

# It's in the Hole .....



## Rob Adams Called To Serve Active Duty In the U.S. Army

Rob Adams, Superintendent at The Ponds at Battle Creek, has been called to serve active duty for the United States Army. The MGCSA wishes Rob the best.

## BASF Tourney Takes Place May 16

BASF Professional Turf again this year has brought the MGCSA a tremendous opportunity - the chance to host a 2005 People vs. the Pros qualification tournament. As host, it is GUARANTEED that one of our member superintendents will win a trip to the People vs. the Pros national tournament at Barton Creek to compete for a chance to play Justin Leonard or Ben Crenshaw on ESPN for \$100,000. Will it be you?

Both our local stroke-play tournament and the national championship tournament will use handicaps to level the playing field. This will be a fun event with

food, drinks and giveaways. And, it's worth repeating - one person from our chapter WILL win a trip to the People vs. the Pros national tournament to compete for \$100,000.

Last year our state PVP tournament was won by Jeff Schaefer and netted over \$6,000 dollars for the MGCSA.

The People vs. the Pros Qualification Tournament is set for May 16 at Stillwater Country Club.

## Simplot Partners Becomes Turfwerks

Turfwerks, a newly formed LLC, has purchased the assets and inventory of Simplot Partners, Roseville, Minn., division of the JR Simplot Co., Boise, ID. The location's former operations manager, Joe Churchill, will be Turfwerks' president and operations manager. The investment group will also include Paul Davis, owner of Davis Sun Turf located in St. Paul, Sioux Falls, Omaha and Des Moines. The business moved in March from its current

facility in Roseville to Little Canada and shares space with Davis Sun Turf.

As its first two personnel hires, Turfwerks also announces the additions of Jim Schmitz and Dan Augdahl as Technical Sales Representatives.

"Our intentions are to retain selected product lines currently being marketed by SP and Davis Sun Turf including Polyon, The Andersons' Tee Time and ProTurf lines, Simplot Partners Specialty Products and Jacklin Seed among several others key supply lines." said Churchill.

## Diegnau Wins Ping Pong Tournament

Paul Diegnau, CGCS, Keller Golf Course, beat a field of 21 by a comfortable margin to win the 1st Annual MGCSA Ping Pong Tournament held at North Oaks Golf Club on February 15, reported Drew Larsen, Superintendent, Rolling Green Country Club. The tournament lasted from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and included a pizza lunch.

Paul Diegnau also led the Keller Golf Course/Ramsey Parks to the team championship. The Rolling Green team was second and Golden Valley finished third.

**TURFCO**

The Topdresser You Trust Most.

**MTI DISTRIBUTING, INC.**  
 4830 AZELIA AVE. NO. #100  
 BROOKLYN CENTER, MN 55429  
 763-592-5600 800-362-3665

**AerWay** AerWay® gives you the versatility to meet your changing needs.

Seasons Change... So Should Your Aeration Treatments

**Aerate All Year Long!**  
 Aeration needs change with the seasons - from early establishment and growth, to maintenance midseason, and then to topdressing and overseeding as circumstances permit.

**Design Your Own Aerator!**  
 Only AerWay® lets you choose a frame size and style to suit your power unit, and add any of our quick-change tined rollers (Shattertine®, Sportstine®, Finetine®, Coring Tine®) that suit the seasonal requirement.

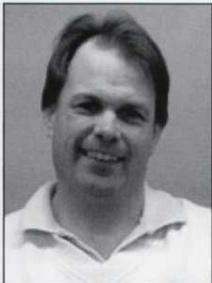
**Distributed By...**

**TEE SHOT** MARKETING, INC.

1-800-950-4288  
 1-952-881-2256  
 www.teeshot.org  
 info@teeshot.org

## MGCSA Members on the Move....

*Reinders, Inc. is pleased to announce that Pat Walton* has joined the company's Turf Division as a Territory Manager and will help the company expand in the Minnesota market.



