

Turfgrass Matters



December 1991, vol. 44, no. 10

Mid-Atlantic Golf Course Superintendents Newsletter

Annual MAAGCS Elections to be held at Sparrows Point Country Club on December 12

Superintendent Kevin Prysieski welcomes one and all to Sparrows Point Country Club for the MAAGCS annual meeting on December 10.

Lying on Bear Creek, the 27-hole course was originally built for executives of Bethlehem Steel. Designed by William Gordon, the first 18 holes opened in 1955 and an additional nine in 1961. The company sold the club to the members in 1985, having allotted few resources to its maintenance since the 1970s, when fortunes of the steel industry took a downturn. The club then limped along without a superintendent from 1985 to 1988.

When he took over as superintendent in 1988, Kevin faced massive problems. "It was like a nightmare. I didn't know where to begin. Everything needed attention. We always called it 'the abandoned look,'" Kevin laughs. In addition to neglect, the club has the disadvantage of being located on terrible soil. "You would think that this area, so close to water, would have sandy soil." On the contrary, the club is situated on a former brickyard. "That should tell you something about the kind of soil we have," says Kevin.

The very first thing they did was to put in a computerized irrigation system; they chose the Rainbird Maxi system. They pump from two ponds which are well-fed, so there is no problem with streams going dry.

Next, it seemed obvious to

rehabilitate the greens. They began with the Vertidrain program, performing the regime twice a year; in addition, they completely rebuilt one green, stripping it of sod, putting in drain lines and resodding it. They have also added new drain lines to four other greens. This past summer they did water injection aeration, which Kevin feels worked so well they plan to perform it three times next year.

The greens are doing well, now. "This was probably our best year," notes Kevin. "1989 was the worst. We had all that rain and nothing drained. It couldn't get much worse than that, but 1990 was good and this even better."

Even with all this attention to greens, Kevin hasn't neglected the fairways. Last year they began converting them to bentgrass; six of the 27 holes are now finished; in fact, the two they completed this fall aren't open yet. The bentgrass has worked so well, they plan to convert nine holes next year and nine the following year, so that "in 1993 we'll be all done with the 18-hole course and will probably continue with the conversion on the nine-hole course," says Kevin.

Also on these holes, they have converted the tees to bent and put in new rough. "We put in a ryegrass intermediate rough and then beyond that, where sprinkler heads are not hitting, we put in tall fescue. I figure if you have a hole closed, you might as well do everything at once."

At Sparrows Point they mow the greens six days a week at 5/32"; the tees three days a week at 7/16"; and fairways four days a week at 1/2". The fairways are mowed with lightweight mowers and clippings are removed—this being particularly important for the bentgrass fairways. The course is 6,887 yds. from the blue markers, 6,618 from the white, and 5,700 from the red with ratings of 73.0 from the blue and 71.6 from the white. Beginning around the first of the year, golfers must use temporary greens which Kevin and his crew prepare with great precision. At the end of this article Kevin gives his recipe for them.

Kevin, who is a native Baltimorean, graduated from Towson State with a B.S. in Biology. During the summers while in college, he worked on the grounds crew at Baltimore Country Club. It was there he became interested in the possibility of a career as a superintendent. He started as an assistant superintendent at Mount Pleasant, at that time still under the City of Baltimore, and worked there for only seven or eight months before the superintendent retired and he became superintendent. He remained there until 1985 when he moved to Pine Ridge, a Baltimore municipal course. He worked there three years before moving to his present position. He received his certification in 1989.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

How many of
you thought
November and
December
would never
get here? As I
am writing this
we are in the



middle of November. Thanksgiv-
ing is just a week away and
December is moving in on us very
quickly and it is still 70 degrees
outside. With any luck, by the
time this newsletter gets out, we
will be pushing three feet of snow
off the parking lot so we can get to
the wood pile to put more logs on
the fireplace. Fat chance, huh?

Back to the real world. Our
meeting at Wakefield Valley in
November was great. Their
clubhouse is very nice and Gary
and the staff there did a great job.

