. Why couldn't they understand my intentions. Perhaps it all starts with "active listening." Most of us utilize passive listening, where we are listening and hearing maybe only what we want and not fully understanding the discussion.

Active listening includes responses that show you understand the question. This type of listening is harder, as it requires more focus and awareness, and we can't be preparing our response while the other person is still talking. This is a great opportunity to show your ability to critically think and evaluate what you are hearing. The result is better understanding

and clearer communication amongst all parties.

For all the times a staff member, or a golfer led me to disappointment, it was always another opportunity for me to work to understand their perspective. I could have been better at actively listening, and not moving on to my perspective.

How many times did my brain mistype continue and opportunity? (3 times each) Did you catch them all? It was hard not to spellcheck those correctly. Did you read this "actively" as well? You may have caught my spelling errors if you did.

The brain is a powerful tool that we can utilize better. The simple awareness that you are actively listening or reading will improve all communications with your staff, members, patrons, and family. Make sure you understand what they are actually asking of you, before you respond to a question they didn't ask.