Pat Walton

Pat has more than 20 years of experience in the turf business and will be helping provide "Solutions and Supplies" for golf courses in the Twin Cities area. He started out in the industry as an Assistant Superintendent at Golden Valley Country Club. After that Walton served as Superintendent at the Deer Run Golf Club in Victoria before moving on to Rolling Green Country Club in Hamel where he was Superintendent for 14 years. He also worked for the City of Plymouth parks department.

Pat is a Certified Golf Course Superintendent and is a past Board member of the MGCSA and the MTGF. He received his Bachelors degree in Turfgrass Science from the University of Minnesota. Pat is based out of New Hope and can be reached at 612-770-2015. He joins Mike Redmond of Reinders in working with golf courses across the state.

*Chris Hoff recently relocated with the JR Simplot Co.* to serve as a Sales Representative for Simplot Partners at its Palm Desert, Calif. location. Hoff's territory will include the Coachella Valley and will focus primarily on golf and landscape accounts. Hoff will work closely with the Simplot Partners management team.

# GRADEN

## CONTOUR SAND INJECTION



1-800-950-4288 • 1-952-881-2256  
[www.teeshot.org](http://www.teeshot.org) • [info@teeshot.org](mailto:info@teeshot.org)

### DON'T JUST GROOVE IT FILL IT



# LEITNER COMPANY

*Specializing in Soils for Golf Course Maintenance & Construction*

*Soil mixing and processing specialists.*

*Supplying the Golf Course Industry with soil and sand products for over 60 years.*

*Material to specification for topdressing and construction.*

*Quality - Reliability - Experience*

MIKE LEITNER

**LEITNER COMPANY**

945 Randolph Avenue ~ St. Paul, Minnesota 55102

**(651) 291-2655**

PROUD SUPPORTER OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION THROUGH THE MGCSA

# A Big Walleye Was Caught Following Advice from Joe and Bonnie Moris

By MIKE DAVIES

Superintendent, Superior National Golf Course

My wife, Gena, and I want to say thanks to you and Bonnie for taking time from your vacation to stop by our home and visit with us. We love to show off our home and yard to anyone, and you and Bonnie were very gracious guests. But the real reason that we need to say thanks goes deeper than that. While we were walking around the yard, Gena asked Bonnie how you managed to get away from the golf course for more than one day at a time. Joe, you were quick to say "when Bonnie sees that I need a break, we start planning a vacation, I don't think anyone who has retired would look back on their career and wish they would have worked more."

As you and Bonnie left our place and

continued on your vacation, Gena quickly seized the moment and said, "Mike, we need to get away like that, I'll take care of the details here, you take care of them at work." The next day Gena had a trip planned for the following weekend. I set it up at work (which was easier than I thought it would be), and we were busy planning a fishing trip to Sag. A co-worker who used to guide would meet on the landing at 7:00 a.m. and show us around the lake. Neither of us got much sleep on Friday night, but we had no problem being at the landing on time. The Day started out hot and kept getting hotter until by 10:00 a.m. it

was 85° F and not the best weather for fishing, but perfect for hanging out at the lake. In

spite of the weather, I caught a 26", walleye got a picture and released her. By then, Jim had to leave, and Gena and I were on our own for the next two days.

**We set up camp on a very secluded Canadian island**, (one Gena says hasn't seen that level of romance in quite some time.) We had no timetable and two days to get it done. The following morning, we set out fishing in one of the spots Jim said might hold fish, what followed is *the rest of the story*.

We started catching some nice fish, then Gena got herself snagged again, or so I



Gena Davies catches a big walleye measuring 31.5" off a secluded Canadian island thanks to some friendly advice from Joe and Bonnie Moris.

thought. When the snag started stripping line, I started to get serious. I really got excited when the walleye surfaced and we got a look at a real nice-sized fish. Twenty minutes later, we had a 31.5" walleye in the net and in the boat. The picture above says it all. I like the look on Gena's face as much as the monster walleye. We got the fish back in the water, took a break and thought about the fact that we probably wouldn't have been there had we not talked with you and Bonnie concerning the value of a break from work.

