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HOLE NOTES

Official Publication
of the
Minnesota Golf Course
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From Your President's Desk



E. Paul Eckholm, CGCS

Inevitable Long Days And Weekends Lie Ahead

As Spring tries to force its way into our area we will all once again be faced with the inevitable long days and weekends. As one of my predecessors pointed out in one of his columns, we all need to take some time to spend with our families or friends away from work. As committed as we all are to our professions we must still remember that it is a job like any other and in order to be productive we must take the time to recharge our batteries.

* * * *

The Research Committee had a meeting recently to which we invited many of the vendor members to get their input on the Drive for the 'U' program. There were many great suggestions on ways to kick start the research program at the St. Paul Campus, thanks to all those who attended. All of the vendors received their Drive for the 'U' request forms and many have sent them back with pledges, look for the list printed in this publication. Also look at the needs list for any items you may be able to help out with. We will be running the contribution list through the end of the year in each of the *Hole Notes* issues.

* * * *

The legislative session is fast becoming history. The phosphorous bill was killed by an unlikely source, the municipalities. They were not at all happy that they would not be able to enact more stringent ordinances than the state law so they fought hard to keep the bill from getting introduced in the Senate. This is actually bad news for us. It means that many municipalities will try to get ordinances in place before next year's legislative session so that they will fall under the grandfather clause. And many of these cities will be looking for an all out ban on the use of phosphorous regardless of who, what or where it is being applied. So keep tuned to your local government and be sure to be active in the drafting of the ordinance.

The other bill with an effect on our industry was the pesticide license bill. This bill would require all applicators of pesticides to golf course to be licensed. The bill passed committees in the Senate but was not introduced in the House. Look for this bill to make a comeback in 2002.

The Board is busy setting budgets for the next fiscal year and is looking at a modest increase in dues to match inflation. It is the feeling of the Board that we will not let the Association get into dire need of a dues increase but will instead try to keep pace with modest increases when needed.

As always if you have a question or comment feel free to contact me or any other Board member, this is after all your association. Have a great start-up and remember to take some time for yourself.

--Paul Eckholm, CGCS
epeckholm@msn.com


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Inside This Issue of Hole Notes

- 1 Drive for the 'U' Program**
- E. Paul Eckholm, CGCS
- 5 Thatch Management**
- Bob Vavrek
- 9 Mark Smith, Where Is He Today?**
- Jack Kolb
- 14 Don't Shoot the Messenger**
- By David Schreiber
- 16 Heart Smart**
- Thomas O'Connor
- 22 GCSAA Introduces New Online Education Program**
- 24 Golf Course Construction Costs**
- Richard Creed
- 28 Board Meeting Highlights**
- 31 Turfgrass Research Benefit Week**
- 35 On the Road With the USGA**
- Bob Brame

Departments

- 3 From Your President's Desk**
- E. Paul Eckholm, CGCS
- 33 Industry News**
- 38 Editor's Report**
- Richard Traver, Jr., CGCS



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Century Rain Aid.....	12
Classified Ads.....	6
Country Club Turf.....	30
Cushman Motor Co., Inc.....	14
Double Eagle Golf Construction.....	16
DBI.....	BC
E.H. Renner.....	31
Eureka Sands.....	17
Hassan Sand & Gravel.....	31
Hartman.....	4
Hedberg.....	38
Herfort-Norby.....	16
Hydrologic.....	7
Howrey Construction.....	36
Gill Miller, Inc.....	10
Glenn Rehbein.....	35
GreenImage.....	29
Hartman.....	4
Hydrologic.....	7
Leitner Company.....	13
Minnesota Golf Cars.....	33
MTI Distributing Co., Inc.....	20
MTI Distributing Co., Inc.....	21
North Star Turf.....	IFC
North Star Turf.....	32
Par Aide Products Co.....	28
PBI Gordon.....	22
Plaisted Companies Inc.....	11
Precision Turf.....	34
Premier Irrigation.....	26
Prinsco.....	27
RDO Equipment.....	8
Simplot Partners.....	15
Syngenta.....	23
Sustane.....	IBC
Turf Supply Company.....	19
The Andersons.....	18
Twin City Seed.....	37

