

# Turfgrass Matters



November 1993, vol. 45, no. 9

Mid-Atlantic Golf Course Superintendents Newsletter

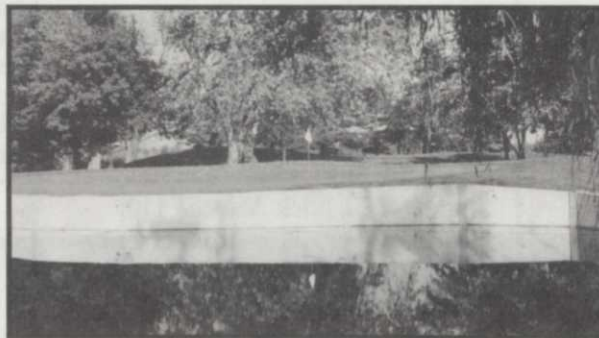
## Ron Weaver to Host Team Championship at Swan Creek on November 9

On November 9 superintendent Ron Weaver will welcome the MAAGCS to the Golf and Country Club of Swan Creek for its annual Four-man Team Championship. The club is a private 18-hole facility. The course is a par 70 that measures just under 6,000 yards, but don't be fooled by its lack of length. With its tight landing areas and narrow fairways, many big hitters would be wise to leave their drivers at home.

The club was built with a nine-hole course in the mid-1950s, then in 1977 land was acquired, Ed Ault was hired as architect, and nine new holes were built. In 1981 the course was sold by the membership at public auction to its current owners, Fred and Teresa Hawkins. They got the course for a steal and have done an amazing job with it. They took a nearly bankrupt, struggling club, made many vital improvements, and turned it into a thriving club with 450 very active members.

Greens on the course are a mixture of old bents, new bents and Poa. They are mowed daily at 11/64", but they are cut down to 5/32" for events like member-guest and club championships. "I'd like to keep them at 5/32" but there seems to be a fine line there. At the lower height Anthracnose and Summer Patch really can get a foothold," says Ron. Greens are Verticut four times per year, groomed weekly and topped

monthly. This helps keep the ball rolling true and the speeds a little more in line—even at 11/64". They receive 3.5 to 4 lbs. of nitrogen throughout the year, 2.5 lbs. granular in the spring and fall



*The Seventeenth at Swan Creek*

and a pound's worth of soluble, spoon feeding in the summer months. "I also apply up to a pound of Cutless in a year," says Ron. "It makes the Poa look like hell, but I'm still not convinced much progress is being made."

Fairways and tees, which are a mixture of Ryegrass and Poa, are cut three times a week at 11/32". They get 2 lbs. N a year and are now on an overseeding/Prograss program.

Ron is a midwesterner who has just survived his fifth season in the Mid-Atlantic. "I've got to admit that there are plenty of days in July and August when the weather has me 'longing for my Indiana home' and praying for a nice midwestern-type cold front!" Ron was a chemistry major at Indiana University before transfer-

ring to Purdue where he earned his B.S. in Agronomy in 1983. "But don't confuse me with the Boiler-makers, my heart is still all Indiana Hoosiers." His golf course experience includes five years at

the USX Supervisors Club in northwest Indiana where he started changing cups and became the assistant after three years. He then moved to Cog Hill in Lemont, Illinois—home of the Western Open PGA stop. It was a real learning experience for me. I was the only assistant at a 72-hole golf complex. We had four different courses with four distinct types of  
*See Swan Creek, page 8*

**Golf:** For details on playing in the tournament, see **Golf Notes** on page two.

**Dinner:** Cocktails 5:00-6:00, dinner at 6:00. \$30. Reservations essential: 301-381-0030.

**Directions:** From Baltimore/ Washington and just about everywhere. Take I-95 north. Approximately 20 miles north of the Baltimore Beltway, take the Aberdeen exit (22 East). Go 2 miles, take Rte 40 East toward Havre de Grace. Go one mile to second light. Turn right on Oakington Rd. Road comes to a Y after the bridge. Go straight. Follow Oakington for 2 miles. Golf course and clubhouse are on the left side.

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**MAAGCS Newsletter**

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**GOLF NOTES**

Thanks to Bruce Cadenelli and his fine staff for preparing Caves Valley Golf Club for our annual MAAGCS Championship. The golf course was absolutely perfect and a true test for our tournament.

