



Mid-Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents NEWSLETTER



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The President's Message . . .

As golf course superintendents, our concerns are necessarily focused on the management and care of fine golf turf. Our work is demanding, and often we lose sight of some of nature's finest creations in our surroundings. Trees, for example, are frequently taken for granted. We see them but seldom take real notice of or fully appreciate their grandeur. Think of a landscape on a golf course without them—frightening, to say the least. At Woodmont, we are blessed with a variety of magnificent trees, many of them over 100 years old. With the help of interested Woodmont members, we hired a horticulturist to verify the identity of trees that are in high visibility areas around the clubhouse and golf course. The American Horticultural Society has been most helpful in supplying the style of nameplates we desired at a nominal cost. This project has been well received by the membership and has helped to create a new appreciation of our trees. It's something that other clubs might want to try.

Due to a scheduling mixup, the 1985 Musser Tournament will be held on October 15 at the Country Club of Maryland. Mark your calendar and plan to participate in this worthwhile event. Our October meeting will be held at International Country Club in Fairfax, Virginia, and our host is Steve Nash. October is the month of our annual superintendents' championship, so be mindful of registering in advance by calling our office at 964-0070.

Michael J. Larsen, *President*



Virgil Robinson Leads In Match Play Event

With one round remaining to be played in this year's MAAGCS Match Play Championship, Virgil Robinson has a slight lead with a total of 11 points plus 10. Jeff Miskin is in second place with 11 plus 8, Ben Staff is third with 11 plus 6, and Bert Yingling has 10 plus 10. In the fifth spot, George Renault has 9 points plus 6, while Bill Neus is sixth with 8 points plus 6. The final round will be played November 12 at Hunt Valley Golf Club.

The annual golf championship will be played at International Country Club on October 8, with the Hines and Glover trophies at stake. There will also be a division for Class C and Class F members, who are not eligible for the overall championship. Entry fee will be \$5, according to Golf Chairman Nick Vance.

October Meeting is at International—But Date Changed to 8th

Originally scheduled for October 15, the next monthly meeting has been changed to Tuesday, October 8, because of a conflict with International Country Club's annual membership meeting. The change also eliminates a potential conflict with this year's Musser benefit tournament.

International's short history has been an active one. First organized as Falls Church Golf and Country Club in 1959, it had a nine-hole course at an in-town location that now adjoins the Capital Beltway. The original owners had planned to build a full-sized course to be called "the Suburban Course," and it is on this 240-acre tract that the club's present golf course on Route 50 in Fairfax is located.

This course was designed by golf professional Fred Bolton, one of the initial owners, and Buck Whetsell and Carl Wilkinson participated in the construction as consultants. When the



owners found themselves in financial difficulties, the club members undertook to complete the construction of the new course and assume responsibilities of ownership. Ground was broken for a new clubhouse in May 1967, and the in-town clubhouse and golf course were closed in November 1968 (that course is now operated by the county as an executive course open to the public). The new clubhouse and pro shop were

then opened in December 1968. A number of changes have been made to the course since then, and a master plan for remodeling, done by Eddie Ault, remains to be implemented. The course plays to 6,839 yards from the blue tees, 6,484 from the whites, and 5,776 from the reds.

Steven A. Nash, CGCS, has been superintendent at International since January 1984; he is a 1972 graduate of the Institute of Applied Agriculture at the University of Maryland, and he served for three years as editor of this newsletter. His combination Poa/bent greens are mowed six times a week to 3/16". Bluegrass, Poa, and ryegrass fairways are mowed three times a week to 3/4", while the rough is cut once a week to 2". Greens receive 4-3# of N per year, fairways 2#. Since Steve came to the club, he has carried out a number of improvements, including dredging

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Published by this Association to aid the advancement of the Golf Course Superintendent through education and merit.

Claud Corrigan, *Editor*
Joe Gambatese, *Photographer*

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From The Golf World

The Ryder Cup matches, which dropped off the U.S. television because they were played in England in September, will be shown on ESPN on Nov. 2 and 3; if you watch, you can get a good look at a British parkland course, much more American in style and appearance than the links that show up on most broadcasts from overseas.

The second professional golf management program in the country has been established at Mississippi State University, which like Ferris State will now be sending apprentices out to work in pro shops around the country. A total of 23 students are now enrolled in the cooperative program, whose curriculum takes 4½ years to complete. State is also upgrading its golf facilities, including a full-scale renovation of its golf course.

