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Inside This Issue Of Hole Notes

- 4 **President's Message: Relax: Spring Will Get Here Soon Enough!** - Paul Diegnau CGCS
- 5 **My Turning Point** - Jeff Johnson
- 7 **Going Green** - Nick Folk, Justin Bicek
- 8 **Peer-to-Peer: Signs of Spring**
- 11 **DivotPack: Schwegman's Light Bulb Moment** - Megan Nicolai
- 12 **Insight: One Superintendent's Perspective** - Kevin Black, CGCS
- 14 **Super Dogs: Leashes** - Sue Mills-Kothe
- 18 **Changes to 2012 Northern Green Expo**
- 19 **Savory Supe: Strip Steaks** - Scottie Hines CGCS
- 20 **Membership Report: March 25, 2011** - Matt McKinnon
- 21 **MGCSA March Mega-Seminar Re-Cap** - Scott Turtinen
- 22 **MGCSA Assistants' Spring Mixer** - Scott Turtinen
- 25 **A Lighting Audit** - Mark Johnson
- 26 **Musing the Minutes: March 25, 2011** - Brian Brown
- 28 **In Bounds: Water Stewardship** - Jack MacKenzie CGCS
- 29 **Minnesota Golf Course Water Stewardship Guidelines**

MGCSA EVENTS

APRIL / MAY
Vendor Appreciation Day
TBA

MAY 24
MGCSA Assistants
Spring Mixer
New Prague GC
Host: Jeff Pint

JUNE 13
MGCSA Scholarship Scramble
Victory Links GC
Host: Curtiss Conkright

AUGUST 15
MGCSA Championship
Ruttgers Bay Lake Lodge
Host: Joe Wollner

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- 26 Herfort Norby Golf Course Architects
- 10 John Deere Golf
- 16 MTI Distributing, Inc.
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- 18 Turfwerks
- 22 Winfield Solutions
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ABOUT THE COVER

New Prague Golf Club, site of the May 24 MGCSA Assistants' Spring Mixer. All members are encouraged to attend. Jeff Pint will be the Host Superintendent. (See article on Page 22)

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Relax: Spring Will Get Here Soon Enough!

By Paul Diegnau, CGCSA

As I write this column, I have several weather-related items bouncing around in my head. Winter has been slow to relinquish its grip on the upper Midwest this year...or so it seems. I think the mindset of many owners and operators is such that they have come to expect a ringing cash register in March. Many fellow Superintendents are bouncing off the walls in anticipation of some outdoor time. Current economic times are tough but to expect a March opening is a flawed thought process brought on by unseasonably early and warm springs of recent past. Historically speaking, average Minnesota golf course opening dates have fallen roughly between April 7 and April 15. Having a birthday in the middle of April, as I do, I can recall enjoying multiple celebrations with frozen crystals falling from the sky. Current conditions are not abnormal. RELAX! Spring will get here soon enough.

I have heard multiple reports and viewed photographs of damaged playing surfaces at different facilities around the state. If you lucked out and suffered little to no damage, count your blessings. Whether ice or snow mold related, it is never fun starting out a golf season nurturing damaged turf. Let us hope for a warm spring to aid in the recovery of our playing surfaces.

Several MGCSA members had suggested that we should conduct a survey with our membership regarding the successes and failures of the multitude of snow mold fungicide combinations experimented with this past winter. Due to the numerous variables associated with fungicide applications and site-specific turfgrass at each golf course, the BOD decided not to create a survey on this topic. Luckily, though, the UM contracted with UW-Madison to set up snow mold trials at the Les Bolstad University of Minnesota Golf Course this past winter. Close to 60 snow mold fungicide combinations were tested on their ninth fairway. According to Dr. Brian Horgan, the site was very active with disease, as one might expect after such a winter. Hopefully, many of you reading this now will have attended the April 12 Field Day at the Les Bolstad University of Minnesota Golf Course and could see for yourself what worked and what didn't. If you were unable to attend, Brian assures us that the collected data will be published in a future edition of *Hole Notes*. Stay tuned.

I recently came upon a Noernet conversation from Wisconsin that I thought I would share with you, being neighbor states have a tendency to follow the other's activities. It appears that the state of Wisconsin DATCP (Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection) will be enforcing new phosphite labeling requirements this year. The end game of such a move will require phosphite products to carry EPA pesticide labels and we all know how that affects product pricing. Enjoy your cheap pythium protection products for now, as I would not doubt the winds of change could blow from the east.

