

# RESULTS YOU CAN SEE

Experience the difference with SePRO's turf plant growth regulation solutions - where innovation meets performance. Our products are designed to work as hard as you do, delivering results you can see: a visible difference with unmatched regulation and extended control.

**Legacy<sup>®</sup>**  
Turf Growth Regulator

**Cutless<sup>®</sup> MEC**  
Turf Growth Regulator

**Musketeer<sup>®</sup>**  
Turf Growth Regulator



◀ **SELECT THE RIGHT PGR FOR YOU**

Always read and follow label directions. Cutless, Legacy & Musketeer are trademarks of SePRO Corporation.  
Copyright ©2024 SePRO Corporation.



317-580-8282 | SEPRO.COM



MARCH 2024 | [golfcourseindustry.com](http://golfcourseindustry.com)

# GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY



**HOW  
DO  
YOU**

# **HIRE?**

In this transient labor era, astute superintendents are still finding ways to construct high-achieving teams. What are their secrets?





## A MERGER THAT HAS TURF AT HEART

**Aquatrols®** and the turf division of **Precision Laboratories™**, two of the leading brands in turf management, have merged to form The Aquatrols Company. This merger brings together the most comprehensive portfolio of soil surfactant and adjuvant products in the industry.

The Aquatrols Company will continue to offer the full line of Aquatrols and Precision Laboratories soil surfactants, as well as Precision Laboratories tank mix adjuvants, colorants and additives. **VerdeLNX™**, a novel line of advanced nutrient products, will be added to the portfolio in early 2024.

### EXPLORE OUR STORY

CURIOUS ABOUT THE AQUATROLS COMPANY? LEARN MORE AT [WWW.AQUATROLSCOMPANY.COM](http://WWW.AQUATROLSCOMPANY.COM)



18

# HOW DO YOU HIRE?

In this transient labor era, astute superintendents are still finding ways to construct high-achieving teams. What are their secrets?

## COLUMNS

- 16 OUTSIDE THE ROPES**  
Tim Moraghan: Changing lanes? Not so fast
- 26 GAME PLAN**  
Henry DeLozier: The golf boom and you
- 38 GOLF THERAPY**  
Bradley S. Klein: Two management approaches
- 50 AMERICA'S GREENKEEPER**  
Matthew Wharton: Making the move, Part 2

## DEPARTMENTS

- 4 TEEING OFF:** Calendar collaboration or clash?
- 6 NOTEBOOK:** Celebrating social leaders
- 14 WONDERFUL WOMEN:** Natalie Russell
- 40 TRAVELS WITH TERRY:** Equipment ideas
- 49 CLASSIFIEDS / INDEX**

## FEATURES

Cover package

### 18 HOW DO YOU HIRE?

In this transient labor era, astute superintendents are still finding ways to construct high-achieving teams. What are their secrets?

- A case for more full-timers
- The long- and short-term of it



47

Management

### 35 PROACTIVE CARE

Everyone benefits from a curated culture of safety. Communication is your best friend for establishing that culture, but it's only part of the job.

Spotlight

### 42 TURF DOESN'T WEAR A TIMEX

In D.C., legislators are lobbying to change how most of us change our clocks. What would that mean for golf course maintenance teams?

Short course stories

### 47 A DIFFERENT KIND OF CROP

The 1990s cranberry crisis spurred Will Stearns and his family to give golf a go. But they kept their bogs.



**G** pbi/gordon  
CORPORATION  
Employee-Owned

27

**TURF  
REPORTS  
FUNGICIDES**



# ARE THEY REALLY COLLABORATING?

**H**arrogate, England, and London are separated by 210 driving miles. Another 4,580 nautical miles separate London from Phoenix. Daytona Beach is 3,727 nautical miles from London. Daytona Beach is another 1,606 nautical miles from Phoenix. Flying from Phoenix back to Florida, Orlando specifically, requires traveling 1,606 more nautical miles.

Everything above assumes somebody finds — and can afford — direct flights.

If miles and maps aren't your thing, study this early 2024 calendar:

- BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition, Jan. 23-25, Harrogate, England
- Sports Field Managers Association Conference and Exhibition, Jan. 22-25, Daytona Beach
- GCSAA Conference and Trade Show, Jan. 29-Feb. 1, Phoenix
- Turfgrass Producers International Education Conference and Field Day, Feb. 4-8, Orlando

Somehow a few companies found a way to support all four events. These companies deserve more than a “thanks.” They deserve better from the associations they play huge roles in supporting.