As I said at the meeting, the MAAGCS should be very proud to have Caves Valley Golf Club and a superintendent of Mr. Cadenelli's stature in the Mid-Atlantic.

Thanks again to Bruce and his entire staff for making us feel like "Kings for a Day." Playing under very tough conditions (the course

not the weather), here are the results of the tournament:

**1st gross** - John Newcomb (83) won \$100 and the W.H. Glover Trophy; **2nd gross** - Bill Shirk (84) \$50; **1st net** - Nick Vance (76) \$100 plus Carroll Hitchcock Trophy; **2nd net** - Mike Gilmore (77) \$50; **Longest drive (Pro-Lawn)** - Nick Vance; **Closest-to-pin #4 (G.L. Cornell)** - Mike Gilmore; **Closest-to-pin #8 (York Distributors)** - Ed Porterfield; **Closest-to-pin #12 (Scott's)** - David Rudinski; **Closest-to-pin #15 (Loft's)** - Ed Porterfield; **Putting Contest (Bruce Cadenelli)** - David Rudinski; **Gross Trophy** donated by G.L. Cornell; **Net Trophy** donated by TESCO. Thanks to our sponsors. They truly make our golf tournaments a big success.

An update on the Golfer of the Year Award points: Mike Gilmore - 160; Bill Shirk - 140; Sean Remington - 120; Nick Vance - 110; Scott Wagner - 110; Jim McHenry - 100; John Newcomb - 100. November's Tournament will be our last competition for points.

**November Golf**

Our November meeting, at the GCC of Swan Creek, will be our last tournament for 1993—the Annual Four-Man Scramble, four players to a team. All MAAGCS members are welcome. The Golf Committee will make the teams on the day of the tournament according to handicaps. Each team will be made up of an A, B, C, and D player. Sign-up will be from 10:30 until 11:30 a.m. with a 12:00 p.m. shotgun start. You do not need to phone the pro-shop but **Please don't be late!**

The golf Committee will make all teams. No exceptions, please. There will be a \$5 entry fee for the tournament. Our sponsors for November's tourney are **Egypt Farms - Long Drive; Closest-to-pin - Egypt Farms and Loft's.**

Bill Shirk, Golf Chairman

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

October has been a busy month for most superintendents. Many renovation schedules were extensive due to the long, hot summer, and many activities—put off until summer was over—were in full swing. The John Deere tournament was held at Turf Valley on October 11 where board member Mike Gilmore is the superintendent. Ladies night was on October 9 and the annual tournament on October 12 at Caves Valley Golf Club. The train ride to Thurmont for ladies night was very popular and everyone had a great time. Congratulations to Mark Merrick once again for a job well done. The annual tournament turned out to be a great day. Even after 1.3 inches of rain, member Bruce Cadenelli and his staff had the golf course in perfect shape. Although the wet greens held shots, putting was still quite a challenge. A special thank-you to Bruce and the entire Caves Valley staff for hosting what will be a memorable tournament. For those of you who did not participate in this event, you truly missed an unforgettable experience.

The Long Range committee has made some recommendations in reaction to the survey responses and they are detailed in this newsletter. These changes coupled with no dues increase for three years have necessitated a dues increase for 1994. Please read your newsletter and don't hesitate to call me or any other board member if you have any questions or concerns.

The next meeting will be at Swan Creek with Ron Weaver as our host. Ron has made a lot of improvements over the past couple of years and I hope you are able to come play the course before the meeting. *The permanent reservation book is back in effect so call if you are on the list and unable to attend as you are financially responsible for your reservation.*

Steve Potter, President



# Looking Toward the Future

by Michael J. Gilmore, Chairman, Long Range Planning Committee

The golf course management profession has evolved over the years to the point where it is on a par with, if not above, the level of any other club official. The demands of the membership, the ever-changing agronomics and associated technology, as well as the expenses involved in maintaining a golf course have raised the importance of our positions. We are truly professionals and our association should reflect this.

Last spring the Long-Range Planning Committee sent a survey to gauge the membership's feelings about their association and what they would like to see improved, if anything. Suggestions included upgrading the newsletter, expanding the seminar schedule, continue and increase funding of scholarship and research, and continue to promote our profession. Seventy-five percent of those responding to the survey feel it is essential to maintain a permanent office for the MAAGCS and begin to position ourselves to be able to hire a person to handle the ever-growing needs of our association.

