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HOLE NOTES

Official Publication
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Minnesota Golf Course
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763/295-3323 Fax: 763/271-0124
supytrav@soncom.com

Editor

Richard Traver, Jr., CGCS
supytrav@soncom.com



Editorial and Business Office:

Scott Turtinen, Executive Director
Minnesota Golf Course
Superintendents' Association
240 Minnetonka Avenue South, P.O. Box 617
Wayzata, Minnesota 55391-1617
Tel: 952/473-0557 Fax: 952/473-0576
Toll Free: 1-800-642-7227
E-mail: scott@mgcsa.org

From Your President's Desk

Time To Regroup



E. Paul Eckholm, CGCS

What a beautiful day for golf. Finally a string of good weather and full golf courses. It would seem that the pent up golfer was just waiting for some good weather to play in. Let's all hope for a long fall to help all of the revenue pictures. The NGF reports that rounds golfed so far this season in our area are down by as much as 10%, and rounds nation wide are down by 3%. The majority of those decreases are directly attributable to weather, however, there is growing concern that golf has peaked and the competition for golfers is now on. The high end public courses are expected to be the first to feel the crunch of the softening economy and the saturation of the championship golf market, but all courses will eventually feel the effects. What can we as Golf Course Superintendents do, keep a lid on the costs, think about ways to attract more golfers or to keep the golfers we already have and voice those thoughts to your boss. In short show management that you have more to offer than just great agronomic skill. If you are short on ideas, talk with your other area superintendents, your staff and the members, they are all good sources of fresh ideas.

So you thought that local government didn't affect your life. Well you were wrong. With the failure of the state legislature to enact a comprehensive working piece of legislation to control phosphorous we now have every single municipality working on their own. This means that there could be over 300 separate ordinances in the state with regard to phosphorous. It is time to get involved. Speak to your councilman or city administrators to get an ordinance you can live with. If you need a guide I can provide you with the model we were using at the legislature. This is only the first step in the process for the people who blame our lifestyles for all of the ills of our lakes. First phosphorous then nitrogen and then who solution. Don't get me wrong, I am all for clean lakes and water. I just base my views of the solution on sound science and good conservation principles, not on emotions and class warfare.

As August progresses and our thoughts turn to aerification and scheduling a compressor for blow-out, don't forget to schedule in that personal time. With the season the way it has been, many if not all of us are feeling a little bit wrung out. As much as the golf course needs to be recharged so do all of us. Take some time to recharge those batteries, the fall may be a long one.

The Championship was held at Wayzata Country Club Monday, August 25th and Bob Distel had the course in terrific shape. Cudos Bob and all of your staff. The next outing is at Edina Country Club September 25th, plan on attending this scramble event to support turfgrass research.

There are a couple of new contributors to the Drive for the 'U' campaign. DTN Weather Services has donated a weather monitor for the research facility and Green Image has donated a spray rig. Plaisted Co. Inc. and Eureka Sands have also committed to help in the construction of a green at the research center by providing drainage materials and growing media. The University is currently evaluating the research area for the best location for this research green.

A passing noted. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Joe Moris and his family who lost his father recently. Ray Moris was a Life Member of the MGCSA and an active participant in the association for many years, Ray was 91. Our most sincere condolences Joe.

Respectfully,
Paul Eckholm, CGCS
epeckholm@msn.com

HOLE NOTES (ISSN 108-27994) is published monthly except bi-monthly December/January, February/March for \$2 an issue or \$20 per year by the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association, 240 Minnetonka Avenue South, Wayzata, MN 55391-1617. Scott Turtinen, publisher. Periodicals postage paid at Wayzata, MN. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HOLE NOTES, 240 Minnetonka Avenue South, Wayzata, MN 55391-1617.

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MGCSA CALENDAR

Tuesday, September 25
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Edina Country Club
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Wednesday, October 3
MGCSA FALL MIXER

Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge
 Host: Joe Wollner

Tues.-Thurs., December 4, 5, 6
MGCSA ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING AND

MTGF CONFERENCE AND SHOW
 Minneapolis Convention Center

Lots of Moss on a Donald Ross...

By: BOB VAVREK, USGA Agronomist

This season, there's no shortage of moss on greens at golf courses designed by Donald Ross or any other architect. Perhaps the cool, wet weather this spring is partly to blame for the moss explosion seen on many recent visits. The weather patterns have not been particularly favorable for growing a deep, dense root system in putting greens, especially old, bent/Poa greens. Snow mold injury, discussed in previous updates, has recovered slowly, and bentgrass really did not start to grow vigorously until a few weeks ago. Thin turf and plenty of rain opened the door for moss encroachment.