The American Society of Golf Course Architects reports that a number of ski resorts are adding golf courses so that they can operate year-round. Since many of them include housing units, these can be rented in the off-season to golfers, in the cold months to snow bunnies.

It's of some local interest that Fred Funk, assistant pro at the University of Maryland course and its golf coach, has decided to defend his PGA assistants' championship after all. Earlier, he had said he would try for his Tour card during qualifying rounds that conflicted with the assistants' event in Brockton, Mass.

Finally, one of the old-line golf club

From Greenskeeper to Professional— and Back Again

by Lee Dieter

I've noticed a trend developing in our profession that disturbs me, one characterized by a lack of personal commitment to individual and professional goals. I believe that if in all areas of life you aren't improving yourself, you're falling behind. It's easy to fall into the status quo trap. We must look at all areas of our professional ability and identify the areas where we're backsliding or not improving and make the necessary corrections.

What can we do to maintain and improve our professional image and our public relations? The Mid-Atlantic Superintendents have certainly excelled in one area, certification. We have 37 certified superintendents, 42% of those eligible. Why are others holding back from this certain positive step toward true professionalism? Within our local and national association this is only the beginning of involvement as a professional. Holding office and working on committees at both local and national levels is the next step upward. How can a person explain away the minimum commitment of attending meetings? Put something of yourself back into your profession — you owe it to yourself, your fellow professionals, and the generations of superintendents that will follow you.



How do the golfers at our courses see us? Of course, we are judged primarily by the results of our efforts, the finished product, the golf course that we maintain. Are we perceived by our golfers as just another one of the workers on the course? Is our office or maintenance facility organized, neat, and tidy? We can strive to do all these things better and we can make ourselves more visible by addressing groups of golfers and others on various topics related to our profession. We can also make ourselves available to answer questions regarding the operation of our course. Are we recognized as part of the management team by our fellow employees and the golfers?

Do our personal friends, our neighbors, and others in the community see us and recognize us as professionals? We must find time to work in and serve the community. It isn't easy, but many of our fellow superintendents make the commitment. They coach sports, work with youth organizations, serve on church and service groups, and help with charity drives and fund raisers. Community service organizations such as the Lions, Optimists, and Rotary offer an excellent opportunity for us to be visible as professionals.

I'm hoping that these thoughts will awaken in all of our members, including myself, a desire to put a little more of ourselves back into the profession that we all owe so much to. We will be the beneficiaries.

OCTOBER MEETING

(Continued from page 1)

three of the many ponds, rebuilding portions of two fairways, rebuilding and enlarging two tees, installing new Toro VT III irrigation controllers, adding irrigation for the rough, and laying down cart paths tee to green on the front nine. The back nine is scheduled for full cart paths next Spring. The

manufacturers, PGA Golf Co., has officially changed its name to the Tommy Armour Golf Co. Part of the Kidde conglomerate, PGA has been making products bearing the Armour name for more than 50 years. The late Tommy Armour lost an eye fighting in France in World War I but went on to win the U.S. Open in 1927, the PGA Championship in 1930, and the British Open in 1931.

clubhouse is presently being redecorated, and sewer and water are being brought to the maintenance building this Fall, completing an impressive list of improvements to this active country club.

Directions to International are: Take the Beltway (495) to Route 66 West toward Front Royal, turning right onto Route 50 at Exit 15 marked "Dulles-Winchester." The club is approximately three miles down Route 50, on the right.

The program for October 8 is as follows:

Lunch (cash or charge): 11:30 a.m. on Golf: Call pro shop (703-968-7070) for tee times, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; event is annual MAAGCS championship, stroke play, net and gross
Cocktails: 6 p.m. (cash bar)
Dinner: 7 p.m. (coat and tie; cost \$20)
Meeting: 8 p.m.
Reservations: Call 964-0070

Musser Tournament Aids Sports Turf

by Dr. Fred V. Grau

The Mid-Atlantic Musser Tournament being held October 15 (rain date October 22) at the Country Club of Maryland has taken on a new significance. The proceeds from this annual event will help not only turf research but will also support the activities of the National Sports Turf Research and Education Committee. This group of 14 people made up the first national Sports Turf Forum that was held in Beltsville in April. Safer Sports Turf Forum II will be held October 29-30 by the committee, which is made up of leaders in organizations dedicated to better sports turf designed to reduce injuries. A resilient cushion of natural grass turf is the best protection from injuries to players, and there are well-turfed athletic fields on which there have been no injuries for 3 and 4 years.

