

# Turfgrass Matters



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Mid-Atlantic Golf Course Superintendents Newsletter

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

Superintendent Kevin Pryseski 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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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:*  
east on I-695.  
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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