Weak, shallow rooted turf has been watered heavily on a daily basis now that extended periods of hot weather have arrived. Over watering is partly to blame for sustaining and spreading the bumper crop of moss.

Aggressive maintenance practices on greens to produce fast green speeds during May and June were contributing factors as well. Frequent rolling operations over wet greens will compact the upper root zone and deep grooming or vertical mowing operations constantly thin out the stand of turf. You never find a significant moss problem on a dense stand of healthy turf maintained at a reasonable (5/32") height of cut.

Everyone seems to have a new cocktail for moss control. The only sure-fire aspect of the various moss control programs is that they all have been consistently inconsistent. What appears to work at one golf course does not work at another, and sometimes the results vary from green to green on the same course. Occasionally a significant amount of progress is achieved, but a few days of wet, cool weather occur and the moss is back stronger than ever.

A perplexing aspect of moss encroachment is how greens at one course can be smothered in moss, while a superintendent at nearby course (similar age, mowing heights, and maintenance practices) has never seen moss on even the thinnest, wettest green.

Raising the height of cut and a little more fertilizer during the season would shift the competitive edge to the turf. Think controlling moss is a challenge - try convincing golfers to accept greens that are anything but lightning quick for day-to-day play.

(Editor's Note: Bob Vavrek may be reached at rvavrek@usga.org or 262-797-8743.)

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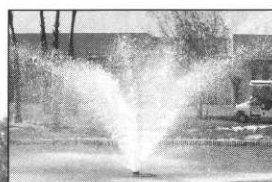
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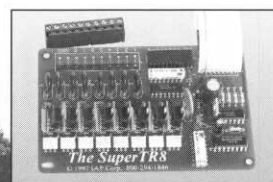
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Certification: What Good Is It?

By RANDY DAYTON, CGCS

Having recently completed the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's requirements for re-certification, I have had ample opportunity to consider the values of being a certified golf course superintendent and the reasons for working toward that title.

It is easy to come to the conclusion that the GCSAA has oversold the program in some regards. Earning the title will not guarantee your future success or safeguard your career. Then again, neither will a degree in agronomy. Both, however, will open doors that might otherwise remain closed.

Like a college degree, certification does enhance your perceived value in the eyes of employers. The GCSAA feels that adding the "CGCS" designation to your name says you've gone the extra mile to become the best superintendent you can.

It says you are not satisfied with what you learned yesterday, last year, or last decade, but instead, that you strive to remain up to date with industry practices and technology. It says you are willing and able to take advantage of any development or procedure available to keep your golf course in the best condition possible. That perception (and fact) can make the difference in a job interview.

The GCSAA has done an excellent job of promoting the certification process within the industry, and many employers are now aware of its significance. Prospective employers often show a preference for certified applicants and often make certification a requirement of available positions. You can expect that to be the case more often in the future.

Even so, there are aspects of certification that (at present) do not achieve some of the GCSAA's loftier claims. Compensation surveys, for instance, have repeatedly demonstrated that certified superintendents earn (on average) more than their non-certified colleagues, but becoming certified will not automatically guarantee an increase in your salary. Likewise, you may not immediately earn the respect and adoration of your employer and peers when you become certified, and the grass in your care will still die on occasion.

Over time, however, certification will increase your earnings potential and will improve the perception of professionalism you receive from the people with whom you work. In addition, today's golf market is highly volatile, and you can find yourself unemployed on a moment's notice. If that happens, you need every competitive edge you can find to secure a new position as quickly as possible — certification can be a "difference maker" in that situation. It can also be a difference maker if you decide to relocate to another region of the state or country where you have no established professional reputation. Again, the "CGCS" designa-

tion says "professional," and that's frequently what a prospective employer needs to hear.

The cost of certification is very reasonable, especially when compared to similar programs in other professions (such as the PGA). The application fee is \$200, and the complete set of study materials for the test costs \$370. Re-certification is required every five years, at a fee of \$150.

There are also a variety of seminars required to earn the Continuing Education Credits for certification or re-certification. Each is accompanied by a fee, of course, and those can add up to become one of the program's primary costs. With the implementation of the Professional Development Initiative, there will be a number of new means for earning CEUs, and not all of them will require attending a conference or taking a class.