MGCSA CALENDAR

Monday, June 18
SCHOLARSHIP SCRAMBLE
 Dacotah Ridge
 Host Superintendent: Mike Nelson

Thursday, July 26
U OF M FIELD DAYS
 University of Minnesota
 Host: Dr. Jon Powell

Monday, August 20
MGCSA CHAMPIONSHIP
 Wayzata Country Club
 Host Superintendent: Bob Distel

Tuesday, September 25
HAROLD STODOLA SCRAMBLE
 Edina Country Club
 Host Superintendent: Mike Kelly

Wednesday, October 3
MGCSA FALL MIXER
 Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge
 Host Superintendent: Joe Wollner

THATCH MANAGEMENT

Some Turf Troubles Never Go Away

By **BOB VAVREK**,
USGA Agronomist

Excessive thatch accumulation...it was interesting to hear how many times this age-old problem was cited at a recent disease seminar I attended as being a contributing factor for a wide variety of turf problems. Several researchers mentioned that thatchy sites are more likely to experience problems with localized dry spots, snow mold, or fairy rings compared to sites without excessive organic matter accumulation in the upper soil profile. Excessive thatch accumulation also was a concern regarding the management of new ultradwarf bermudagrass greens.

Manage your playing surfaces to strike a balance between the rate of turfgrass growth versus the rate of natural organic matter decomposition in the root zone and thatch will not be an issue. Once an undesirable layer of dense thatch develops, however, an aggressive program of core cultivation and topdressing is your best bet for addressing this problem.

Reduce excessive thatch in fairways and tees through frequent hollow-tine aeration operations. Break up the cores with a dragmat or flail mower and work the soil back into the turf. This process physically removes a small percentage of the thatch and introduces microbes responsible for organic matter decay into the thatch layer. Less disruptive operations such as solid tine aeration, water injection aeration, and spiking are great for relieving compaction, but stick with hollow tines when thatch is the primary objective.

Thatch management of a sand-based green is a more complicated process because topdressing with soil would likely clog pore spaces and ultimately limit water movement through the soil profile. Consequently, straight sand is commonly used as a topdressing material. Light, frequent applications of sand can help prevent future thatch development by constantly diluting the plant debris produced by the turf. Sand topdressing, though, only buries an existing thatch layer. Removing the cores following hollow tine aeration has traditionally been the most effective way to remove thatch from greens.

The Graden vertical mower is being used successfully as a substitute for core cultivation at some courses in southern states that manage bermudagrass greens or the ultra-dense, A and G series bentgrasses. Keep in mind that bermudagrass recovers very quickly from aggressive cultivation practices during warm weather. Cool season turf in central Wisconsin during spring or fall does not have anywhere close to the same recuperative potential as bermudagrass in

central Georgia during the summer.

In time, aggressive vertical mowing will undoubtedly find a niche in cool season turf management, but until then, be conservative and stick with the tried and true techniques. Golfers hate holes in greens and fairways as much as ever, but sometimes you have to break some eggs to make an omelet, especially a thatch omelet.

Source: rvavrek@usga.org or 262-797-8742.

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The MGCSA Legacy Awards offer educational aid to the children and grandchildren of Class AA, A, B, C, D and Affiliate members who have been active members.