**I also knew something else had changed in that moment.** Gena had now caught a walleye bigger than I ever had and was taking full advantage of that fact. The rest of the day Gena provided all kinds of helpful hints like "cast into the rapids, work the jig quicker, don't reel in so fast. In the instant she landed the fish, she had become the new guide and I was now the student.

I never did catch a bigger fish but it was the lesson we learned from you that taking the time to do what has importance to your wife and you that really matters.

WE WOULDN'T BE  
RUNNING THIS AD IF WE  
DIDN'T ENJOY DOING  
BUSINESS WITH YOU.

We would like to thank you for nearly 50 years of business. We appreciate your support and intend to keep earning your trust and respect. You've certainly earned ours. [www.paraide.com](http://www.paraide.com)



WHEREVER GOLF IS PLAYED

## PART III

# Design Review: 1985-2005

By GARRETT GILL, ASGCSA  
Gill Design, Inc.



### Prelude

Jack Mackenzie asked me develop an article on changes in golf course design from a more recent historical perspective. I have chosen the twenty-year period from 1985 to 2005 for three reasons.

First, this period represents one of the greatest periods of golf growth and, more recently, one of the most severe declines. Secondly, this time includes significant sophistication and advancement in golf turf grasses, maintenance equipment technology and golf club/ball technology. Thirdly, as a design company, we are celebrating our 20th year of professional practice in golf course architecture.

Part I presented in the November-December issue of *Hole Notes*, reviewed the basic design changes we have seen as golf course architects from 1985 to 2005. Part II examined the changes during this twenty-year period in maintenance considerations and practices and their more subtle impact on golf course design. This final part will discuss changes in golf participation, golf as a business and legal issues during this period.

### Golf participation - the baby boomers have yet to arrive...

I believe golf managers will agree that the industry has yet to feel the impact of the baby boomer generation influence. What we may be experiencing is a shocking awakening. The reality is baby boomers are not flocking to the golf courses as anticipated but rather are pursuing other less expensive or less time-consuming leisure activities.

In a recent December 2004 study, "The Lives and Times of the Baby Boomers," written by Mary Elizabeth Hughes and Angela M. O'Rand, from Duke University the following findings were presented and reported.

#### 1) Baby boomers are diverse:

Immigration has played a major role in increasing the diversity of the baby boomers. About 12 percent of the early boomers (born between 1946 and 1955) are foreign-born, compared to 15 percent of late boomers (born between 1956 and

over time, but the percentage of Hispanic and Asian Americans has increased dramatically.

#### 2) Diversity has not led to equality:

Baby boomers are the first generation to come of age after the Civil Rights era. Yet the authors found differences of income according to race, ethnicity and country of birth so entrenched that, in effect, they are ethnic classes. Blacks in the boomer generation, for example, are no better off relative to whites than their parents and grandparents. And educational levels also are unequal across the baby boom generation, which is often described as the best-educated generation in history.

#### 3) Many boomers live in poverty:

At midlife, boomers have the highest wage inequality of any recent generation. Late boomers have the highest levels of poverty since the generation born before World War I. One in 10 late boomers lives in poverty at middle age.

#### 4) Baby boomers are likely to extend midlife well into what used to be considered "old age."

They will continue working longer, and responsibilities such as paying for college or having children at home will extend to older ages. They also are likely to enjoy good health and remain "actively engaged" longer than previous generations.

(Continued on Page 25)