For all the chatter, press releases and social media postings about partnerships, alliances and collaborations, the organizations responsible for leading the turfgrass industry are myopic when it comes to their revenue-generating meetups. Never mind they are all seeking financial investments from the same corporate pot. Fortunately, that pot has increased the past four years, thanks to record U.S. golf play.

The turfgrass industry is cyclical. The corporate pot will eventually contract. And then what?

Associations exist to serve their members and the industry has some wonderful groups dedicated to promoting member-oriented efforts and initiatives. But modern associations can't optimally function without corporate support. Turfgrass associations must engage many of the same companies to fund their programming, staffing and advocacy. By not scattering significant turfgrass industry events over multiple months, associations are creating expensive and exhaustive scenarios for midsize and small companies. Family plans were shuffled or delayed in late January and early February. Office productivity was lost.

Event planning represents a tough — and big — business. Schedules must be set years in advance. Everything appears seamless on the show floor. Behind the scenes, dozens of dedicated employees are sweating, knowing the viability of their association hinges on the attendee and exhibitor experience. Forcing exhibitors to be in multiple places with little recovery time threatens their experience.

Nothing is likely to change in the next few years. Securing quality venues requires advance booking. At least six months are implausible for national/international events because of the immense workloads facing superintendents, sports field managers and turf producers during peak-demand periods. The work calendar leaves October, November, December, January, February and March as event options.

Creating a cushion between events means association leaders must proactively communicate with each other. Conversations about who's holding events when and where in 2028, 2029 and 2030 should already be occurring. A consensus about what's best for members *and* exhibitors must be reached. The brightest leaders will grab the phone or craft emails to fellow association leaders. Waiting for somebody else to make the first call or a concession doesn't provide effective solutions.

Many of us consider what we do and the people we serve as the center of the working world. That mentality protects us and our stakeholders. It also can make it tougher for others to do their jobs or support our efforts. A few groups might have to surrender a traditional date in the spirit of collaboration.

The GCSAA, BIGGA, SFMA and TPI are interconnected. Their members are trying to produce and maintain the highest quality turfgrass within the means of their allocated resources. If enough people comprehend the value of high-quality turfgrass, corporations will find and support our industry. Associations will flourish, thus extending the tradition of tremendous advocacy and programming.

Unfortunately, it's not all bling, all the time for the turfgrass industry. Economies collapse and recreational habits change. Will companies be able to justify three straight weeks of jet-setting, entertaining, networking and supporting interconnected efforts in 2029 like they did in 2024?

Now is the time to talk it out. **GCI**



*Guy Cipriano*  
**Guy Cipriano**  
Editor-in-Chief  
gcipriano@gie.net

**MISSION STATEMENT**  
*To provide an independent, innovative and inclusive voice for today's — and tomorrow's — golf industry professionals.*

**Vol. 56 No. 5**

GIE Media, Inc.  
5811 Canal Road  
Valley View, Ohio 44125  
Phone: 800-456-0707  
Fax: 216-525-0515

**PUBLISHER**

**Dave Szy**  
dszy@gie.net

**EDITORIAL**

**Guy Cipriano**

Editor-in-Chief gcipriano@gie.net

**Matt LaWell**

Managing Editor mlawell@gie.net

**Terry Buchen**

Senior Contributing Technical Editor

**GRAPHICS / PRODUCTION**

**Jim Blayney**

Creative Director

**Kaitlin Sellers**

Advertising Production Coordinator

**SALES**

**Russell Warner**

National Sales Manager  
rwarner@gie.net • 216-393-0293

**Jimmy Clark**

Account Representative  
jclark@gie.net • 216-393-0220

**CORPORATE**

**Richard Foster**

Chairman

**Chris Foster**

President and CEO

**Dan Moreland**

Publisher Emeritus

**James R. Keefe**

Executive Vice President

**Kelly Antal**

Controller

**Christina Warner**

Director of Data Acquisition

**Michelle Wisniewski**

Production Manager

**Maria Miller**

Director, Conferences and Events

**Irene Sweeney**

Marketing Director

Golf Course Industry is a member of:  
Golf Course Superintendents  
Association of America  
National Golf Foundation  
Golf Course Builders Association of America  
The Irrigation Association  
Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment

Todd can connect and manage  
the easy way.