Ladies night was also a
success. Mark Merrick did a very
good job organizing and orches-
trating the event. I think everyone

GOLF NOTES

Congratulations to
our November
winners in the
scramble event:
Todd Eckenrode,
Buck Parks, Tom
Ritter and John
Stevens scored 64.
For our December
meeting golf will
be available after
11 a.m. The event
will be individual
play in both net
and gross divi-
sions. **Special note:**
Anyone planning
to play in the
National Tourna-
ment, please
contact me ASAP.

Scott Wagner
Golf Chairman

in attendance had a great time.

The next thing on our agenda
is December's election meeting.
Take a good look at the proposed
by-laws and Code of Ethics that
were in the November newsletter.
We will vote on them at the
December meeting.

See you on December 10th at
Sparrows Point.

Nick Vance, CGCS
President, MAAGCS


Slate of Officers for 1992

Elections for next year's Board of
Directors will take place at the
December 10 meeting at Sparrows
Point Country Club. The slate of
officers is as follows:


President Ken Ingram
V. President Steve Potter
Secretary Lou Rudinski
Treasurer Scott Wagner

For two Directors positions:
Mike Gilmore, Bill Shirk, Lentz
Wheeler

Nominations will be accepted
from the floor.



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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Thank you for your support in
1991.

Best wishes for good health
and success in 1992.

Computers, are they right for you?

by Rhys Arthur, MAAGCS

Obviously there have been tremendous technological strides in personal computers during the past ten years. It seems like yesterday that the general conception of a computer was a cumbersome, difficult, and expensive machine. Their use by the general population was limited at best.

Over the years, somewhat like the phenomenon of electronic calculators, personal computers have become faster, cheaper, and easier to use. Easy to understand Operating Systems like IBM's DOS were developed, and programmers wrote software that did specific jobs and was user friendly.

The result of all this technology? Now we finally have an economical machine that will run truly advanced software that almost anyone can master.

As we know, companies like Buckner, Rainbird and Toro have worked incredibly hard to develop computerized irrigation that not only works well, but is easy to use. And why not use a personal computer as a central control for irrigation? Often, it is reasonably priced, does a better job managing water, and then offers all the abilities that a computer has to complement the Superintendent in his office.

Writing letters with a word processor is probably one of the finest benefits of having a computer in the office. With a word processor, correspondence becomes a pleasure rather than a true burden. Typing letters on the screen, with the ability to correct mistakes, check spelling, and revise content, makes the word processor a real asset. In addition, documents can be saved, retrieved, edited and printed as many times as necessary. Therefore, the word processor makes

the computer work like a typewriter, file cabinet, and photocopier.

Preparing operating budgets is the annual nightmare all superintendents face. Using spreadsheet software, computers can also make this job much easier. Spreadsheet software works the same way as an accounting journal sheet does. Typically, each line in the spreadsheet represents a line item in the budget. Then each column contains the amount budgeted for each month throughout the year. Given the many line items in a regular budget, the computer can automate all the arithmetic on all these rows and columns. And, the same benefits apply as in the word processor; all these spreadsheets can be saved, retrieved, edited and printed as many times as necessary.

The data base is another great computer tool. This type of software program allows you to store and track information about specific events that you define. For example, I keep track of all the invoices I approve for payment. The information I choose to store is: the date of the invoice, the invoice number, the vendor, what it is for, where it was used and the cost. Therefore, at any given time, I can retrieve all the invoices that were for one specific piece of equipment, or charged to fertilizer, or any given line item during any given period of time. This a great way to monitor your spending. Case in point: How many times have you wondered how much you have spent on repairs half way through the month? Or on a construction project? All this information can be kept in a data base.

Specialty software is becoming more popular as the computer

market expands. Some of these programs, like TRIMS, are already prepared to keep records like the data base. In addition, more agronomically specific software, like the Superintendents Spray Program, is being developed to help us grow our grass better. Over time, we will see many more programs specifically tailored to our industry, especially as regulatory compliance becomes more of an issue.

Best of all, not only is it easier to prepare these items with the computer, but it also presents a more professional image of you and our profession. More often than not, the people who review our written work are professionals in their own right. The board of directors at your club, the budget committee, or outside regulatory agencies all develop their own perception of your management abilities based on professional communications skills.