Table A-1

Demographic	Participation Rate* (Percent of Population Age 12+)						Number of Golfers (Thousands)	Percent of All Golfers
	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%		
Total							26,448	100.0%
Gender								
Male					13.5%		21,315	80.6%
Female	4.4%						5,131	19.4%
Age								
12-17 yrs			3.3%				2,036	7.7%
18-29 yrs				11.9%			5,501	20.8%
30-39 yrs					13.5%		7,114	26.9%
40-49 yrs						12.8%	5,131	19.4%
50-59 yrs				11.3%			2,909	11.0%
60-64 yrs				11.2%			1,217	4.6%
65 and over			7.8%				2,539	9.6%
Household Income								
Under \$20,000		3.4%					1,402	5.3%
\$20,000-29,999			7.2%				2,010	7.6%
\$30,000-39,999				9.7%			2,777	10.5%
\$40,000-49,999					11.5%		2,982	11.2%
\$50,000-74,999					14.8%		7,035	26.6%
\$75,000-99,999						18.1%	5,739	21.7%
\$100,000 and over						20.3%	4,522	17.1%
H/H Education								
Non-HS Grad		2.7%					691	2.5%
HS Grad			3.2%				4,258	16.1%
Some College				9.5%			9,389	35.5%
College Grad					18.1%		12,139	45.9%
H/H Occupation								
Prof/Mgmt/Adm					19.3%		11,345	42.9%
Clerical/Sales					15.1%		3,808	14.4%
Blue Collar					12.2%		6,182	23.3%
Other							1,613	6.1%
Retired/Not Employed				8.8%			3,517	13.3%

\*Percentage of the given population or demographic segment who are golfers.

†Head of household

1) Percentage of given population or demographic segment who are golfers.

2) Head of Household

1964.) The percentage of African Americans has not changed a great deal



**Duinink  
Bros. Inc.**

**GOLF**

New Construction • Renovation  
Restoration • Laser Leveling Tees  
Drainage • Green Construction

**800-328-8949**  
**www.dbigolf.com**

P.O. Box 208, Prinsburg, MN 56281





# Golf Design Review—

(Continued from Page 24)

5) Economic inequalities are likely to become more important as the boomers age. The least well off may face higher risks of unemployment and worse health at a time when policy changes are encouraging them to remain at work longer. Low wages and job instability also may mean they have less saved than previous generations.

What this suggests to me is that the golf industry cannot rely on the baby boomers to sustain or increase golfer participation rates or that if there are increases, they will be much less than expected. The fallacy of placing all hope into the baby boomer legend is that eventually their influence will pass as their group diminishes due to age. Conceivably, the



No. 3 at The Ponds at Battle Creek, Ramsey County Parks

golf industry may be even in a worst state that it is now.

Again as an industry the accompanying 2001 / 2004 summary from the National Golf Foundation reflects a widening of the gap in who can afford to play golf. The 2001/2004 comparisons also reflect the decrease in new golfers coming into the game.

The one golf group that was virtually silent 20 years ago, and that the industry is now responding to is the woman golfer. From the high school and college sports level, women's participation in golf is second to soccer. In the 2004 National Golf Foundation report "Golf Participation in the U.S." usage numbers reflect a 2% annual decrease in male golfers with a corresponding 2% increase in women

golfers. The numbers or trend is more impressive if you compare women / men participation from 2001 to 2004.

In golf course design the response has been towards continued development of forward tees – better, larger forward tees, and championship women's tee sets to balance the comparable tee arrangements for men. Bunker and other hazard placement has been re-thought as well. We are actively comparing landing and rollout positions for women as we had previously for men. We have also noticed women are much more active now on planning and greens and grounds committees than they have been in past years.

*Golf is definitely a business now...*

Twenty years ago, golf was much less a business. In fact it was about that time we first started our consulting work for the American Golf Corporation (AGC).

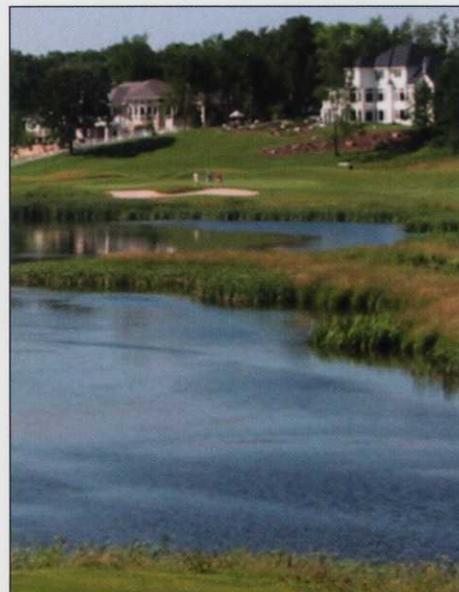
Their basic philosophy was to provide an above average golf experience for the market acceptable price and to be able to do that throughout each day of the golf season. We designed and laid out thousands of miles of cart path on golf courses for the simple reason that it kept golfers on the course and revenue in the clubhouse. AGC superintendents would yield to managers and repair course damage rather than lose revenue and keep carts in

the barn.