**Questions regarding the scholarship program
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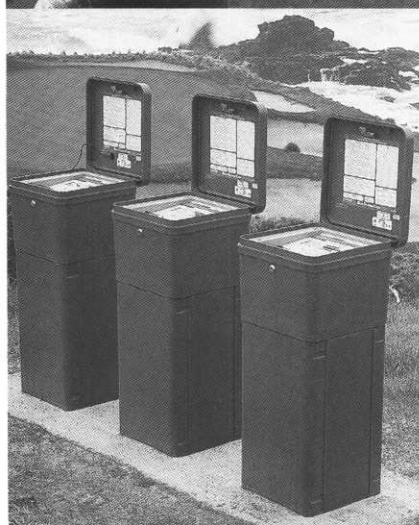
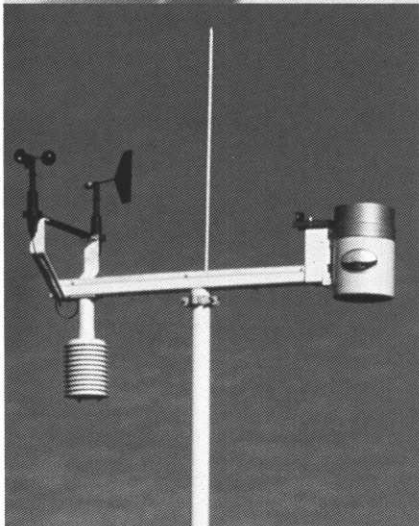
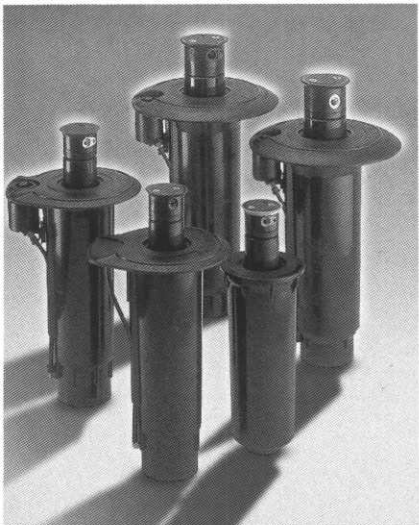
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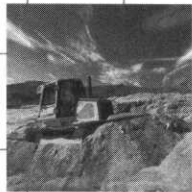
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Where Is He Today?

Mark Smith

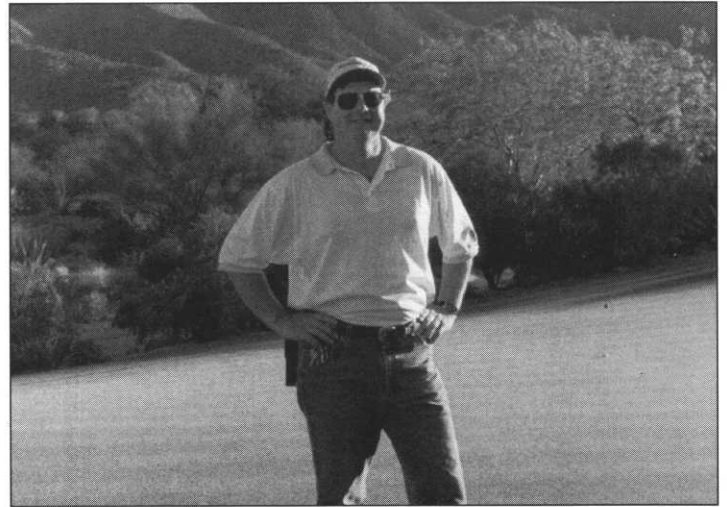
By JACK KOLB
MGCSA Life Member

Back in 1978, nine years after this writer had left Minneapolis Golf Club, a young 27-year-old was appointed superintendent of MGC. In the routine of making sales calls for Turf Supply Company I was able to visit with the mechanic at the Club. He had worked for me and continued on through a succession of superintendents. Walter Gunn as a genius inventory type of mechanic and was now under the employee of this young man. He felt that this fellow, Mark Smithy, was going to be a good superintendent. Walt did not realize how prophetic his statement would be.