When the PDI kicks in during 2003, however, certification requirements will change. The GCSAA Certification Committee is in the process of redesigning the certification test, and the goal is not to make it easier, so now is the best time to consider working toward certification.

The decision is yours, but the basic fact is this: becoming certified can help your career prospects, and will never work to your detriment.

Free Compost-Quality Publication Available

Not quite sure how to evaluate the quality of compost? Check out the California Integrated Waste Management Board's new publication "Compost: Matching Performance Needs with Product Characteristics."

This document helps you to evaluate compost based on your specific needs and guides you in the types of questions you should ask compost producers. The publication is available free of charge. Contact Bertie Mora at (916) 255-2708. You may also locate suppliers of compost on the Organics Outlook Website.

Golf Course Architects Look For Help To Defend Courses Against Technology

By PAUL FULLMER

American Society of Golf Course Architects

Golf course architects believe there should be "a line drawn in the sand soon" -at least for tournament golf - or technology could render some courses obsolete.

The Board of Governors of the American society of Golf Course Architects stated that " it is difficult and sometimes impossible because of land restrictions for architects to design courses that will challenge top players using high-tech golf clubs and balls. The challenge will grow even more difficult with each passing year.

"It is not just an issue for new courses, but for every club that finds its best golf holes rendered defenseless by technology."

As modern golf becomes more of a power game, designers are finding it difficult to create holes that require good players to hit long irons onto the green. In the recent U.S. Open, for instance, players were hitting with two irons on a 490-yard hole - not the driver and long iron intended.

In 1994, the ASGCA issued its original warning on the subject. At that time the Society distributed a White Paper that pointed out that advancements in golf course maintenance, club design and ball technology have altered the way the game is played and how courses are designed.

Some Restrictions Needed

Many of the group's most prominent members, including Jack Nicklaus (who received the group's Donald Ross Award during the recent annual meeting in Columbus) and Pete Dye, have long called for a "tournament ball" that would control distance. Many ASGCA past presidents - including Bobby and Rees Jones, Ed Seay, Art Hills and Geoffery Cornish - support the call to review technology's impact on the game.

"Technological parameters would enable some of the great traditional courses to continue to host major tournaments," Newly elected ASGCA President Damian Pascuzzo said, " and enable us to design new courses that won't be obsolete in a few years."

Longer drives by high handicap players also are forcing

designers to widen corridors to accommodate more pronounced slice and hook shots. "Safety is a real concern," said Pascuzzo.

Pascuzzo added that if technology dictates longer and wider golf courses, it would further escalate land acquisition and maintenance costs.

Longer Courses Discourage Newcomers

"If technology continues to give more distance, it will be impossible for us to design courses that will be a challenge for more than a decade. We're already designing 7,000-yard courses. What's next - 8,000 or 9,000 yards? Or does technology force designers to 'trick up' a course in order to defend par? Frankly, we think that solution is not good for golf," explained Pascuzzo.

The new ASGCSA president stressed the fact that golf needs to attract more new players who find the game fun. Research shows that many players drop out because they become discouraged, and Pascuzzo believes that percentage would increase if courses had to be longer and more difficult to challenge better players.

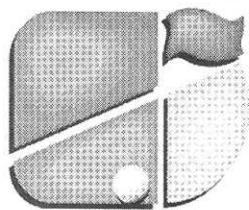
"It's becoming increasingly difficult to design a courses that all levels of players find interesting," he added. "Many newer courses have five and six sets of tees and even that might not be enough to satisfy all the needs."

Urges More Cooperation for "Good of the Game"

The ASGCSA Board of Governors urges golf's ruling bodies and manufacturers to work more cooperatively so that the game of golf can continue to prosper.

"We don't think it's a good idea to have different classes of golf courses - just a handful for the touring pros, certain others that only excellent players can master and then those for the everyday players. Reasonable parameters for clubs and balls will help the great golf courses of America stand up and defend par, as their original designers intended, and that will benefit everyone who enjoys watching great players go up against the best in strategic design."

The American Society of Golf Course Architects is composed of 150 leading golf course architects throughout North America, all of whom have met the organization's stringent requirements for membership. To learn more about the ASGCA, visit the group's web site at www.asgca.org. Or contact the ASGCA by phone (312) 372-7090 or fax (312) 372-6160.



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