The majority of our design actions for AGC were oriented to improving revenue. Irrigation systems were constantly upgraded because AGC could prove that revenue increased by having a quality irrigation system. Courses were never taken out of play. AGC would instruct contractors to work nights to complete the work so that it wouldn't inconvenience the golfer and so that the improvements could be made in the shortest period of time.

We assisted AGC on the evaluation and remodeling of many golf courses as a means to reduce maintenance inputs. We assisted AGC in naturalizing many out of play or limited play golf course areas to reduce maintenance costs. At about this

(Continued on Page 27)



Legends, Prior Lake

## 2004 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE GOLF PARTICIPANTS

Total Golf Participants ..... 37,900

### Gender:

Male .....72.2%  
Female .....27.8%

### Age:

5 - 11 ..... 6.5%  
12 - 17 ..... 8.1%  
18 - 29 ..... 17.5%  
30 - 39 ..... 21.6%  
40 - 49 ..... 20.9%  
50 - 59 ..... 12.1%  
60 - 64 ..... 4.3%  
65+ ..... 9.1%

### Income:

Under \$20,000 ..... 7.0%  
\$20,000 - \$29,000 ..... 7.9%  
\$30,000 - \$39,999 ..... 9.5%  
\$40,000 - \$49,999 ..... 9.4%  
\$50,000 - \$74,000 ..... 22.7%  
\$75,000 - \$99,999 ..... 18.8%  
\$100,000+ .....24.7%

### Education:

Non-HS Graduate ..... 2.9%  
High School Graduate ..... 17.7%  
Some College ..... 33.4%  
College Graduate .....46.0%

### Occupation:

Prof/Mgmt/Adm ..... 38.4%  
Clerical Sales ..... 16.1%  
Blue Collar ..... 24.5%  
Other ..... 6.4%  
Retired ..... 14.5%

## Golf Design Review—

(Continued from Page 26)

this same time, the more naturalist golf course image was emerging. The two themes worked well together.

**Golf has evolved from a weekend sport** where the courses were filled to capacity by a diverse group of unrelated individuals to a mid-week sport where the course is filled by corporate golf outings and banquets. As we know, there is very little problem finding a tee time now on a Saturday morning.

**We have seen the practice facility industry develop and mature.** Twenty years ago, developing a stand-alone practice range facility wasn't given much consideration. But throughout much of the 1990s many such facilities were developed. As one manager friend said to me "this is a pretty good business... they give you \$5.00, you give them a club and a bucket of balls, and you get the club and the balls back!" What makes practice ranges popular is the relative low cost to participate; minimum time commitment, and I believe the fact that one doesn't need

to post a score.

**We are glad to be active in the design of the alternative course or recreational courses.** Golf courses such as 9-hole par 3's and 9- or 18-hole executive length facilities I think will continue to become more and more popular for many of the same reasons as practice ranges. Our firm greatly enjoyed developing our executive course designs. In the metro area we completed Glen Lake, Minnetonka, Arbor Pointe, Inver Grove Heights, Ponds at Battle Creek, Maplewood, and the Bridges, Moundsview. All of these courses have been based on the philosophy of making the golf challenging yet fun to play. Our courses hold the golfers interest throughout every hole. In every respect, they were as challenging to design and as rewarding to play when finished as a full-length regulation or championship 18.

**Residential golf developments were excellent business tools.** Nationwide over 70% of the new 18-hole courses built from the late 1980s through early 2000 contained a residential component. Locally, in this period we designed Crystal Lakes, Lakeville, Cedar Creek, Albertville, West 9 Pebble Creek, Becker,

The Legends, Prior Lake, and White Eagle, North Hudson, Wis. However since 2002, even with the low interest rates, the residential golf development market has been quiet, in part I believe, due to the saturation of courses and the decline of play.