Mark Smith first became interested in a golf career when he was nine years old, playing with his dad at Madison Country Club in Madison, Minn. From the time he could ride his bike he spent his entire summers at Madison Country Club playing golf. As a sophomore in high school he was able to secure a job on the grounds crew. The "crew" as Mark referred to it was made of two persons -- Mark and a senior citizen who mowed fairways and roughs with gang mowers pulled by a military surplus jeep. Mark did all the delicate work such as mowing greens, dealing with hazards and pestilence that attack his work of art. The greens were the only portion of the course which received irrigation -- guess who came back at night setting the hoses and sprinklers.

After high school graduation Mark enrolled at what was then Southwest Minnesota State College in Marshall, Minn. Gravitating immediately to Marshall Country Club, Mark soon met and was employed on a part time basis by MGCSA venerable member Carl Zahn. What was referred to as part time work while attending college soon turned into part time college as they built and opened a second nine in 1972. Mark did not abandon his quest for education. One of his favorite subjects being Spanish, led him to enroll at *La Universidad De Las Americas* in Cholula, Pueblo, Mexico for a "J" term.

By the fall of 1972, being immersed in golf course construction for most of the summer, Mark decided that his was his vocation and enrolled in Penn State's two year turf program. While in school at Penn State word of Carl Zahn's death was relayed to Mark by then-club president, Vern Skramstad, from Marshall, "Would he (Mark) be willing to take the job as course superintendent even though he had not completed his training in Turf Management? Mark now wore two hats, one as a student and second as a superintendent of Marshall Golf Club. So the summer of 1973 was



MARK SMITH – At the end of an arduous day with the sun setting behind the Santa Rosa Mountains in the background.

spent running Marshall Golf Club and a rather questionable living abode was provided as part of his salary. After graduation from Penn State in early spring of 1974 mark continued his position until 1977.

The opportunity of an assistant job opened at The Minikahda Club in Minneapolis and he worked in that position until he was called to take the responsibilities at Minneapolis Golf Club in December of 1978. The Minikahda position introduced Mark to a host of young men who would go on to manage classic courses of their own in the following years. Mark points out that lasting friendships along the way have helped him in developing and securing the vocation that he so passionately follows.

Minneapolis Golf Club revealed a history of mechanical wizards. Herbert Cohrs who had been the superintendent for so many years had built numerous machines along with a nephew Roger Ortloff. Herb did not patent all his works so therefore did not get full credit for his creativity. Herb Cohrs built the first "Greens Aire" in 1939. Without a patent and to keep one Scotty McLaren from taking his ideas back to Toro, Herb completely enclosed the machine in a metal shroud which prevented anyone from seeing the mechanics of the thing. Other (give me a piece of the action) partners eventually had the machine patented and the shroud was removed. Herb also was responsible for the

(Continued on Page 10)

Mark Smith-

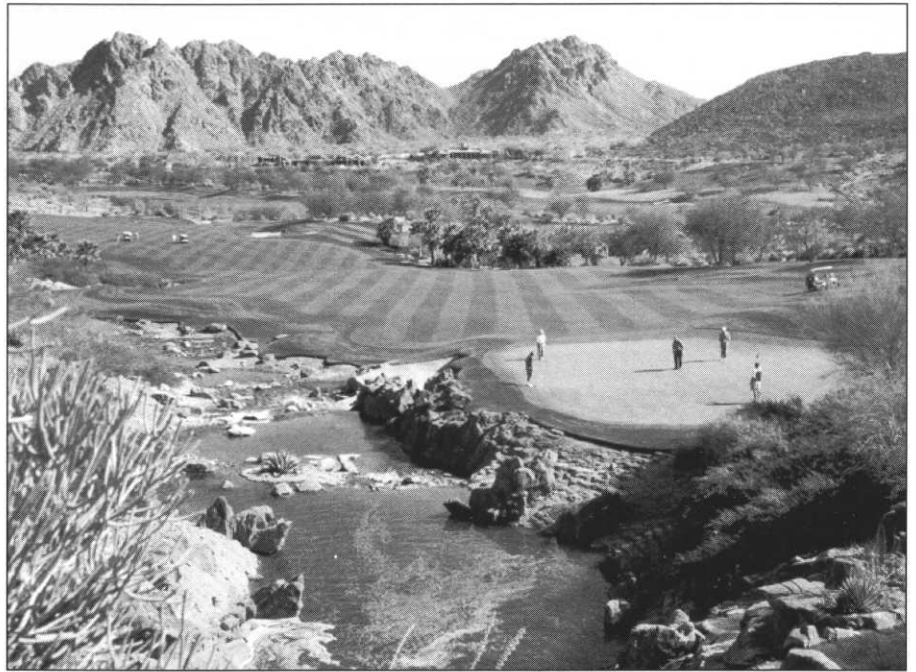
(Continued from Page 9)

