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The Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California

JANUARY-MARCH 2021



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FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

- *Ken Benoit Inspires Golf Facilities to Adopt BMP's*
- *Thinking Outside the Cup*
- *Superintendent Profile: Justin Brimley, Superintendent, Crystal Springs Golf Club*

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COVER PHOTO: Sharp Park Golf Course, featured in this issue

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Executive Director's Report

By **MARC CONNERLY**, GCSANC Executive Director

2020 was a chaotic year, no doubt. But, with the exception of online retail and food delivery services, golf may have fared better than virtually every industry, emerging from the chaos with a dramatic increase in play and a newfound optimism about the future. That uptick in play and optimism has continued in the early weeks of 2021.

While the atmosphere is currently sunny and bright, there are clouds on the horizon. It may be too early to determine if they are fair weather clouds that will harmlessly pass, or if they carry significant storms and upheaval, but they are there and warrant our attention.

One such cloud is a piece of legislation introduced by Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia (D-Downey). The title of AB 672 is "Golf Courses: Open Space and Affordable Housing," which should pique the interest of anybody with ties to golf. Although the legislation is a "spot bill," meaning that the meat has not yet been added to the bones of the bill, it does specify that the intent of the bill is to enact "legislation that would enable the use of underutilized golf courses for open space and affordable housing."

The obvious reason for concern is the prospect of golf courses being bulldozed to create housing, but the more subtle cause for concern is the mindset underlying the proposal; a mindset that golf is dispensable, and that golf courses provided limited value or benefit to communities. This is a very serious issue that goes to the image of the game, and whether or not this bill passes, is a matter that we as an industry must address immediately.

Another cloud on the horizon, or more aptly "absence of a cloud," is water. While COVID-19, wildfires and political mayhem dominated the headlines in 2020, we have experienced another dry winter. There are 12 reservoirs in California, and as of this writing 10 of them are at less than their historical average quantities (expressed in acre-feet), and 8 of those 10 are at less than 75% of their historical average quantities.

Furthermore, the water content of California snow packs is just 60% of average for the same date in prior years, and only 54% of the April 1 average. Those numbers are better than the height of the drought in 2014-2015, but significantly down from 2018-2019 levels.

Finally, the big question virtually every golf course operator is asking is "Will the golfers stay after COVID restrictions are lifted?" Industry forecasters optimistically project that we will be able to manage to retain 20% to 30% of the current increase in rounds. If that is true, most will be very pleased, but it is likely going to come down to how good a job courses have done with capturing customer data, the overall experience that golfers have had while on the course, and how well crafted the outreach messaging is as we return to greater normalcy and competition from other recreational and entertainment activities.

My advice: pay attention to the clouds and hope they bring storms in a literal sense, and much less so figuratively.



From the Field

By **JEFF JENSEN**, GCSAA Field Staff, Southwest Region

I hope you had a great holiday season and your 2021 is off to a running start! 2020 was not what we envisioned, but there is some light at the end of the tunnel moving into the new year. As you read this, vaccines are being distributed to frontline workers and vulnerable populations and hopefully things will be back to some semblance of normal late this summer or early fall.

Please begin to think about your facility donating a foursome for the 2021 Rounds 4 Research auction. The dates haven't been officially set yet for the Spring auction, but we are already taking donations at <https://www.eifg.org/research/rounds-4-research>.

We realize that many facilities are seeing record breaking play and donating can be difficult, but this is a great opportunity to assist your local chapter in raising funds for research, education and advocacy purposes. 80 percent of all funds raised through the auction goes back to the participating facilities home chapter.

You have the ability to set blackout dates and times that work best for your course. Resort, private, daily fee and municipal courses are all welcome to participate in the auction and it is a great way to market your facility due to the national nature of the auction.

Several Southwest chapters have experienced success over the past years including the Hawaii GCSAA who raised nearly \$6,000 during the 2020 auction.

In closing, I would like to thank those members who have signed up to be a GCSAA Grassroots Ambassador. We still have numerous openings available in Southern California and it is a great opportunity to work as a liaison between the golf industry and your member of Congress.

As we shift from the pandemic back to normal business, golf will once again be under the microscope for its water and pesticide use, taxes and beneficial use of open space. It is important that we get the message out about the games economic, environmental and social impacts. Please contact me if you are interested in participating in the program.

Thank you for your support and if you have any questions, please email me at jjensen@gcsaa.org and follow me on Twitter at GCSAA_SW for industry updates.