**Lastly, I have not heard the term "new 18" being said too often.** As in the past, golf design is cyclic in nature. Right now we are spending much of our time on renovation projects. In May, the new Highland Park National will re-open for the city of St. Paul. It has been two years and Denise Kispert and her crew have worked hard bringing the course in.

The new 18 will return, but I believe it will be different than we have experienced to date.

*Send lawyers, clubs and money...  
(Warren Zevon)*

As golf course architects, our professional liability insurance has risen about on par with health care costs and it's not because we are a bad risk. It is because golf courses have been seen as a relatively easy mark.

(Continued on Page 28)

# Meeting Your Needs With Quality Seeds for 2005

*Beauty  
Shouldn't  
be a  
Burden!*

## SEED RESEARCH BLENDS

**MAGNUM GOLD** - Perennial Rye Grass Blend    **BLUE GRASS BLENDS** - Coaches and Elite Landscape  
**TRADITION** - Fescue Blends

*Improve Your Course With the Following Varieties of Bentgrass:*

**SR 1119**  
Creeping Bentgrass

**X-treme**  
**DOMINANT**  
creeping bentgrass  
blend

**INDEPENDENCE**  
CREeping BENTGRASS

**Providence**  
(SR1019)

**SRO**  
**FAIRWAY**

PHONE: 612-804-1692  
FAX: 952-949-3889

**Superior Turf Services, Inc.**

LARRY THORNTON



*Sure Things:*

**A HAPPY DOG WAGS ITS TAIL.**

**CHILDREN WILL WALK  
THROUGH PUDDLES.**

**DIMENSION CONTROLS ALL  
SEASON LONG.**

DIMENSION

There are some things in life you can count on. Like Dimension® herbicide. You can count on it to control all season long. You can count on it to provide early postemergent control of crabgrass. And you can count on it not to stain. With Dimension, there's never a doubt.

**ALL YOU NEED. ALL SEASON LONG.**

©Trademark of Dow AgroSciences LLC  
Always read and follow label directions.

 Dow AgroSciences  
**Dimension**<sup>\*</sup>  
Specialty Herbicide

## Golf Design Review—

(Continued from Page 27)

When you think about it, there are many areas of concern. From chemical applications, errant golf shots, golf carts, kids and alcohol there are many issues that managers, superintendents, and designers must address. Michael Kraker, a lawyer friend of mine, has developed a law practice and consulting service to golf course clients on the basis of "Foreseeability" and the premise of 1) "design it safe" suggestions for course designers, owners and developers; 2) "keep it safe" recommendations to directors of golf, superintendents and managers on golf operations; and 3) "drive it safe" where Mike lists basic protocols for golf cart operations. As you negotiate the [www.golflawyer.com](http://www.golflawyer.com) web site, you can get a sense for the many issues that must be address in the design, operation and maintenance of a golf course. We tend to listen to Mike.

The legal issues are complex. We mix golfers of different ages and abilities with different technologies and playing experience. We place them in unfamiliar sur-



*We did lots and lots of cart paths.  
Cart paths made money.*

roundings with little more than a scorecard for direction and ask them to play safe within their abilities.

Needless to say, golf course legal issues 20 years ago are much different than they are today. Today, the reasonable man doctrine, which essentially is the default expert, requires designers, owners, managers, superintendents and contractors to take every reasonable and foreseeable, step necessary to protect the user, non-participant, owner, adjacent property owner and the natural environment. As

presented in Part 1, design widths for residential golf corridors have expanded because of advancements in golf club and ball technology. Golf cart paths are designed wider and engineered like modern roadways with speed limits, guard rails and warning signs. Pond banks are designed with a shelf to keep golfers from slipping beyond reach. More grading is done to improve visibility and protect adjacent play areas. We have been trained to label and note every exception and to restate the obvious twice.

### In Closing

I'd like to say thanks for giving me the opportunity, through all of these pages, to express myself through words about golf and my feelings about the game and its design. It may be another 20 years before I get the courage again.