The committee has voted unanimously to work within the Musser Foundation, which is unbiased, tax-exempt, and non-profit. Tournaments such as the one coming up at Country Club of Maryland will help greatly in financing committee activities. Golf course superintendents will have a chance to become involved in athletic field improvement as the program gets underway, reaching every parent and child who may be involved in active sports.

NEW MEMBER

James T. McHenry, Class D
Assistant Superintendent
Prince Georges Country Club

John Strickland Is New Turf Representative

John Strickland of Egypt Farms, Inc., a MAAGCS Class F member, has been appointed by Gov. Harry Hughes to the Maryland Agricultural Commission for a three-year term as turf representative. The commission serves as an advisory body to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Governor, and this is the initial appointment of a turf specialist to that body.

A New Problem—Liability Insurance on Pesticide Use Escalating

If country clubs and golf course operators haven't heard about it yet, they soon will. The cost of liability insurance for these facilities is going up, up, up, almost astronomically, largely because of two things: the widespread use of pesticides and the sale of alcoholic beverages. Only the former concerns golf course superintendents, but it concerns them mightily, for the simple reason that many states require that users of fungicides, insecticides, and herbicides carry minimum amounts of liability insurance if they are to be licensed to use such chemicals. To do so without insurance or license is to court disaster.

How did this problem arise? It's probably one of the ultimate effects of all the personal damage awards and costly settlements of lawsuits that have been cutting into insurance industry profits to an alarming degree. A major news magazine noted in its September 16 issue that liability insurance rates have risen as much as 1,000% in some cases, with doctors, tavern-keepers, high schools, bowling alleys, and banks all being hit hardest. They might have added golf clubs, as well. One major carrier has cancelled all its country club and golf course liability insurance policies because of a million-dollar award to someone claiming harm from a chemical sprayed on a golf course. And, insurance companies claim they sustained \$3.8 billion in losses last year, a figure that would account for the tremendous rise in rates.

To some extent, the insurers have a point. As one company president put it, "You have an accident, and everyone gets sued. We live in litigious times." What he means, in effect, is that the woods are filled with lawyers who seem only too eager to take on a damage case on contingency (which costs the client little or nothing, as the lawyer works for a third or half share of whatever he can collect). The legal profession doesn't like to hear such comments, but the opinion is shared by much of the public. Juries, apparently believing that the only loser in a damage case will be a wealthy insurance company, bloated with profits from premiums, give massive awards, even in cases of very remote responsibility. This leads insurers to make heavy settlements rather than risk a courtroom award that would be even heavier. The classic case of the would-be suicide who jumped in front of a subway train in New York City, lived through the attempt, and then collected a \$365,000 settlement as a result of suing the transit system for several million shocked almost everyone who heard about it — but, it happened.

Chemicals, with their overtones in the public perception as carcinogens, have been a prime target of damage suits. Chemical companies themselves are finding it almost impossible to obtain toxic-pollution insurance protection. The medical profession is also taking a beating, especially obstetricians, who are being sued for every problem that crops up in the area of childbearing; their malpractice insurance costs are as high as \$72,000 a year, which means that fees for office visits and deliveries must also rise.

What can a golf course superintendent do about this trend? Faced with today's demand for well-watered, smooth, lush, disease-free turf on golf course fairways and greens, he is forced to use a variety of chemicals to combat the many enemies of turf maintained to such standards. With these requirements by the golfers and the types of grass in use, there isn't any other way, and even then, it can be a losing battle (witness the onslaughts of bacterial wilt on greens in the mid-West). To change the situation, golfers would have to be willing to accept courses that are drier, harder, and perhaps covered with coarser, longer grasses, green-brown in color rather than brilliant emerald. New strains of disease-resistant turf would have to be developed, and standards and conditions of maintenance would have to be drastically altered. The other alternative, of course, is to pay the costly new premiums and hope that the insurance companies don't price us all out of business. Lawyers, too, must become aware that when juries realize that liability insurance is unobtainable, as it could become for users of chemicals, then the geese that have been laying all those little golden eggs over the years are going to be very dead birds. — C.C.

MEETING SCHEDULE, 1985

- October 8 — International C.C., Steve Nash, Host
- November 12 — Hunt Valley G.C., Bob Orazi, Host
- December 10 — Naval Academy, Mike McKenzie, Host

SUPERINTENDENT WANTED

- *One who wants to move up* —
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