Jeff

“The Ambassador program has broadened my horizons allowing me to experience an entirely different side of the industry many GCSAA members need to be more aware of. The decisions made by Congress are very important to the daily operations of golf facilities and getting involved in the process has been both eye opening and rewarding. “

Brandon Williams
Director of Agronomy
St. Mark Golf Club [CA-50]



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Bonus From The Field

By **JEFF JENSEN**, GCSAA Field Staff, Southwest Region

Benoit inspires golf facilities to adopt BMPs during his journey across America
Founder of Eco Turf Consulting pedals nearly 3,400 miles over 51 days



“I named my tour the ‘Connect To Protect Tour’ as a nod to connecting with superintendents in a way which would hopefully inform of the importance of BMPs and their relationship to protecting the environment, particularly as it relates to water conservation and quality, pollinator and wildlife habitat,”

Eco Turf Consulting Founder Ken Benoit, CGCS, recently completed a journey across America on bicycle to promote the development and adoption of BMPs.

A 26-year member of GCSAA, Benoit resides in Bedford, NY. and served over two decades as a golf course superintendent including a stint as President of the Metropolitan GCSA. His firm specializes in the implementation of BMPs, assisting golf facilities in developing a customized approach to course management, and maintenance.

Benoit began his journey on August 14th in Greenwich, Connecticut and peddled his way across America arriving at Bandon Dunes Golf Resort in Bandon, Oregon on October 3rd. The journey encompassed 51 days (36 days of actual riding) with Benoit riding 3,397 miles.

Benoit's love of cycling, golf, and the environment, along with GCSAA's goal of having BMPs in 50 states by the end of 2020, led him to using a bike trip as a platform to promote BMPs. Benoit has served as a consultant on BMPs for 14 individual states.

“I named my tour the ‘Connect To Protect Tour’ as a nod to connecting with superintendents in a way which

would hopefully inform of the importance of BMPs and their relationship to protecting the environment, particularly as it relates to water conservation and quality, pollinator and wildlife habitat,” said Benoit.

Benoit took a northern route through 13 states, stopping along the way at 14 golf facilities to consult and assist with their BMPs:

- Fairview Country Club – Greenwich, CT.
- Bedford Golf & Tennis Club- Bedford, NY.
- Centre Hills Country Club – State College, PA.
- Muirfield Village Golf Club – Dublin, OH.
- Brickyard Crossing – Indianapolis, IN.
- Mt. Hawley Country Club – Peoria, IL.
- Finkbine Golf Club – Iowa City, IA.
- The Prairie Club – Valentine, NE.
- Fossil Island Golf Club – Kemmerer, WY.
- Hillcrest Country Club- Boise, ID.
- Silvies Valley Ranch- Seneca, OR.
- Sunset Bay Golf Club- Coos Bay, OR.
- Bandon Dunes Golf Resort, Bandon, OR.