\*\*\*\*\*

(Editor's Note: This is the third article in a 3-part series of *Golf Course Design*. Part I was published in the November-December 2004 issue of *Hole Notes* and Part II was published in the January-February 2005 issue of *Hole Notes*.)

# TERRA SPIKE® XF

eXtremely  
**new**  
Fast

**High Productivity**  
Decompact an aerate your turf at an operating speed of up to **3.7 mph**.

**Excellent Turf Cruising**  
The shock absorbing systems **VibraStop** and **PowerPack** provide for a unique smoothness running.

**... the Revolution**

- ◆ **VibraStop / PowerPack** – shock absorbing systems
- ◆ **Working depth up to 9"** – solid and coring tines
- ◆ **TwinDrive** – encapsulated drive
- ◆ **Up to 3.7 mph** – operating speed
- ◆ **QuickSet** – setting of working depth and tine entry angle
- ◆ **QuickFit** – integrated tine mounting and removal system

For a free demo, call Tee Shot Marketing at  
Phone 952-881-2256 & 800-950-4288 · E-mail: [info@teeshot.org](mailto:info@teeshot.org)

Wiedenmann NA, LLC · Savannah, GA · Phone (912) 790-3004 · Toll free (866) 790-3004 · Fax (912) 790-3005 · E-mail: [office@terraspike.com](mailto:office@terraspike.com)

**TEE SHOT**  
MARKETING, INC.

**Wiedenmann**  
[www.terraspike.com](http://www.terraspike.com)

# Premier

commitment to

Quality  
irrigation, inc.



new course  
Construction



**2 YEAR WARRANTY**  
ON ALL NEW IRRIGATION SYSTEMS



*Providing Quality Golf Course & Athletic Field Irrigation*

- New Golf Course Construction
- Certified Irrigation Contractor
- Licensed, Bonded & Insured
- Flexible Installation Schedule
- Financing Options Available
- Renovations, Additions & Upgrades
- Pump Stations & Retrofits
- Fountain & Aerators
- Repair & Service
- Winterization & Start-ups

Premier Irrigation, Inc. is the only irrigation contractor also to be licensed by the Minnesota State Board of Electricity as a Class "A" Electrical Contractor.

This distinct advantage allows us to do all our own electrical work without involving other subcontractors

renovations,  
additions &  
Upgrades



**Premier** irrigation, inc

Hastings, MN 55033

Call to Schedule a Free Site Visit

621-480-8857 • 651-480-8854 Fax



## In Bounds

By JOHN "JACK" MACKENZIE, CGCS  
North Oaks Golf Club

Weather patterns in recent years have been quite strange. It would be utter arrogance on my behalf to claim that the human population could possibly create what some term as "Global Warming." But the last three winters, with limited snow and warmer than average temperatures in the Upper Midwest, does indicate odd climatic trends.

**The spring of 2003 broke with moderate damage** upon my Poa greens and exposed tee and fairway surfaces. An extremely dry fall followed by a winter with virtually no snow cover until the month of January, and the resulting desiccated and cold temperature killed areas of turf were sold to my membership in the May newsletter as an "anomaly of Mother Nature. Time and the availability of annual bluegrass seed in our soil will heal the wounds quickly."

**Once again in the spring of 2004,** North Oaks Golf Club and many other courses in the area placed pins into thin greens and pulled out the slit seeders to repair their tees and fairways injured by yet another open winter. Courses predominantly comprised of bent grass and low mow blue grasses were in pretty good shape.

This could not be said for those of us with Poa annua. I prepared my players a bit earlier, the third week of April, for the bitter truth. "Mother Nature has reared her fickle head. The winter of '03-'04 was an aberration. My staff and I have begun remediation practices including aerification and overseeding."

**First deemed an anomaly, and then claimed an aberration,** the patterns of open winters persisted for another year. The Upper Midwest weather trend continued in '04 and '05, generating little moisture in the form of snow, rapidly fluctuating temperatures and creating conditions optimum for direct cold temperature kill, crown hydration and desiccation. Basically it spelled death to my Poa annua.