Finally, make sure you read Editor Jack MacKenzie's column on Page 30 of this issue about water usage by our industry, and specifically, in the state of Minnesota. Over the last several months, Jack and I have been working on a state document for our industry titled *Minnesota Golf Course Water Stewardship Guidelines*. You may believe that living in the "Land of 10,000 Lakes" makes us immune to the water shortages experienced in the southwest and, more recently, the southeast section of our country. Don't be fooled by this false sense of security. Increased water resource regulation is coming - even in our state. The leadership of the MGCSA has chosen a proactive path for our association. Thank you to those members that have contributed content for this publication. We welcome your thoughts on a plan that addresses methods of regulation. After all, this will be OUR document.

*-Until next month,
Paul Diegnau, CGCSA*

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My Turning Point

By JEFF JOHNSON

Superintendent, The Minikahda Club

Many of us have had a moment in our career that we look back on and say it changed our professional outlook, a moment that, maybe, at the time, appeared to be about the worst event that ever happened to us, professionally.

When I encountered my moment, I had no idea of the journey on which it would lead me, a journey, happily, that I'm still on.

The spring of 2004 was a spring that neither I nor anyone who was on our staff here at The Minikahda Club will soon forget. It's the year our putting surfaces emerged from winter in the worst condition one could possibly imagine. *Poa annua* death affected every green to one degree or another. Recovery was an extremely long and painful process. No matter what we did to heal the greens, the process never proceeded as quickly as we hoped. We had greens with up to 60% loss and the recovery process was close to a 12 week painful ordeal.

Throughout the experience I learned some valuable lessons about communication, turf management, and my skills as a Superintendent. What I did not expect was how it would eventually mold my golf course management philosophy. A true blessing in disguise, this event was a precursor to what I feel has been one of the better career decisions I have made during my nine years as Superintendent.

By losing as much *Poa annua* on our greens as we did, it made the club realize how vulnerable our playing surfaces were to winter kill. Seasonal disease stress also was viewed for the threat it is, rather than something to accept and treat. We concluded *Poa annua* was our greatest liability and we felt it would hold us back from ever having truly great greens. This is a sea change for us, since our putting surface at Minikahda, as well as our overall conditioning, are highly regarded by our membership and others. Given this conclusion, we were confronted with the challenge of finding a way to increase our bentgrass populations and while at the same time providing quality playing surface with both turf types. My other goal was to find a way to improve the overall health and condition of our weakest grass, *Poa annua*. Basically an oxymoron right? I wanted to increase our bent population but have healthier *Poa* (a very confusing

process to say the least). We were spending a great deal of funds on fertilizers and fungicides and the one thought I kept coming back to was, why does the plant need all of these inputs to survive? Can we not provide a healthier more sustainable system through the use of an organic based program? If this works for the agriculture community why can it not work in our environment? I wanted to find a way to reduce our addiction to fungicides as well as our dependence on a regular fertility regime.

This thought process lead me down the road of investigating alternative products (which I now no longer view as alternative) such as seaweed extract, humic acid, molasses, fish hydrolysate, sea mineral water, yucca extract. These were just a few of the products we applied in order to provide a healthier plant as well as a healthier more sustainable soil system. There was no doubt that over time we began to produce a healthier plant. We pushed the envelope. We used less fertilizer and slowly reduced our fungicide usage as well. Benefits which our membership was seeing and feeling with the quality of our playing surfaces.

During the following years the quality of the golf course continued to improve. But what were we doing to increase our bentgrass population? What were we doing to reduce or eliminate our greatest liability? Re-grassing greens was out of the question. We had just completed a \$2.5 million restoration to the course which had involved shutting it down and re-grassing greens through yet another shutdown was not going to happen in the near term. My answer was to begin an over-seeding program. During the restoration we were able to remove between 350-400 trees on the course; trees, which created shade, making past over-seeding efforts a waste of time and money. Now with so many trees gone we might stand a chance to grow grass from overseeding.

For the next three years an application of two pounds of creeping bentgrass was applied to the greens both spring and fall in coordination with core aeration. Seed germinated, but with no change in our management, *Poa annua* continued to dominate the stand. We were spending close to \$5,000 for seed annually and



JEFF JOHNSON
Superintendent
The Minikahda Club

when I heard a speaker at a seminar explain that in an over-seeding program only 2% of the seed will establish, it confirmed to me we were wasting our time and money with overseeding. I know none of my members would think a return of \$100 on a \$5,000 investment is very smart business. So we soon abandoned the idea of over-seeding greens.