JOHN DEERE

Be on the course, even offsite, with OnLink.

Todd Bohn is the Director of Agronomy at Desert Mountain. See how he can manage to keep his finger on the pulse of all 7 World Class Golf Courses with OnLink and keep Desert Mountain on top of the world. Desert Mountain is connected. Connect at [JohnDeere.com/Golf](http://JohnDeere.com/Golf)

Trusted by the Best.



OFFICIAL  
GOLF COURSE  
EQUIPMENT  
SUPPLIER

[JohnDeere.com/Golf](http://JohnDeere.com/Golf)



# NOTEBOOK



Left to right, Ian Gallagher, Emily Casey, Zach Bauer, Chad Allen, Dr. Ben McGraw, Rob Uzar and Ty Robb (in paper cutout spirit).

## CELEBRATION TIME



Kaminski Award winner Chad Allen is front and center.

Golf Course Industry and Aquatrols honored the 2024 Super Social Media Award winners during the rebranded Social Media Celebration at the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in Phoenix. Recipients included:

- Kaminski Award: **Chad Allen**, The Club at Chatham Hills, Westfield, Indiana
- Conservation Award: **Ian Gallagher**, Sand Ridge Golf Club, Chardon, Ohio
- Super Social Media Award: **Zach Bauer**, CDA National Reserve, Couer d'Alene, Idaho
- Super Social Media Award: **Emily Casey**, Seven Canyons, Sedona, Arizona
- Super Social Media Award: **Dr. Ben McGraw**, Penn State University, University Park, Pennsylvania
- Super Social Media Award: **Jeremiah Mincey**, Savannah Quarters Country Club, Pooler, Georgia
- Super Social Media Award: **Ty Robb**, Treasure Coast GCSA, Port St. Lucie, Florida, and **Rob Uzar**, Hammock Creek Golf Club, Palm City, Florida



▲ Tom Valentine of Aquatrols.

© GUY CIPRIANO (3)



# Turf journey of a lifetime

By Judd Spicer

**P**art-agronomy study, part-self-exploration, a pair of young men endeavored the turf trip of a lifetime via the inaugural “Turf Across America” internship program.

Concepted by **Bryan Stromme**, vice president of agronomy at Century Golf Partners, and **Scott Bordner**, director of agronomy at The Union League of Philadelphia, the debut program provided a coast-to-coast opportunity for selected participants **Will Bolin** and **Alex Loesch**.

In the spring through fall months of 2023, the pair of future superintendent hopefuls interned at Union League National in Swainton, New Jersey. In November, they arrived at PGA WEST in LaQuinta, California, for the second part of their year-long internship.

The tandem linked locales with a

3,200-mile, cross-country drive that included scheduled tour stops at some of the nation’s most celebrated clubs.

From right to left coast, the pair has learned about grass, themselves and high-end

agronomy working environments.

Amid their time at PGA WEST, Bolin and Loesch took a moment away from helping to prep for the PGA Tour’s annual American Express desert stop to discuss their journey.

“I think they’re completely different,” the 22-year-old Bolin, a native Texan, says



Will Bolin, left, and Alex Loesch traveled for turf.

of the program’s inverse host property turfgrasses.

“The East Coast: high humidity, stays wet, lot of disease. Here, they don’t really spray fungicides; it’s mainly just wetting agents because of little

rain. And then, there’s not really any Bermudagrass up there; little bit of zoysia, but really not on the course.”

Along with turf differences, the intern pair also found dichotomy in coastal cultures.

“The people are definitely different,” says Bolin, adding that he’d been gently ribbed

## Ready. Preset. Go.



### Torrent2™ Debris Blower

MagnaPoint™ Technology lets you lock-in your optimal nozzle angles, gaining up to 2 hours per day in extra productivity. Take debris cleanup to a whole new level with the fastest, most efficient blower available.



### WideSpin™ 1550 Topdresser

Calculates your preferred topdressing rates and saves your settings for exceptional greens, tees and approaches. See the most comprehensive line of spinner and drop-style topdressers on the market.



