Milwaukee Country Club

Dan Quast delegates responsibility and encourages ideas to turn turf graduates into great superintendents.

by **Bruce F.Shank,** executive editor

Danny Quast *and arborist Dennis Fermenich stand in the Club's nursery.*

When the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America coined the term "thinking superintendent" for information-sharing sessions at its conference and show, it may have been thinking of Dan Quast, superintendent at Milwaukee Country Country, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Quast, a 20-year veteran superintendent, enjoys the respect of MCC's 350 members, and consequently their support for his "thinking". They support a full-time arborist and crew, a tree replacement program to counteract losses from Dutch Elm Disease, a tree nursery, a student training program, an annual bluegrass reduction program, and Quast's time away from the Club to travel to national turf conferences and to be an instructor at Jacobsen Manufacturing Company's student seminars in Racine, WI.

After graduating from the turf program at the University of Massachusetts, Quast was hired by W.A. Cleary Chemical Corp. to work on its golf course, then became superintendent at Troy Country Club in Troy, OH, and later superintendent at Springfield Country Club in Springfield, OH. He moved to MCC in the fall of 1973 to help implement a number of improvements in the course recommended by golf course architect Robert Trent Jones.

Milwaukee Country Club was founded in 1926. The course, designed by Colt Allison, served its members faithfully for more than 42 years when the decision was made to host the Walker Cup in 1968. Fairways were narrowed and permanent bridges were built to cross the Milwaukee River.

About this time the membership started to feel the course was too rewarding to the low handicapper and too punishing to the high handicapper. "The course needed to be updated," says Quast. "In three short years we made all the changes Jones suggested. We repositioned and added traps. We expanded tees to withstand increased play and to make the golf shot more challenging. Aprons arounds greens were eliminated and some greens were expanded and traps added. Trees were planted along certain fairways to create doglegs. In general, the hazzards were made more realistic for today's golfer."

Clippings are removed *on German bent fairways to reduce annual bluegrass.*

Reducing Poa annua

Tees, fairways, and greens at Milwaukee Country Club are a mixture of South German and Seaside bentgrass. A major problem with annual bluegrass appears to be solved by a program put together by Quast, USGA Green Section Director Stan Zontek, and Jim Latham of the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission. It combines clipping removal, reduced compaction by use of light-weight equipment on fairways, low fertilization levels, an improved irrigation system, and use of Rubigan on greens.

"The course needed updating. It was too rewarding to low handicappers and too punishing for high handicappers." Dan Quast.

Fairways are mowed with a prototype Jacobsen HF-5 with baskets to remove clippings. Tractors and reel gangs are confined to the bluegrass roughs. Milorganite is the only fairway fertilizer. A two-row Toro Irrrigation system was installed in 1981. Fairways are aerified once per year in September.

Quast uses Cleary's FLUF on the greens. He is very pleased at the new turf fungicides (Bayleton, Subdue and Rubigan) and uses them all for his greens depending upon the problem. "No one chemical is a panacea for all turf diseases," Quast says. "I mix the new fungicides with Thiram to cover as many diseases as I need." Quast is especially pleased with the secondary benefit of Rubigan as a supressant to annual bluegrass.