We also recommend that a flier be sent every month to announce the next month's meeting. This would contain only details that pertain to the meeting—directions, times, costs, etc. This could prevent people from missing the meetings because of delays in the newsletter. Other suggestions include:

1. Continue to promote the MAAGCS at the national conference by way of the MAAGCS Room.
2. Increase the funding of the scholarship and research pro-

grams for the MAAGCS.

3. Begin searching for a person or association management firm to handle administrative duties for the MAAGCS.

4. Establish a \$15 initiation fee to cover processing new members.

5. Increase seminar schedule

***We need to pursue these objectives and, to be successful, to be able to fund them.***

to reflect the membership's needs i.e., education, personnel management, self-enhancement, etc.

These are a few of the things that need to be done. Adequate funds are necessary to initiate some of these changes in addition to conducting usual business affairs of the association. Some of the expenses include benevolent contributions to the mid-west and southeast, scholarship costs and meeting costs — particularly covering the dinner costs of

members or guests who do not honor their reservations. These expenses have created a shortage that was covered by the T. Rowe Price account as it was designed to do. In accordance with the bylaws, Article I, Section D, the board of directors of the MAAGCS has set a \$35 dues increase for fiscal year 1994. The last increase was FY 1991. This should allow the board of directors to pursue some of the goals of the association and still meet the normal operating expenses of the association.

In the Long-Range Planning Committee membership survey, 68% of the members favored an increase of at least \$25 to help the MAAGCS move forward. We need to pursue the objectives outlined above, and to be successful, we need to be able to fund them. Hopefully, the members of the MAAGCS will desire more out of the MAAGCS and will support the increase to help us achieve these goals.



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## Firing Squad: How to Give Someone the Boot Without Getting Kicked Back

*Reprinted with permission from Tee to Green, newsletter of the Metropolitan (NY) GCSA*

We've all done it . . . hired someone who looked great on paper—or at first glance—and then after a short time on the job discovered they weren't going to cut the mustard. Unfortunately, it's a lot easier to hire bad apples than it is to weed them out.

In fact, owing to a growing body of law and an increasingly litigious work force, firing employees has become a complicated—and sometimes risky—business. Each year companies spend millions of dollars defending lawsuits brought by former employees who feel they were fired unjustly.

If you think, "Ahhh, this kind of thing doesn't happen to superintendents," guess again. More than a few of your colleagues have been called on the carpet for their firing practices. (No, we won't name names.)

So to help you and your club stay out of harm's way when you have to send an employee packing, here's a look at the law and some pointers on procedure.

### Firing by the Book

Your first legal consideration in firing an employee is to be sure that the dismissal in no way constitutes discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, age, sex, union membership or activity, and physical or mental handicap.

Beyond that, and in the absence of either a union or private employment contract, common law deems that most employees without a formal contract ("employees at will") can be fired at any time for any reason, with no legal recourse.

Now, however, the right of an employer to fire at will is facing a

serious challenge. Under the concept of "wrongful discharge," the courts have established a new cause of action that permits lawsuits by employees who have not been discriminated against *per se* but feel they've been dumped unfairly.

Although the formal definition varies from state to state, many wrongful discharge cases are based on the presence of an "implied contract" between an employer and employee. That might include a lengthy term of employment, a record of regular raises or promotions, and even such casual verbal assurances as, "You know, Joe, you've got a great future here at the club."

Even when such claims can't be substantiated, they can become evidence. And labor lawyers will tell you that if the case goes to trial, a jury's sympathy will more likely rest with the employee than with the employer.

### Your Line of Defense

The first step in protecting yourself from claims like these is to make sure that, before terminating an employee, you let him know there's a serious performance problem and give ample warnings. In fact, communication and documentation should begin the moment you foresee trouble so the employee has a fair shot correcting the problem. Many experts recommend what's called a "progressive discipline" approach. In short, here's how it works:

- **Begin with a frank discussion** of the performance or conduct problem. Describe the appropriate corrective measures, and outline your personal expectations of the employee.

Experts also advise that you

use this meeting to express confidence in the person's ability to improve.

- **If this heart-to-heart talk has little effect**, the next step would be to put your complaints in a memo that restates the original problem, the required solutions, and what you expect of the employee. It should also mention the previous conversation and when you expect to see results. This memo should make it clear that the employee's job is — or is about to be — on the line.