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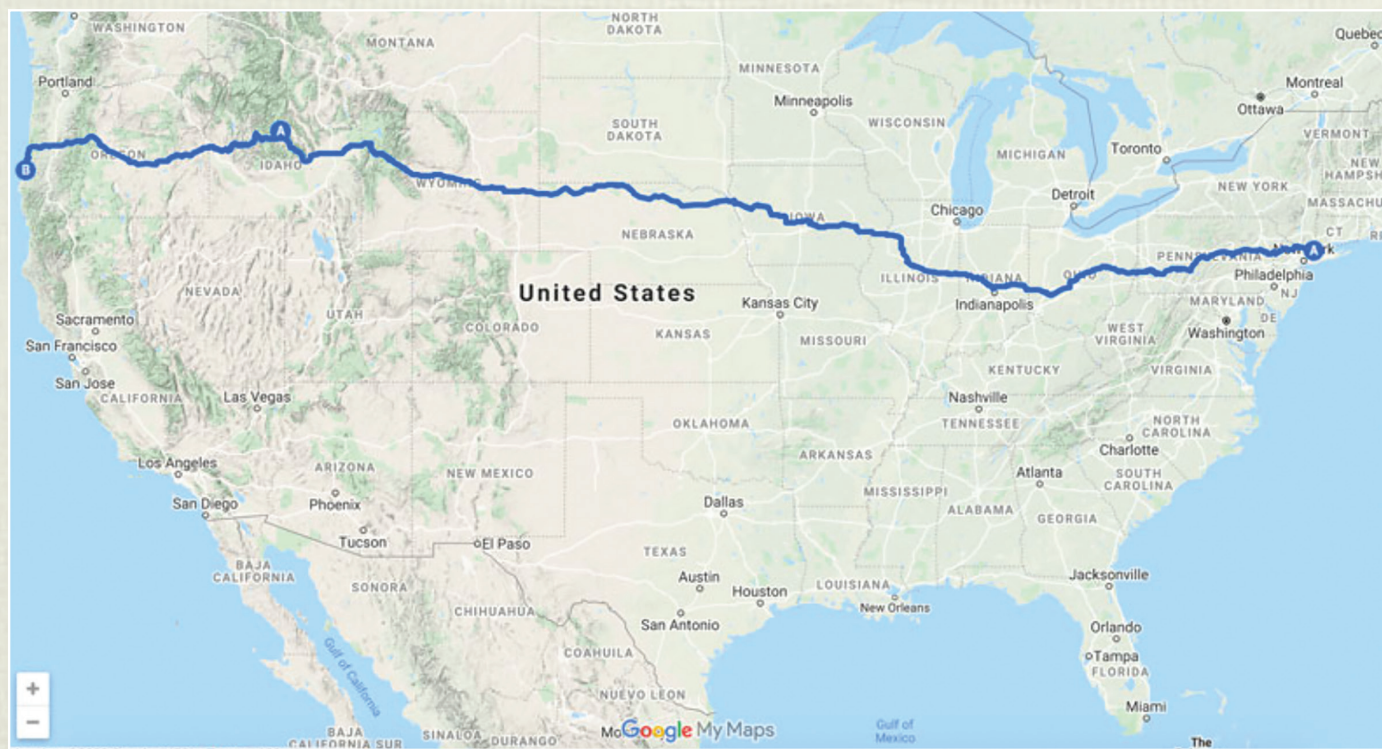
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In addition to meeting with superintendents, some of Benoit's favorite memories of the trip included crossing the Continental Divide, seeing the Tetons for the first time, spending a night in a teepee on the North Platte River, and having the chance to meet up with his sisters in Columbus, OH. and Coos Bay, OR.

Benoit's journey was both mentally and physically demanding. "Each day of riding presents mental challenges," said Benoit. "Riding 100 miles per day was challenging mentally but also motivating in another sense. Before the start of my tour, I stated my intention to average 100 miles per day and was determined to keep to that goal. Throughout the ride I had moments when I wanted to stop short of 100 miles but it was personally important for me to stick to that goal, which served as a major source of motivation to keep pedaling on days when I had a strong desire to stop short."

"I faced many small and not so small physical challenges along the way," said Benoit. "Saddle sores, a head cold, nerve damage to my hands from the pressure point on the handlebars and most critically, an Achilles issue that I thought could end or at least delay my trip."

"The most important lesson I learned was really a reminder of what we all know but often lose sight of... it's important to put effort into the things which we feel are important," stated Benoit. "I realized that, anything

important in my life, requires a connection in order to protect it."

As we approach the end of a very difficult year for most of us, Ken's journey across the country served as an inspiration for me and many other GCSAA members during a very turbulent time.

"When I embarked on my tour I was feeling down about where we were at as a country. It seemed obvious to me that we were deeply divided, and not in a way which allowed for acceptance of personal expression, but in a way that seemed closed minded and harmful," said Benoit. "What I discovered while riding across the country and making myself open to having conversation with the people I ran into, is that the United States is a pure representation of its people. Meaning there is good and bad in all of us just like there is good and bad throughout the country. But, after spending a lot of time speaking with fellow Americans across the country I discovered, overwhelmingly, that the vast majority of Americans are good and caring people who want what's best for the country."

Thanks to Ken for sharing some insights on his amazing journey, and I hope it serves as some inspiration as we lead into what is sure to be a better and brighter 2021.

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Thinking Outside the Cup

By **BRIAN BOYER**, GCSANC Past President; Superintendent, Cinnabar Hills Golf Club

Superintendent Jay Neunsinger of Boundary Oak Golf Course has begun to think outside the cup. Having a conversation with his local Starbucks manager, Jay asked the question, “What are you doing with all of your coffee grounds?”

“What are you doing with all of your coffee grounds?”

Starbucks serves freshly-brewed coffee to millions of customers each day. But many may not know they can also pick up a free bag of used coffee grounds to enrich their gardens and compost.

Starbucks started its Grounds for Your Garden program in 1995, which is offered on a first-come, first-served basis in participating stores where local codes permit. Even the packaging has been reused – baristas scoop spent coffee grounds into the empty bags originally used to ship espresso beans to stores.