Arborist on location

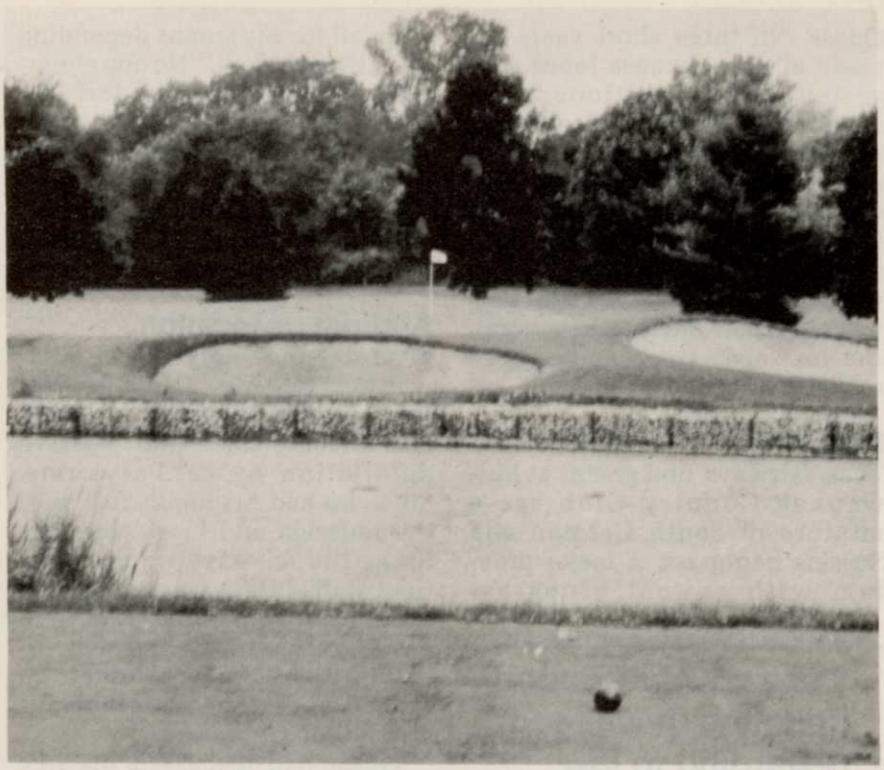
When Quast arrived at Milwaukee Country Club he was faced by the casualties of Dutch Elm Disease(DED) and massive defoliation by cankerworms. Since he had his hands full with the redesign and knew the elms lining the fairways would eventually fall to DED, Quast proposed the club hire a full-time arborist to develop a treatment and replacement program for trees, and to be responsible for the plantings around the clubhouse.

Quast had discussed his tree problems with Dennis Fermenich who was completing work for the North Shore Elm Research Project. The challenge interested Fermenich so much he applied for the job and got it.

The first year Fermenich cut down 102 elms on the course and took counts of the elm bark beetle using pheromone traps. He used weak elms to attract the beetles, then killed them with tree-killing injections of cacodylic acid. Removal of dead and dying trees, dormant oil sprays, injection of Arbotect, and fertilization of healthy elms has reduced the loss to one or two trees per year.

Fermenich replaced the elms with a variety of trees, including zelkova, plane tree, maple, linden, honeylocust, pin oak, red oak, and ash. These younger trees act as a frame for the remaining, majestic elms.

Many of the trees come from the nursery established by Fermenich behind the maintenance building. Whips are purchased and grown in the club's nursery to adapt to local conditions. They are moved onto the course when they reach three- to four-inch caliper.



Fermenich and his crew of two keep the clubhouse grounds immaculate and act as a reserve to the golf course crew when necessary.

The next challenge for Fermenich is the tussock moth which has doubled each of the last three

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years. He has already established a prevention program using Bacillus thuringiensis. He hopes to catalog each tree in the next

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The Milwaukee River *separates one tee from a green. Wire baskets filled with rock stabilize shoreline.*

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year to predict other problems and needs.

The golfization of turf grads

When Quast graduated from the University of Massachusetts turf program he knew little about becoming a superintendent. Leo Cleary, brother of W.A. Cleary of Somerset, NJ, hired Quast to work on the company course. He taught him the ropes of being a superintendent. Now Quast tries to do the same thing for recent turf graduates at MCC.

Each year Quast meets some of the best turf graduates in the country when he attends state and national turf shows and teaches at Jacobsen's student seminars. He picks one or two at a time to learn the ropes at his course. After two years they are ready to be superintendent almost anywhere says Quast.

Steve Blendell, a graduate of the University of Massachusetts, recently left the assistant superintendent position at MCC to be superintendent of another Milwaukee area course. Mike van Sistine, a Michigan State University graduate moved up to assistant superintendent. His previous responsibility was to manage the installation of the new irrigation system. Karen Bruning, a graduate of ABAC, Tifton, GA, is quarterbacking the Poa annua reduction program.

"No one chemical is a panacea for all turf diseases." Quast

Quast believes strongly in the GCSAA certification program for superintendents. He is also editor of the newsletter of the Wisconsin chapter of GCSAA. He knows that much is gained by working with other superintendents and with suppliers, such as the Jake HF-5 basket arrangement which is now on the market. He not only wants superintendents to think for themselves, but to think together.

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