How does a novice get started? First, seek advice from those superintendents around you who know computers. Find out what they use. There is a wealth of free information available from your associates. Ask around. Phone calls are cheap.

Secondly, when shopping for a computer, don't over buy. Personal computers are reasonably priced as long as you don't let a salesman talk you into buying a computer that can run the Pentagon. For golf course use, computers driven with IBM operating systems are the only way to go. All irrigation and specialty software programs are written for the IBM. When actually purchasing a specific computer, brand names are fine, but generally cost more. A prudent

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shopper can do very well purchasing an IBM compatible machine that basically does the same job as brand name units, but costs less. A typical 286 (type of processor) with a 40 megabyte hard drive (permanent memory) and VGA graphics (enhanced color) machine will provide excellent performance for the average superintendent. If you ever intend to use your computer as an irrigation central, ask your irrigation supplier what special equipment, like extended memory, may be necessary to run his software.

Third, be conservative. As a novice, don't buy complex, and very expensive software. Often, these software packages exceed both your pocketbook and your needs. Start with simple, cheap multipurpose software that is easy to learn and does almost every-

thing you need to do. *PFS First* is a very popular program that many superintendents use. It offers a word processor, a spreadsheet program and a small database at a reasonable cost. Once you exceed the limits of the simple software packages, then you know it's time to invest in a more complex and expensive package.

Lastly, stick with it. Many first-time computer users expect too much too soon. Stick to simple assignments that provide immediate results for your efforts. Writing letters, posting maintenance schedules, and making signs are all examples of little routines that make your job easier with the computer.

To determine if a computer is truly right for you, you really must consider the perception you wish to convey to those who evaluate you. Do you write letters and memos frequently? Do you

ever plan to modernize your irrigation control? Will your organization benefit from tracking records, or preparing a better budget?

Perhaps the real question to ask when considering a computer is: Will I be a better golf course superintendent *without* one?

1992 MTC Conference to honor Angelo Cammarotta

The annual conference of the Maryland Turfgrass Council, to be held in Baltimore on January 6-7, will be dedicated to Angelo Cammarotta, former president of the MAAGCS and one of the founding members of MTC.

Mr. Cammarotta, 75, retired from Hobbits Glen in 1983, after serving at a number of other clubs in the Mid-Atlantic and in New Jersey.



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The Key to Job Security: first of a three-part series

by Bruce L. Marcus, Esquire

I had the privilege of addressing your November meeting and spoke on the issue of job security for members of your association.

Under the laws of Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia, employees have little or no right to their jobs if the agreement with the employer is based on an "at-will" arrangement. Simply stated, where no written contract exists between an employer and the employee, either party may terminate the relationship at any time for any reason. One exception would be those instances where discrimination or "whistle blowing" is alleged by the employee as the basis for termination. Surprisingly, I learned that very few members of the Association are employed under written agreements with their respective clubs and/or owners. This situation places Association members in the position of "at-will" employees. In an effort to raise the level of job security and improve the lot of superintendents, I would propose that the Association undertake to review its current Member Service Program to initiate and facilitate written contractual relationships between professionals and their employers.

In furtherance of this goal the first hurdle is raising the issue of a written agreement with an employer who has not previously been faced with contract negotiations. This article is directed at this problem.

Your association should adopt a resolution supporting the concept of written contracts for all of its members and should send letters to all clubs in the Section so stating. Initially, we should expect a negative response, as I do not

believe that this type of campaign will prove to be an overnight success, but will begin a process which is long term in nature.

However, it is intended to provide measurable benefits to association members in the future.

The linchpin of enhanced job security is upgrading the perception of superintendents as "Professionals." This essential ingredient must permeate your relationship with members, club owners, committee chairpersons and all those with whom you deal. Professionalism is something which aids and assists an individual in commanding respect. It begins with the way that you dress, the way that you carry yourself, the way that you project yourself on the job, and the manner and methods by which you undertake and perform your duties and responsibilities. By increasing the level of professionalism on the course and in the workplace, employees place themselves in a position to be a more vital component of a successful operation. It also affords the individual the opportunity to be taken more seriously by others when critical decisions are made on a day-to-day basis. The concept of professionalism is to be incorporated in discussions relating to the issue of a

written contract. Essentially, we will try to convey a message that: (1) the position of superintendent has widespread, varied and large responsibilities; (2) that a highly trained, well-educated person is required to staff the position in order to insure maximum levels of proficiency; (3) that persons who are well trained and who are successful in their field of endeavor are entitled to the same job security as other professionals; and (4) that the level of security required by a superintendent can only be achieved through some written agreement.