In 2007 I received an email from one of our past Grounds Committee Chairman who was also a past President of the Club. He told me about a program being used at his club in California. At his club they were converting their 90-year-old greens to predominantly creeping bentgrass without over-seeding and without shutting down for re-grassing all while maintaining quality playing conditions for the members. Of course, I was curious and skeptical and needed to do my research.

(Continued on Page 6)

My Turning Point -

(Continued from Page 5)

I called the Superintendent and learned about their program. He explained the theory and the consultants who were proponents of the theory. I contacted the main principal of the consulting firm and gathered more information. In all I spoke to about 5 or 6 Superintendents working with the firm. I also took a trip to 5 courses in California to see the results for myself. I returned to our club and met with the grounds committee and scheduled a

"Throughout the process I have changed my approach to managing the finer grasses almost 180 degrees from my prior philosophy learned in college and in my years as an assistant. In the past our goal was to manage for the lowest common denominator (the Poa); now our goal became to create advantageous conditions for the bentgrass to thrive."

meeting and site visit with one of the consulting firm's agronomists. The committee spent a great deal of time speaking with the consultants and investigating the benefits and potential challenges of the program. Impressed with what we heard, we hired the firm, Greenway Golf, and began the process to transition our 100 year old greens back to a predominately creeping bentgrass sward of turf.

We are now in our second season implementing the cultural and nutritional techniques recommended for this bentgrass management program. Throughout the process I have changed my approach to managing the finer grasses almost 180 degrees from my prior philosophy learned in college and in my years as an assistant. In the past our goal was to manage for the lowest common denominator (the *Poa*); now our goal became to create advantageous conditions for the bentgrass to thrive. In only the first season, about a 6-month growing season for us in Minneapolis, we saw on average a 20% increase in our greens bentgrass stand. As we strive to increase the population of bentgrass we are seeing additional benefits such as a reduction in fertility as well as fungicide usage. The entire system seems healthier and more sustainable. We know not every year will provide substantial reductions in fungicide use as Mother Nature always has the last say, but it's a start. We have a long way to go towards our ultimate goal and this past season we have experienced a few set backs along the way, but as we make changes and adjust the process to meet our needs, the goal continues to be towards increasing our sward of bentgrass.

The conversion to creeping bentgrass is going to take some time and effort but in the process we have altered our approach to how we manage the golf course, in turn we have reduced inputs and improved playing conditions and are heading in a direction in which I am confident.

For me as I look back on the Spring of 2004, I see it as a point in my career that altered my thought process as to how we go forward managing the golf course. In retrospect it provided me with a new direction and outlook on managing the golf course and an experience that I can say was clearly a turning point in my career.

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Going Green

By NICK FOLK, JUSTIN BICEK
The Minikahda Club, North Oaks Golf Club

"Going Green" is a commonly used term in our modern day language. In fact, a plausible statement may be that a person could not go one day without hearing it on the radio, seeing a commercial on TV, or looking at a billboard during their commute. Since golf is an industry that focuses on "green", it's only fitting that we continue to strive for environmentally friendly methods which reuse and protect our resources.

We try to minimize the use of synthetic chemicals by utilizing horticultural oils, organic materials, extracts, and bio-stimulants. We save water by increasing natural areas, developing more efficient irrigation systems, and using disease/drought tolerant grass species when applicable all in hopes of reducing inputs and our impact on the environment.

A simple online search on recycling facts will blow your mind! Like this one, a typical family consumes 182 gallons of soda, 29 gallons of juice, 104 gallons of milk, and 26 gallons of bottled water a year. That's a lot of containers! It's hard to put a number on what a golf course uses, but focusing on recycling would prove to be beneficial when compared to a typical household.

Throughout our golf clubs many other plastics (soft drink, automotive and cleaning bottles to name a few) are all recycled by our local waste management company.

Unfortunately, the pesticide containers we generate do not meet our local recycling companies' requirements; specifically the toxicity of what was in the containers could be hazardous in the finished product. Fortunately, the pesticide manufacturers founded and funded the establishment of a collection and recycling program for triple rinsed containers in 1992. Since that time nearly 120,000,000 pounds of containers have been recycled.

Container Services Network (CSN), is the contractor for Ag Container Recycling Council (ACRC) servicing Minnesota.. They provide additional recycling options for many industries in the Mid-West with tailored services to fit any need you may have. They will recycle plastic, steel, dispensing systems, fiber containers, and container accessories. Most importantly, they will take our triple rinsed pesticide containers while ensuring the most efficient and economic methods of recycling are carried out to meet ACRC protocols.