**I knew my course was in deep trouble by mid February.** During the early days of the "Big Show" southerly breezes had heralded a series of record-breaking warm days. Temperatures during that period topped out four days in a row at 47, 51, 53 and 48 degrees respectively. I awoke to single digit temperatures on the fifth day.

What little snow there was, generated only since the second week of January, had melted rapidly and formed vast areas of ice.

**My walk about on February 11th,** yet another warm 47 degree day, caused me great concern. Running from under the four inches of ice upon one of my seven sloping greens was a river of water, and the stench of silage so vile my stomach knotted in revulsion. At that point I knew the situation was grave. It didn't matter how healthy the turf had gone into the winter months. The twisted finger of Mother Nature had screwed me once again, only this time in monstrous proportions.

**The following morning I spread 300 pounds of black sunflower seed** upon my worst greens to melt through the ice layer. In my heart I knew that the efforts would be for naught, because most of my greens lie at the base of drainage patterns and collected water faster than it can run off. Alas, two days later it rained over one-half an inch, followed by a cold snap, sealing my fate.

**Weeks passed.** Local golfers donned their ice skates and enjoyed their course for an unprecedented opportunity. We had suddenly become a "four season club". I on the other hand took plugs and observed my Poa plants for any signs of life. Witnessing none, my mind began formulating a plan to encourage recovery. The players at North Oaks were not going to be happy with my observations or recommendations.

Although scheduled to review turf conditions at the April Board of Directors meeting, I requested a special mid-March appearance. The bitter news had to be shared in order for my recovery plan to be implemented. Strongly considering the potential of vast areas of dead putting surfaces, I proposed a plan to purchase lightweight covers for all 19 of our greens. These would be applied as soon as possible, even before the frost was out of the ground, in an effort to dry down the fine playing areas through the creation of micro green houses, stimulate the bent grass that remained and warm the soil for the next, more invasive action.

**Once firm, the greens would be aggressively vertical mowed,** aerified with "job saver" tines, overseeded with a

blend of bent grass varieties in an effort to out-compete the Poa, top dressed, brushed lightly and again covered until recovery was well under way. The program had to be embraced that night in order for me to purchase the covers (off season), have the top dressing delivered prior to road restrictions and order the seed that may be in high demand during the weeks and months ahead.

**Although broken hearted, they appreciated my forthright honesty.** The Board articulated well thought out questions and I had the opportunity to respond in fashion. Finally they passed a motion endorsing my recommendation and thus greatly relieving me of much of my anxiety. A concise letter of explanation was to be drafted and sent to our membership detailing the conditions and preparing them for the recovery efforts ahead.

**Since that meeting, however, I have been surprised by the responses of a few of my professional peers.** Comments from fellow peers in the industry indicate resentment by some superintendents of my progressive desire to educate my members, my employers, of our plight. Some suggested that to take plugs and investigate ongoing conditions was folly. Sales representatives have told me of instances where my judgment was being scrutinized for early disclosure of what could only be anticipated as another marginal spring.

**As a responsible employee isn't it my charge to share information** (good and bad), project scenarios and detail options? And as a responsible family man it is important for me to maintain employment. If this means sharing unwelcome, but true, information, then I am guilty. What is there to hide? It is what it is.

**Two years ago I blamed the damage upon a weather "anomaly,"** last year it was an "aberration." Each time the membership was told a bit earlier and the extent of the injury tended to be a bit greater. This year, through early communication, I have been able to purchase the tools necessary for recovery on a timely basis. And more importantly, I have received the endorsement of my Board of Directors.

**Yes, it saddens me to share the bad news of yet another tough spring.** But through early communication I can twist it in a positive perspective. We now have the opportunity to introduce a more viable seed base with a competitive advantage. My membership can articulate the woes and recovery of our club with others in an educated fashion rather than a shadowed secret. And finally, full disclosure maintains the trust I have built with my golfers over the last 20 years. Nobody said it would be easy, but in my book honesty is the best, the only, policy.