In the next issue, I will discuss the specific aspects of the contractual relationship.

Bruce L. Marcus is an attorney in Greenbelt, Md. with the firm of Marcus & Bonsib and has represented golf course owners, clubs, golf professionals and superintendents for over ten years.



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ELANCO



SIERRA

continued from front page

Kevin's wife Jan is also in the business. With a degree in agronomy from the University of Maryland, she is a division chief for the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Needwood Golf Course in Montgomery County, along with other parks, is under her supervision. "At least we have something to talk about when we get home," declares Kevin.

Kevin's big interest is skiing. His favorite slopes are in Utah and Colorado. Now that his step-daughter, Maggie, is at the University of Utah, he combines visits and ski trips. Last year after the GCSSA conference in Las Vegas, he and Jan visited Maggie for a short ski vacation.

Kevin and Jan live in historic Dickeyville, the former mill town. Built in 1860, their house, as is the entire area, is on the National Historic Register. To find furnish-

ings, Kevin and Jan often spend weekends haunting favorite antique shops in Hagerstown, Frederick, or nearby Ellicott City. Their home has been in *Better Homes and Gardens* and on the Maryland house and garden tour. "It's a nice area to live in," says Kevin. "There's a park with a stream and waterfall in back of the house where our chocolate Lab, Lucy, likes to play."

Kevin also loves to travel, especially in the national parks, and to take photographs—landscapes being his favorite subjects. When home, he experiments with gourmet cooking, using Jan as his guinea pig, he says.

Kevin, his assistant Rick Boldissar, and Sparrows Point head pro, John McCloskey, look forward to hosting this, the last meeting of the year.

Meeting: Cocktails, 6:00; dinner 7:00; \$25.

Reservations: 301-381-0030

Directions:

From Baltimore:
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Take exit 41, Cove Rd. Go west; at first light (very near exit) go left on Northpoint Blvd. Go 2 miles to Wise Ave. Turn right. Go 1/2 mile. Entrance to the club is on the left.

From D.C.:

Take either I-95 or I-70. Go south on I-695 across the Key bridge, then follow directions above.

Kevin's Temporary Greens Formula

Each winter Sparrows Point moves to temporary greens. Here's how Kevin prepares them.

Location: Level area of approach or green surround. Choose driest area possible. Because of the potential for wet conditions in winter, the temporary should be placed on the side closest to cart path.

Size: 1,000 to 1,200 sq. feet

Installation: Aerate with greensaire; remove cores; broadcast ryegrass seed at 12-15 lbs/1,000 sq. feet; groove seed with mataway two directions, top dress until holes are filled; drag with steel mat; roll with fairway roller pulled by Cushman approximately 400-lb. weight; fertilize with a starter fertilizer—3/4 lb. N, 11 lb. P, 3/4 lb K.

Maintenance: Mow with walking greensmower at 1/4" as needed; roll with fairway roller twice a week; light top dressing every three weeks.

Other: Use Standard Golf's special event 8" cup. It is helpful if you drill four or five holes in bottom so water will drain out.

- If possible, place all tee markers on blue tee. This adds the distance lost at the green and wear is concentrated on tee that is used the least during the season.
- Top dressing and lower height of cut make the greens stand out with a dark green color compared to surrounding dormant turf.
- Rolling on a regular basis is the key to members' satisfaction with the temporaries.
- If you want to sell the membership on temporary greens, give them a smooth putting surface all winter. The temps, with constant attention, will actually putt better than regulation ones under winter conditions.

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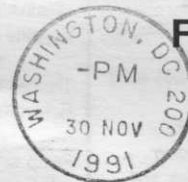
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