### TriWave™ 45 Overseeder

Features easy hook up and patented floating heads that follow the contours, keeping seed depth consistent. The seed system delivers a 30% better germination rate with less waste.

Schedule your demo today at [www.turfco.com](http://www.turfco.com) or call 800.679.8201

**TURFCO**

for his *joven* Spanish. “This (desert) reminds me more of home. Up there in New Jersey, there were no tamales. Being from Texas, with so many Californians moving there, and now my being here, I can see a lot of the stuff that people brought with them to Texas.”

Adds Loesch, a 19-year-old New Jersey native: “The language barrier has been a learning experience, with most of the team

speaking Spanish. I got a heads-up on that from my boss in Jersey, Scott Bordner. I probably should have paid a bit more attention (during Spanish class) in school. But I’ve adapted out here a little bit.”

Such workplace malleability has been as much of a lesson for the two as the wealth of knowledge they’ve gained about turf management practices.

“The guys when we got here said this,

and I’ve heard other people at our other stops say pretty much the same, is that this business is 50 percent about people,” Bolin says. “It’s really about organizing people, knowing and finding people’s strengths, being on the same page and that your team is only as strong as the weakest link.”

His fellow intern concurred.

“What I learned most is about working with people, the importance of a strong boss and how to get along with everybody,” Loesch says. “I mean, people are gonna butt heads sometimes.”

Of course, for a pair of young men finding their respective ways in the world, the journey had as much impact as the destinations.

En route from Jersey to La Quinta, the six-stop tour included: The Country Club in Cleveland, Ohio; Chicago Golf Club in Wheaton, Illinois; Sand Hills Golf Club in Mullen, Nebraska; Castle Pines Golf Club in Castle Rock, Colorado; Shadow Creek Golf Course in Las Vegas, Nevada; and Anthem Country Club in Henderson, Nevada. Along the way, the two had time for pit stops at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, and a stroll down the Vegas Strip. They also visited the *Golf Course Industry* headquarters in northeast Ohio.

While Bolin and Loesch drove in separate cars (Bolin in his Ford F-150; Loesch in his Chevy Colorado pickup truck), the two appreciated having one another close along the dusty trail.

“It was definitely easier with another person, and there was a reassurance (on the road), just going place to place and having our talks about, ‘Should we call ’em first, text them first?’” Loesch says. “Like, in Chicago, it was 6 o’clock at night, and they had to come to the shop to let us in. They were all prepared for us, but it was just kinda funny. And I think we pulled into two gas stations along the trip where we didn’t even know each other was there. Will pulled past me and called, and was like, ‘Did you even know I was there?’ I was like, ‘Where are you?’ and he says, ‘Um, right behind you.’”

After months in tandem — and sharing an apartment in California — the two have learned how to lean on one other, when need be. Spending such ample time around each other on-and-off course, they’ve reached the familiarity stage of occasionally finishing each other’s sentences.



## Take good care of your babies.

### Put DryJect® to work for you.



#### DRYJECT SERVICE

*DryJect applies dry or wet sand, or your amendment choice. We come early in the day with three or four machines. You provide crew for each machine to help keep amendments flowing. Before you know it the job is done. And you’re ready for play with few if any lost or discounted rounds. Call, visit our website or social media for your DryJect Service Center.*

It can be a first step in taking your greens to the next level. DryJect is quite affordable compared to traditional core aeration, all-in, and can boost revenue. There are few if any lost or discounted rounds with DryJect.

The agronomics have been proven over two decades. Thousands of superintendents rely on DryJect to help them keep their babies looking and playing great.

Just think. When the DryJect crew leaves, your greens are ready for play right away. And that’s a beautiful thing.



Aerate, amend and play right away™



Search DryJect



Search DryJect



DryJect



@DryJect

800-270-8873

DryJect.com



# THE ANSWER TO YOUR #1 PRIORITY



MAINTAIN PRISTINE  
SURFACE CONDITIONS



FIND SAVINGS ON  
TIME & LABOR



APPLY WITH EASIER  
CONVENIENCE

## Anuew EZ PLANT GROWTH REGULATOR

Whether your sights are on playability, density or color – or the pressure is on to reduce time and labor – Anuew EZ is ready to respond. It's the PGR you rely on to achieve your #1 course priority in a new, easy liquid formulation.