Labor attorneys also recommend that you have employees sign the memo, not to indicate agreement, but to prove that they've seen it so they can't deny it later. The same applies to any second or third "warning" memos you issue.

- **You should also be diligent about collecting or noting other evidence of incompetence.** For instance, if your assistant's record keeping is sloppy or error-laden, retain a copy for your files. In addition, you should note all relevant incidences of misconduct, lateness, absenteeism, and other behavioral problems in your calendar or employee file. Also record the dates, general content, and outcome of any meetings or conversations you have with the employee.

- **Be aware not only of the content, but also the tone and volatility of your documentation.** Though you're not legally obligated to show your documentation to the employee, you may be asked to open your files if you're dragged into court. Any notations that are less-than-professional will surely work against you.

- **If your club has an employee**

manual, pay close attention to procedures for employee terminations. If they're billed as "guidelines" or "recommendations," there are usually no legal ramifications if you decide not to follow them to the letter. But if the procedures can be construed as club policy, then employees who feel they haven't been fired "by the book" can turn around and claim wrongful discharge.

#### Exit Lines

In the end, the more grounded you are in the legal and ethical rules of the road, the less likely it is that the next time you give someone the boot, you'll get kicked around in the process.

#### Happy Endings

When you fire someone, it's easy to get so caught up in the substance that you forget all about form. But fine-tuning your approach can make the whole process more humane—and prevent the kind of bad blood that leads to litigation. Here are a few tips from a well-known executive recruiter, Robert Half, and his book *Robert Half on Hiring*.

● **Do it yourself and in private.** Delegating a dismissal to your assistant is unfair all around. Not only do you lose control of how it's handled, but you also set a bad example for others on your staff.

● **Be prepared.** Have all the relevant paperwork ready: Pink slip, owed pay, memos detailing the amount of pension plans accruing, etc.

● **Don't beat around the bush about why you're firing the person.** And don't try to soften the blow by offering false hope of later reinstatement. What you "promise" in a moment of weakness may come back to haunt you.

● **Start strong.** Try leading into the crusher with a positive evaluation: "You're great with the crew, Joe. I just don't think the job is

keyed to your strengths."

● **Be prepared for severe reactions.** Even though studies show that, except in rare cases, employees expect to be fired, the reality still hits hard. Be sympathetic; give the employee some time to accept the news; then focus on the next steps.

● **Be consistent.** Don't promise termination "fringes," like an extended stay in the club's employee quarters, unless you're prepared to offer the same to the next employee you fire.

● **Consider the ripple effect.** Handle other employees' questions and concerns with reasonable candor. And try passing out some reassuring positive feedback; others may be worried that they're next.

#### Worth noting

...

One study showed that the majority of all firings are the employer's—not the employee's—fault. The prime offenders: bad hiring due to poor screening, interviewing, and reference checking; inadequate training; and shoddy supervision.

*The source for this article was Learning International, Inc., a sales and service training company in Stamford, CT.*

## It's a Fact

A test conducted by the USGA proves that golf shoe spikes with recessed flanges cause far less damage to greens than normal spikes.

The average golf shoe has 12 spikes, and the USGA has computed that a player averages 28 paces per green; 28 paces times 24 spikes means 672 impressions; 672 impressions times 18 greens equals 12,096 impressions per round per player. Assuming the 200 rounds are played each day on a course, the greens receive 2,419,200 impressions daily, or more than 72 million holes each month.

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# Scare tactics on pesticides mislead public

by C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General of the U.S.

Reprinted with permission from The Grass Roots, Wisconsin GCSA

Back in my former incarnation as a surgeon, I was distressed when cyclamates were taken out of soft drinks. I had found Fresca very much to my liking.

The reason these substances were banned was because of experiments on rodents. The scientists found that high doses of cyclamates cause cancer in rats.

Translating those scientific studies to someone my size, I would have had to drink four bathtubs full of Fresca daily for about eight years to have an equivalent dosage.

Those who read murder mysteries know that with poison, it is the dose that counts. With coffee, it takes 96 cups to deliver a toxic dose of caffeine, and with turkey, 3.8 tons to deliver a toxic dose of malonaldehyde.

In the days of my early surgical career, the state of the art in detecting the concentration of toxins was beginning to approach a sensitivity of one part per million. Anything below that was considered to be zero residue.