“Grounds for Your Garden is a win-win for both Starbucks and our customers,” said Jim Hanna, director on Starbucks Global Responsibility team. “We can keep valuable material out of landfills and put it to good use.”

In its 20 years, Grounds for Your Garden has evolved to become an important part of Starbucks effort to reduce the environmental impact of its stores. Although composting may not be commercially available in all municipalities, the program serves as another way to reuse coffee grounds.

Jay asked if they could work out an arrangement to allow Jay to receive all of the grounds. The owner of the local Starbucks franchise that he frequents owns multiple locations within the City of Walnut Creek, and they have arranged to have their grounds delivered to Boundary Oak on a weekly basis.

“Our vision is to recycle and reduce the waste in our stores as much as possible,” Hanna said. “This is one way we can accomplish this objective while providing something for our customers at the same time.”

Pre-packaged bags of Grounds for Your Garden may not be available in all stores. Check with your barista to see if used coffee grounds are available at your local Starbucks.



About Starbucks Global Responsibility

Starbucks has always believed that they can – and should – have a positive impact on the communities we serve one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time. As we have grown to more than 20,000 stores in 67 countries, so too has our commitment to use our scale for good. It is our vision that together we will elevate our partners, customers, suppliers and neighbors to create positive change. We are innovators, leaders and contributors to an inclusive society and a healthy environment so that everyone we touch can endure and thrive.

It's no wonder Jay has received numerous GCSAA ELGA awards over the years, and we hope this tip might provide you with an idea for working with your local Starbucks.



Zoom Fatigue Ugh!

Along with phrases such as “social distancing” and “new normal,” the term “Zoom fatigue” (or “webinar fatigue”) has also entered our vernacular over the course of the last year. Intended to describe growing weary or tired from excessive online meetings and educational sessions, the fatigue is real.

Researchers at Stanford University recently released the first peer-reviewed, psychological study of Zoom fatigue, according to www.fastcompany.com. They discovered four different causes and helpful solutions for each.

1. Constant close-up eye contact is intense. In a typical Zoom discussion, the amount of eye contact far exceeds what you would experience during real-life interactions. And faces on a Zoom call typically are larger and closer than in real-life work discussions.

Solution: Minimize the face sizes of attendees into grid view, and sit back a bit to allow yourself more personal space.

2. Watching yourself during video chats is exhausting. In real life, you spend much less time looking at your reflection. The researchers cite studies showing when seeing one’s own reflection, people are more critical of themselves, which is stressful.

Solution: Confirm your lighting and setup look good; then, adjust the settings to hide your view of yourself.

3. Video calls reduce our mobility. During typical in-person discussions, people move around. On Zoom, people sit immobile for hours. Jeremy Bailenson, founding director of Stanford’s Virtual Human Interaction Lab, said: “There’s a growing research that says that when people are moving, they’re performing better cognitively.”

Solution: Create a wider visual field for your camera; for example, an external camera often allows you more space to move than a laptop camera.

4. Video calls are cognitively exhausting. Your brain works much harder to send and receive cues through a screen, leading to hours of exaggerated expressions and increased concentration.

Solution: When feasible, turn off your camera for breaks and turn your body away from the screen.

These fatigue inducers are not specific to Zoom—they can apply to all videoconferencing. The researchers hope videoconferencing apps will incorporate solutions to these problems into their basic setups.





Superintendent Profile: **Justin Brimley,** *Superintendent, Crystal Springs Golf Club*

By **BRIAN BOYER**, GCSANC Past President; Superintendent, Cinnabar Hills Golf Club

This edition's interview is with Justin Brimley, Golf Course Superintendent at Crystal Springs Golf Club in Burlingame. Justin's abilities to grow grass had been on my radar for some time, but it was a comment from Nick Checklinis recently that pushed my desire for an interview. Prior to Crystal, Justin was at Deep Cliff, and Nick had mentioned that Deep Cliff, under Justin's watch, had never been better and Nick had been playing there since he was a wee lad. High praise coming from Nick. Let's get to know Justin a little better than we did yesterday.

Where did you grow up and how did you end up in Northern California? I grew up in Rocklin, CA.

So, how did you end up in turf? I was working for Del Webb on the Sun City Roseville course construction, now called Timber Creek. Mike Kaveney saw I had talent and brought me into maintenance.

