

THRU THE GREEN

December, 1998

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California

— Committed to Responsible Turfgrass Management —



Pacific Grove Debuts as December Host

For Pacific Grove Links Superintendent, Mike Leach, it was like coming home after an extended tour of duty. After carving out a niche first as an assistant golf professional at MPCC and then as a golf course superintendent at Corral De Tierra, Leach left the beauty of the Monterey Peninsula for the challenge of growing in the Johnny Miller designed Brighton Crest in 1989. Three years later he was back and he has no intention of leaving anytime soon. Having been in the golf profession all of his life, Leach hopes to make Pacific Grove his last stop. "I feel like I can hang my hat at Pacific Grove," Leach says with a smile.

Choosing a career in golf was a natural for Leach. "My family operated Indian Valley Golf Course in Novato," says Leach, "so it's safe to say I was exposed to the game and course maintenance at a very young age." The family owned operation left its mark on Leach's brothers as well. Terry is the V.P. and Golf Course Superintendent at Indian Valley, and Ray is the Spalding/Hogan representative for Northern California. With a lifetime spent in golf, "Was there anyone who may have influenced your career," I asked? "Certainly my brothers," Leach responded, "and Indian Valley Director of Golf, Jeff McAndrew. Jeff had a way of always making work fun." Leach is also quick to heap praises on peninsula stalwarts John and Bob Zoller. "John introduced me to greenskeeping at Pebble Beach," recalls Leach. The education continued three years later under Bob when he was given the opportunity to complete a two year NCGA internship at MPCC.

So what can NorCal members expect when they tee it up at what is known as, "Poor Man's Pebble Beach?" Two distinct nines, in

part a product of two architects, utilizing two uniquely different land masses, constructed 28 years apart.

The front nine which opened in 1932, is characterized by golf holes with small greens traversing through an inland forest. By contrast the back nine, designed by Jack Neville, is a true Links design over duneland that approaches the sea.

As you are hunting for errant golf shots amongst the forest and dunes, take note of the wildlife and natural landmarks that mark the property. Some of the wildlife you're likely to see include blacktail deer, sealions, sea otters and an assortment of birds. Although not likely to be present in December, the monarch butterfly is a regular visitor, calling Pacific Grove home during their annual migration.

Also of significance is the Point Piños Lighthouse, visible from the back nine. It's history dates all the way back to 1855, and it is currently the longest continuously operating lighthouse in California.

You can expect to see some significant course improvements as well. Since Leach's arrival 6 1/2 years ago, the city approved a capital improvement and equipment program. The result, a new irrigation system on the front nine, enlarged greens, concrete paths, some new bunkers and tees, fairway drainage and plenty of new equipment.

With so many positive improvements, it's easy to see why Leach intends to make Pacific Grove his home for a long while. "It really has been a great opportunity coming back," says Leach, "not only for me professionally but also for my family," which includes his wife of 20 years, Jill, and their three children. ♣

Expect The Unexpected — It's Winter

By Bob Costa, CGCS

I can still remember those days, early in my turf management career when I used to anxiously look forward to winter for a chance to catch my breath after a busy and stressful summer. I had visions of myself relaxing in my office organizing files, putting away stacks of photographs and catching up on my trade magazine reading. That was a fantasy that was short lived. It wasn't long before I realized that winter, like summer brought about its own set of challenges and problems. For golf course superintendents and golfers alike, winter represents significant changes, not all of which are anticipated. Here's what a typical week might look like for a superintendent and his staff.

Monday — Plans have been made to apply a fungicide in advance of a predicted rain on Wednesday. Over the weekend

preparations are made and everything is set to go. The spray technician will be in Monday morning at 4:00 a.m. to get started in advance of play. At 4:15 you receive a call at home, it's the spray tech, the temperature has dipped to 28 degrees. You guessed it, frost! Frustrated, you instruct her to cancel the application. Arriving at your office at 5:30 a.m., you check the thermometer, the temperature is still sub freezing. Moments later the phone rings, it's the pro shop asking for a frost update, they're concerned about getting a tournament group off at 8:30. You share their concern. The challenge, to prepare the course for play in limited time while portions are still frozen. Shortly after 8:00 you swing by the clubhouse to meet with the pro. You are greeted by a group of golfers. Simulta-

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Expect the Unexpected — It's Winter (Concluded)

neously they ask, "How does it look out there, are we ready to go?" As your grip tightens on your coffee cup, you smile and say, "I'll let you know."