Last year, The Minikahda Club utilized CSN, and this year, North Oaks Golf Club

will utilize CSN to recycle pesticide containers instead of sending them to a landfill where the average plastic container takes 500 years to break down!

Want to participate? The requirements are simple and NO cost to your facility, just your dedication to prepare your containers for proper recycling. The following is a list of requirements needed to participate.

How to Participate

- 1) All pesticide containers must be triple rinsed with caps and labels removed and punctured per ACRC specifications.
- 2) All containers smaller than 5 gallons must be in bags to be recycled (provided by CSN). Each bag can hold approximately 40 2.5-gallon containers or 40 +/- pounds. Containers over 5 gallons will be loaded loose onto the truck.
- 3) Since CSN does not chip on site, they offer year round service to pick up containers at no cost when appropriate amounts are available (1000 lb. minimum otherwise you drop them off).
- 4) Arranging a drop-off will require contacting CSN to set up a time and an empty trip to a nearby scale to get your vehicle weight. You will then need to return to the scale loaded and obtain a scale ticket which you present at the drop off site.
- 5) The site coordinator and contractor's agent will be responsible for inspecting and approving the condition of containers for pick-up or when we deliver.

The pictures to the right show the proper steps taken for recycling your pesticide containers. Containers that have been triple rinsed with labels removed are placed in large plastic bags and tied off to keep them dry. Virtually all plastic containers are acceptable, from 12oz to 55gallons. Once you have a sufficient number of bags/containers, contact your site coordinator for the proper documents and schedule a time for drop off.

* * * *

(Editor's Note: For more information contact Sheri DeMars at SDeMars @ Container ServicesNetwork.com or ContainerServicesNetwork .com)

RECYCLING - STEP 1

Containers that have been triple rinsed with labels removed are placed in large plastic bags and tied off to keep them dry. Virtually all plastic containers are acceptable, from 12 oz to 55 gallons.



RECYCLING - STEP 2

Accumulate a sufficient number of containers.



RECYCLING - STEP 3

Once you have a sufficient number of bags/containers, contact your site coordinator for the proper documents and schedule a time for drop off.



PEER-TO-PEER: BETTER TURF THROUGH NETWORKING

*MGCSA members were asked: What is your first sign that Spring has arrived?
The Good, the Bad or the Ugly!*



Here is a good sign that it is Spring at The Crossings at Montevideo - the pumphouse has plenty of water! - Jeremiah Ergon, *The Crossings at Montevideo*.

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Spring officially arrives at Tanners Brook when the owners decide it is time.
- Kevin Clunis, CGCS
Tanners Brook Golf Course

* * * *

Flood predictions. Hiawatha Golf Course in Minneapolis is projected to be 95% flooded.
- Robert Porter
Hiawatha Golf Course

* * * *

Curling is over. Other than that, I'm still looking for signs!
- Norma O'Leary, CGCS
Silver Bay Golf Course

* * * *

The sightings of Great Blue Herons, Bluebirds and Sand hill Cranes combined with snow melt runoff, a splash of green grass and the smell of hot asphalt following the first warm rain are a few of my "happy" spring thoughts. Dunes of remaining salt/sand along the boulevards, browsed, no - destroyed - arborvitae shrubs caused by deer damage and copious amounts of dog doo upon a few choice areas of the golf course are the baddies! However, nothing that a little bit of time won't fix.
- Jack MacKenzie, CGCS
North Oaks Golf Club

* * * *

Road weight restrictions; Mourning doves; no more vehicles on the lakes; closed snowmobile trails; all my seasonal help visiting the office asking when we're going to start; people asking when the snow is going to thaw; my dog loses weight, and golfers hanging out at the driving range watching snow melt and dreaming of Spring.
- Bill Stein
Minocqua Country Club



SPEAKERS AT THE MARCH MEGA-SEMINAR, were Nick Christians, Ph.D., Professor at Iowa State University, who opened Day One by talking about plant-soil interactions. Mike Richardson, Ph.D., University of Arkansas, discussed the basic biological concepts about foliar uptake of nutrients in plants. The day concluded with Dr. Christians speaking about *Poa annua* control and management. On Day Two, Dr. Richardson examined several soils, plant diagnosis capabilities, underlying technology, shortcomings and cost.

MGCSA ASSISTANTS' SPRING MIXER



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