Where have you worked? I started construction at Sun City Roseville. I then worked my way through all the positions at Sunset Whitney Country Club. I left Sunset Whitney for the NCGA AIT position at Diablo Country Club. I followed that position up with an assistant position with Walt at Green Hills, and after 2 years went to Stockton Country Club to work with Jim Alwine.

I wanted to get back to the Bay Area, and took a position with Chad Twaddle at Santa Clara Golf and Tennis. When Chad left, I took a position with Sharon Heights. Sharon led to Crystal Springs, and just prior to accepting the Pajaro Valley Superintendent position, Deep Cliff opened and I got my first Superintendent's job. I spent just over two years at Deep Cliff turning that course around, and I got the job at Crystal.



Where did you go to school? I got my AA in business from Sierra College, and through Sharon Heights I earned my turf degree from Rutgers University, where I graduated 4th in my class. Prior to Rutgers, I had interviewed for some Superintendent jobs, but I didn't have the paper. Tons of experience, but no paper.

Having been a Superintendent for 3 years now, what defines a good salesperson to you? Someone who asks, "what can I do for you?" Someone who gives me space, but is there when I need them. A good product at a fair price.

With the same preface, what defines a good assistant? Someone I can trust and rely on.

You are now the second CourseCo Superintendent I've interviewed, so I'll ask the same question I asked Thomas. If CourseCo were to present Crystal Springs with an additional \$250K for 2021, what are the top items you'd be spending it on? I'd first fix the incoming low power phase to the pump house. I have to reset the pump station 3 times per week. After that, I'd purchase some new equipment; particularly a front end loader.

What is your favorite piece of equipment or tool to use on the golf course? An aerifier.

What do you like to do outside of the golf course? Outside of the golf course, I like to golf and travel. Europe is where I'd like to go first outside of the country. I'd like to play St. Andrews and I have friends in France and Russia I'd like to visit.

Is there anything about you that most may not know that you care to share? I've read everything that Stephen King has written.

Who do you consider a mentor(s)? Todd Lyijynen and Mike Kaveny.

If you didn't end up in golf, what would you be doing? I would have pursued being a pilot more. My dad was close to being a pilot in the military, but he was color blind.

I hear that you got a new double wide on property. What's it like and what's it like living on property? I like it a lot. I'm in nature and I have no commute, no rent, and no utilities. I can aggressively work towards my retirement.

When given the chance, what candy are you grabbing for? A PayDay. Literally and Figuratively!

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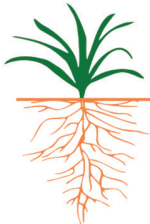
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The PGA Championship and San Francisco's Munis Now and Then

Sharp Park Pro Willie Goggin was runner-up to PGA Champion Gene Sarazen

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It was Sunday, August 13, 1933 in the Milwaukee suburb of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, and 5,000 spectators gathered at the Blue Mound Country Club to gallery the 36-hole final match of the Professional Golfers' Association Championship. The finalists were the 10-year PGA veteran Gene Sarazen and a newcomer, Willie Goggin.

Then, as now, golf's show was going on amid deep national troubles. The Great Depression was in its fourth year. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was in his eighth month as President. And New York Times headlines that week included high unemployment, trade wars, fascism on the rise in Germany, and a Cuban crisis.

Blue Mound then was a "short but tricky" 6,270-yard, par-70 course built on Wisconsin farmland in 1926 by Seth Raynor. The tees and greens that week were well-kept. The unwatered fairways were brown, hard, and rolling.

Sarazen, 31 years old, 5'6" tall, and "oozing all over with typical Sarazen confidence," was the well-established favorite: winner of the PGA Championship in 1922, the US Open in 1922, and both the US Open and the British Open in 1932.

Goggin, at 6' tall and 200 pounds, was described by The Milwaukee Journal as "a big, powerful, steel-nerved linksman." The New York Times' accounts variously called him "the big clouter from the Pacific Coast" and "the professional of the San Francisco municipal course." In fact, the 27-year-old Goggin was in his second year as golf pro at Sharp Park, the Alister MacKenzie-designed,

San Francisco-owned seaside public links that opened in April 1932 on the city's southern coastal outskirts. (At the time, it was an unincorporated area known as Salada Beach; today it is the suburban town of Pacifica.)

