

# Turfgrass Matters



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Mid-Atlantic Golf Course Superintendents Newsletter

## Ken Keller to host March 9 meeting at Fountain Head

To kick off (or should we say tee-off?) the 1993 season, Ken Keller will welcome MAAGCS members to Fountain Head CC in Hagerstown, Md.

This historic course was built in the mid 1920s. Designed by renowned architect Donald Ross, the course has seen few modifications. Typical of courses from that era, Fountain Head is very short—6100 yards from the white tees—and the greens are extremely small—they average only 4,000 square feet; par is 71. "But," says Ken, "it's an honest test of golf because it's difficult to hit regulation shots and have them stay on the putting surface. It requires accurate chipping and probably reflects Scottish courses. It's a great membership course for the average golfer," notes Ken, "the mid-handicap golfer can have a very nice round with a good score."

Fountain Head's greens, bent plus poa, are mowed daily at about 9/64". Ken has been on a TGR program for the last four years which, he says, has significantly increased the bentgrass. Tees, primarily ryegrass with some bentgrass, are mowed three times a week at 1/2". Fairways, which are ryegrass, are mowed three to four times per week at 1/2". "I have been on a TGR program on the fairways for at least two seasons and am very pleased with it. With the demands golfers are making today about tight lies, the TGR has really helped me achieve that goal."

Considering the age of the course, modifications have been amazingly few: some tees have been enlarged and some added; Ken has added approximately six

traps and has enlarged three greens. Two of these three greens had such severe slopes that there was very little cupping space. The third green has been done twice—once 30 years ago, before the time of USGA greens specs—and once under Ken's direction. "It's one of the

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most difficult greens I have to manage: poor soil and drainage, and it's shady. Most of Ross's original features are still intact, however," says Ken. "There are some good humps and mounds."

The course's irrigation system is now automated. "We did it in-house," says Ken, the greens and tees in the early 80s and the fairways in 1990 and 1991. "On the fairways, we just converted with our existing single-row system. The ground in this county is just limestone outcroppings, rockbreaks and things." Anything else would have been much more expensive, so they used pipes already in the ground. An interesting footnote: the main line for two-thirds of the irrigation was steel pipe installed in the mid-1920s. At that time, it carried water from a spring to the clubhouse. Laterals now run off that line, but the original one is still being used on two-thirds of the course as the trunk line for fairway and greens irrigation.

Ken's latest project has been construction of two treated lumber

walls at the tennis courts. Both are about five feet tall landscaped with ornamental grasses and perennial flowers. Plans for this coming year include modifying two men's tees and relocating and adding a new ladies' tee.

A native of Waynesboro, Pa., Ken graduated from the University of Delaware, got his MS in Ag Economics from the University of Maryland, then finished the two-year turfgrass program at Penn State. He has been at Fountain Head since 1980.

He has twin sons, one who lives in Wilmington and one in Dallas. A ten handicapper, Ken says he can still beat one son, but not the other. Ken's daughter is a sophomore at Towson State. His wife, Sue, retired from teaching to be a full-time mother, has recently taken a job as secretary of their church.

When not at work or play on the golf course, Ken can be found with a book in hand, preferably an adventure or historical novel. He urges one and all to visit this historic old course for a challenging round.

*Directions: Fountain Head CC is about one hour and 20 minutes from Gaithersburg or from the Baltimore Beltway. Take I-70 from Frederick, then I-81N. Go about six miles, exit on Maugans Avenue. Go one mile to first stop light, turn right on Pennsylvania Ave. (Rte. 11); go about one mile. At the second light go left. (Note sign on your left for Fountain Head.) Proceed straight to the clubhouse.*

*Dinner is formal, coat and tie required. Cocktails are at 5:30, dinner at 6:30.*

*Cost: cash bar; dinner, \$25.*

*Reservations a must: 301-490-6202*