In 1965 we were able to test for parts per billion; by 1975 parts per trillion. And now we are approaching the time when we will be able to test for parts per quadrillion.

Even parts per million is minuscule measurement. Converted to time, it is one second per two years. Parts per billion converts to one second every 32 years. And parts per trillion comes out in time to a sensitivity of one second every 32,000 years.

Americans are concerned because they are confused. They are confused because no one sorts out for them various components of what has become the food safety issue.

The public does not have a very good grasp of the relationship between the dose of a toxic substance and its risk in human beings. Their information comes from those who revel in using

***These scare tactics lead us down the wrong path.***

scare tactics instead of science to warn the public about dangers in the food supply.

These scare tactics lead us down the wrong path. We end up creating concern where it isn't necessary and ignoring concerns that are real.

For instance, some people think that all man-made substances, such as pesticides, should be removed from our food supply, and that everything occurring in nature is beneficial.

To sell nothing except foods untreated by pesticides would not only leave storekeepers with rotting food but would also fail to protect the consumer against molds that in high enough concentration can be lethal.

People who are so worried about pesticides

fail to realize that the cancer rates have dropped over the past 40 years. Stomach cancer has dropped more than 75 percent, while rectal cancer has dropped more than 65 percent.

In the food supply — as in all other public health questions—we need better understanding of the difference between risk and hypothetical risk.

There is risk in almost everything we do, so we need to concentrate on the differences. The chances of your being killed in a motor vehicle (1 in 6,000) are much more real than are threats from pesticides. Yet that doesn't keep us off the road, either as passengers or as pedestrians.



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There is another concern I have. By focusing on a hypothetical risk, like that from pesticides, not only do people find their anxiety levels elevated, but by focusing on a straw man, they also feel they are doing something to improve their health.

In doing so, they often neglect all the other things that they could be doing more readily, more legitimately and with greater effect, such as paying attention to smoking, alcohol, exercise, balanced diet and so on.

Our food is not only the safest but also the most abundant in the world. Science and good sense will eventually prevail, but not until the pesticide terrorists have had another lick or two.

## EDUCATION NOTES

Bethesda Country Club will host a GCSAA technical training seminar on Thursday, November 18. These meetings are designed to provide additional training for the superintendent's support staff.

Specifically, Bethesda's seminar is designed for Irrigation Specialists discussing irrigation efficiency and system maintenance. Participants will learn about:

- ✓ Soil-plant-water relationships to improve field judgment
- ✓ Reducing water usage by raising efficiency
- ✓ Using evapotranspiration values to calculate plant needs

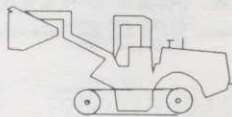
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*Dean Graves,  
Education Chairman*

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## COHOON'S CORNER

- Congratulations to Rob and Joyce Clause on the birth of Hannalore Louise Clause born on September 6, and to Andy and Ann Sheehan on the birth of Kerri Ann Sheehan on September 16.
- Best wishes to Buck Whetsell and Tommy Derry who are recovering after having recent health problems.
- Condolences are offered to the family of long-time member Luther Parsons who passed away recently.
- For those of you who don't yet know, the GCSAA is undergoing a major change in management personnel. John Schilling, Dianna Green, and Robert Ochs have left GCSAA to begin their own company. Replacements to fill their positions are now being sought.
- The MAAGCS has made a

donation to the Disaster Relief Fund set up to help those association members devastated by the flooding in the mid-west. If you would like to make a personal donation, please send it to: Disaster Relief Fund, GCSAA Development Department, P.O. Box 927, Lawrence, KS 66049-0927.

### Dues Increase in 1994

As outlined in Mike Gilmore's article *Looking Toward the Future*, the MAAGCS will be increasing the annual dues from the current \$85 per year to \$120 per year starting in 1994. The increase is based on the responses of the survey sent to all members earlier this year, and to fund those programs that are supported by the membership.

### Swan Creek, from page 1

maintenance practices. I think I got 12 years of experience in three years." He then moved to Havre de Grace and Swan Creek in March of 1989.

Since then he's been busy at Swan Creek. In the last three years they've installed a new irrigation system, tee-to-green cart paths and two restrooms on the course. "We do everything in-house with the help of Mr. Hawkins' construction company," says Ron. "We do the designing, planning and actual installations ourselves. And all in all, despite the trial and error, I've been really happy with the results."



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