The PGA Championship in those days was an endurance contest: 36 holes of medal qualifying on Tuesday cut the field to 32 players, who then played 36-hole single-elimination matches each day Wednesday through Saturday to reach Sunday's 36-hole final match. Goggin shot 5-over-par 145 in the qualifying round (146 qualified), and then was: (Rd. 1) 5 under par over 33 holes to beat 1928 and 1929 PGA Champ Leo Diegel 4-and-3; (Rd. 2) 5 under par for 27 holes to beat 1929 US Open runner-up Al Espinoza 9-and-7; (Rd. 3) even par for 31 holes for a 6-5 win over Paul Runyan, who later won the PGA Championship in 1934 and 1938; (Rd. 4) even par for 36 holes for a 1-up semi-finals victory over fellow-newcomer Jimmy Hines, an assistant at Long Island's Timber Point Club. Over five days of qualifying and match play through the semi-finals, Goggin was 5 under par for 163 holes of golf.

In Sunday's final round, Sarazen – as he had all week – used only seven clubs, his favorite being his low-lofted iron "jigger". He shot one-under-par 69 in the morning round to take a 1-up lead over Goggin, who hung-in with 70. In the afternoon round, Sarazen birdied three of the opening four holes, held a 3-up lead after 9, and closed-out the match on the 32nd hole, for a 5-4 championship win and a \$1,000 winner's check. Over Sunday's 32 holes, Sarazen had 51 putts. By the end

of the day Sunday, Willie Goggin, the “clouter” from Salada Beach, had played 195 holes of championship golf over six days in three under par.

Willie Goggin stayed in golf, took a club pro job at the prestigious Century Country Club in Westchester County, New York, designed by Charles H. Allison (a one-time partner of MacKenzie and his mentor, H.S. Colt). In 1959 Goggin won the PGA Senior Championship at the age of 53 at Dunedin, a Donald Ross-designed course near Tampa, FL. Turns out the big guy was not only a big hitter, but a connoisseur of Hall of Fame golf architects.

For his part, Sarazen two years later won the 1935 Masters Tournament at Alistair MacKenzie’s Augusta National Golf Club, on his way to Golf’s Hall of Fame.

Sarazen, Bobby Jones, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, and Tiger Woods are the only men to win all of Golf’s Major Championships.

And then there’s Blue Mound Country Club and golf in troubled times. The club went bankrupt in 1935, but was bought out of receivership and reincarnated as Blue Mound Golf and Country Club. Blue Mound was originally scheduled host the PGA’s Junior Ryder Cup Tournament in September 2020. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, that event has been rescheduled for 2021.

Gene Sarazen (left) receives congratulations of Willie Goggin of Salada Beach, CA, after winning the Professional Golfers’ Association Championship in Milwaukee, defeating Goggin in the finals, 5 and 4.

(Associated Press Photo, Aug. 13, 1933)



Sharp Park Clubhouse, 1930’s

Sources:

New York Times, Timesmachine: <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/browser>

San Mateo Times, Aug. 14, 1933: <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/28547917/willie-goggin1933-0814/>

Blue Mound Golf and Country Club, History: https://www.bluemoundgcc.com/About_Us/History

Member Engagement

We asked GCSANC members to engage with us on a variety of topics. Here are their responses in pictures.

We asked members how they manage their mental health. Thank you to Mike Souza, Superintendent at Richmond Country Club, for providing these photos demonstrating his mental health outlets.



Michael Souza Mental Health - Winter



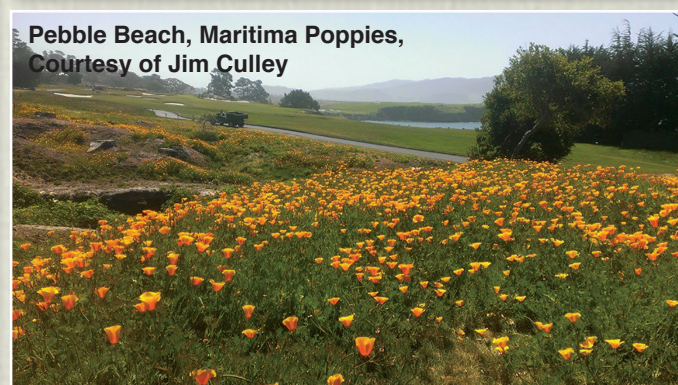
Michael Souza Mental Health - Summer

We asked members to submit photos of their golf course trees. Thank you to Troy Flanagan, Superintendent, Olympic Club, for providing this very unique tree adorning his course.

Olympic Club, Monterey Cypress Tree on #5, Lake Course



Thank you to Tim Powers, Superintendent, Poplar Creek Golf Course, and Jim Culley of Seed King Enterprises for submitting these flower photos in response to our request.





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