Tuesday — The annual leaf drop has begun in earnest. It's a process you have become all too familiar with at Fallenleaf Country Club. During your morning staff meeting, you instruct four employees to blow leaves from the fairways and greens, it's critical that they are removed to accommodate early morning play and so mowing can occur. By six o'clock your blowers are in action. After a morning trip around the golf course you're back in your office, "might as well start organizing those files," you say. "Tomorrow I'm going to organize those pictures, they've been on my desk all summer." Stopping only briefly to check your phone messages you quickly realize your morning plans have changed. It's an angry resident who was awakened shortly after 6:00 by the sound of "those damn blowers". He wants it stopped. Nothing before eight o'clock he screams. "I'll call the county," he threatens, as the call abruptly ends. Next message, it's the head professional. "Just wanted to let you know," he says, "We've had a few complaints from some of the members the last week or so, the leaves are starting to become a problem." Attempting to gain your composure you nervously run your hands through your hair, not much there you think.

Wednesday — You are awakened by the sound of water running through your gutters. Startled, you think, "I thought the rain wasn't supposed to begin until late afternoon." Squinting at the clock you realize it's only 3:00 a.m. Am I dreaming? Glancing at the clock again, you realized it's now four o'clock and you haven't slept a wink. It's raining harder and all you can think about is that tee that you were supposed to sod this morning. You've got 3,000 square feet of sod at the shop ready to install. Everything was ready, now it's all mud. "I can't sleep," you mumble, "I might as well just take a shower and go in early." As you bend over to kiss your wife good bye, she says, "What time is it?" "4:30," you say. "Didn't you promise me that as soon as winter arrived there would be no more early days?" She says. "I promise, this is the last time," you respond as you gently close the door.

Thursday — As you read the morning paper, you shake your head. The headlines read, "Biggest Storm of Season Surprises

Forecasters" Two inches of rain in 24 hours, and the forecast was for around a half inch. "How do these guys keep their jobs?" you wonder. Three hours later your worst fears have been confirmed. Eight trees are down, branches and leaves are strewn everywhere, everyone of the sixty-five bunkers have water in them and much of the sand has been washed from the face. The tee that you had spent \$2,000 dollars to laser level eroded so badly, the drainage is exposed. Shaking your head in disbelief, you try to regain your composure as you lean up against one of the six pallets of sod that rest nearby.

Friday — It's decision time. There is a break in the weather. The long range forecast calls for clear skies today and Saturday, but more rain is due to arrive late Sunday. Glancing at the tournament schedule you note that the Holiday Classic is scheduled for Sunday. Your dilemma is that much of the course is still to wet to mow. Ideally you would like to wait another day, yet you know Saturday is likely to be busy. A short walk on the course confirms your decision. You decide to delay all fairway mowing until Saturday, greens won't be mowed until Sunday. In a move that is guaranteed to cost you a few percentage points in the latest job approval ratings you decide to install temporary greens on four holes. Your objective — to try to have the course in the best possible shape for Sunday.

Saturday — It's your weekend off, you deserve it. While cooking breakfast for your family, the phone rings. Your daughter, as is usually the case, races to answer it. "Dad, it's for you," she says. "It's the golf course." "Don't mean to bother you at home," your assistant says, "but I thought you would want to know the fairway mower got stuck at the top of the hill on #1. We tried to pull it out with the Tractor, but it got stuck too, so then . . ."

** This article was written for the NCGA News and will be appearing in the NCGA News Winter Issue. ↗*

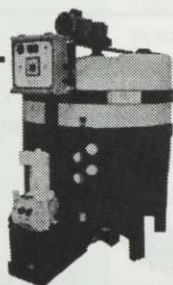
Turf Program Added At January Show

If summer represents the time of year to focus on getting the job done, winter is the time for professional development. Beginning with the Institute in November, and ending with a GCSAA regional seminar in May, Nor Cal Superintendents have plenty of opportunities for continuing education, and now there is more!

Beginning this January, The GCSANC will be participating in the Northern California Turf and Landscape Council's annual show in Santa Clara. The educational program is scheduled for Thursday, January 21st and will include three sessions.

"We were looking for opportunities to partner with the allied associations," said program chairman, Gary Carls, CGCS. "This just seemed like a natural. The NCTLC has historically not been an event that superintendents attend, we're hoping a program designed specifically for golf will provide some additional incentive." Carl's, who was instrumental in putting the program together says the show and the educational sessions are available to all golf industry personnel at no charge.

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