first good "Topdressing" machine which he designed as a miniature manure spreader. Instead of paddles which "flipped" the manure, Herb used a cylindrical brush that rotated in a way that macerated soil clumps, driving the dressing vertically to the ground or surface to be dressed.

Mark's inherited mechanic who was mentioned in the beginning of this dissertation was also a creative wizard. Walter Gunn had only one of his inventions patented and found that the return on cost of patents was not worth the effort. Thus he just continued to build whatever the superintendent needed and found the thrill of a new machine compensation enough. He built a utility vehicle for Mark using a modified Volkswagen Beetle which was dubbed "The Grasshopper." Mr. Gunn built many of the pieces of machinery which were used in overhaul and equipment maintenance. One of his outstanding contributions was a "Riding Reciprocating Aerifier" mounted on the back of a Cushman.

Mark's assessment of Minnesota goes like this: One day it's warm and the rest of the year it's cold. Or this one: Many are cold, but few are frozen! mark's wife Elsa was raised in the warm nearly tropical part of Mexico and she was beginning to love Minnesota -- "The land of many cultures -- mostly throat!" Thus Mark sought out one of his former Minikahda friends, Douglas Anderson, a Willmar native who as now working at The Vintage Club in Indian Wells, Calif. Douglas Anderson interceded for him and got a job for Mark across the street from The Vintage Club at a golf complex called Desert Horizons Country Club also in Indian Wells.

Now this is what we call "gutsy!" mark packed his bags, left his wife and three children behind to go work in a non-indigenous desert surrounding. This was a complete new



NUMBER 10 FAIRWAY AND GREEN, 520 yards. Would you believe with all the rock around Mark has a number of artificial rock in crucial places? Note the sculpted edges where turf ends and desert begins. Water is a premium here in the desert.

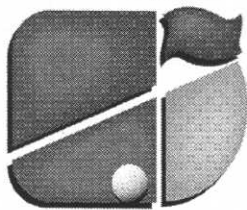
agronomic change from what he had been trained and accustomed to. Besides the change from cool season to warm season grasses, there was overseeding and Teamster Unions to learn about. After three months of indoctrination and when he felt that relocation would work, with some apprehension, Mark brought his family out to the desert.

After eight years at DHCC Mark had established himself as a good journeyman and was chosen as the Golf Course Superintendent at a course under construction called "The Quarry at La Quinta" in La Quinta, Calif. This was reaching the top of the mount! The job had an opportunity to be involved in construction of a Fazio designed, exclusively private desert course. "The Quarry" was built and opened within a nine month period.

The Quarry is built into the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains. Elevations vary from sea level to 318 feet. It is a beautiful setting and as voted the third best new private course to open in the year of 1994 (*Golf Digest*, May 1995).

The Fazio design incorporates a wide variety of native and non-native arid plant material which provides colorful displays throughout the year. There is so much to say about the construction and maintenance of this golf course that it would fill the entire pages of *Hole Notes*. It has been decided to do another article just covering that aspect of the story in a later issue.

Mark credits much of his success, building and maintaining "The
(Continued on Page 13)



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