**Available for purchase during the Nufarm Edge Rewards Program. Visit [nufarm.com/usturf/anuewez](https://nufarm.com/usturf/anuewez) to learn more.**

**NEXT-GENERATION PGR**  
Now in a liquid formulation



“Voice the frustrations, talk about what we liked, decompress from the day,” Bolin says of being intern roommates. “Just like a lot of people do when they get home after work and catch their breath.”

While mapping more than 3,000 miles, the interns further learned the golf world can oftentimes be a small place.

“All the courses we’ve been to, they all know each other, it’s all intertwined,” Bolin says. “They all either worked for the same somebody, or somebody hired their brother or guys talk on the phone with questions all the time. It’s been cool to see how small the industry is, even stretched out across America.”

As the debut program turns toward its back nine and applications are being fielded for Turf Across America’s sophomore season, Bolin and Loesch are hitting the home stretch with a bang. The American Express, hosted by PGA WEST Jan. 18-21, proved a proper exclamation to the experience (as

did, perhaps ironically, the fact that **Nick Dunlap**, the event’s eventual winner, is a mere year Loesch’s senior and two years younger than Bolin).

“We’ve both volunteered for tournaments before, but that’s just coming in (at the last minute) and being, like, ‘Whoa,’ and then leaving,” Loesch said about the weeks preceding the AmEx. “You don’t see it all come together, come up and come down. This has been so cool to see, to be a part of how all this comes together.”

Under the respective directions of **Brian Sullivan**, director of agronomy at PGA WEST, and **Denver Hart**, head superintendent of resort courses at PGA WEST, the interns worked all facets of tourney prep.

“I think it’s an important thing to see and a great addition to the Turf Across America program, because it’s something a lot of guys haven’t been a part of,” Bolin says. “I think I speak for Alex when saying

that we both have a real sense of pride when it comes to this tournament. We’re not just here as volunteers, we’ve been here for all the months of prep leading up to it, meeting with the supers all the time and getting things done every day and making suggestions. It feels good to be prepping for something so important.”

*Judd Spicer is a Palm Desert, California-based writer and senior Golf Course Industry contributor.*

## Tartan Talks 92

Technology hasn’t been a common *Tartan Talks* topic since the series debuted in June

Lastec started the **Articulating Flex-Deck Mower Industry** by which all articulating mowers are now measured. These **high quality, durable decks** deliver **superior accuracy** and the **best quality of cut**.



**PULL BEHIND DECKS  
ZERO TURN MOWERS  
OUT FRONT DECKS**

**THE REVOLUTIONARY  
ARTICULATORS**

Contact your Lastec Dealer  
for pricing information.



lastec.com | 800.515.6798





▲ Burton

2016. Patrick Burton helped move our monthly podcast with an ASGCA member in a trendy direction.

We asked a series of tech-related questions to begin our episode with Burton. He nailed the answers, explaining how drones, GPS applications and other emerging tools help plot a project. We then ended the podcast

by asking Burton to offer his thoughts on future technological advancements in golf course design and construction. We're not going to give away the answer here!

Between the tech talk, we learned Burton's fascinating career story, which included nearly a decade of guiding projects as a young associate with Schmidt-Curley Design. Burton traveled to China for the first time at age 25 and made nearly 40 site visits to the country before the government halted golf development in 2014. The golf crackdown in China forced Burton to find a niche to succeed domestically.

"I was getting great experience in terms of technical skills as a golf course architect, but I wasn't developing relationships in this country," he says. "When I went off to do my own thing, I knew it would be a longer road because I didn't have that 10 to 15 years of networking in the United States. So I turned to technology. I knew I could probably sell myself to other golf course architects, golf course owners,

golf course superintendents, or contractors by using GPS or drone technology."

The full episode with Burton can be found on the Superintendent Radio Network page of any popular distribution platform.



## INDUSTRY BUZZ

SePRO introduced StriCore herbicide, the company's first unique pre-emergent herbicide for the turf and ornamental markets in more than a decade. Goosegrass, crabgrass and *Poa annua* are among the weeds StriCore controls. ... Turfco announced multiple enhancements to its Torrent 2 Debris Blower, including operator-friendly icons added to the Magnapoint Technology and remote start/stop functions. ... Foley unveiled the Foley 642 Quick Spin Reel Grinder. The new unit is a roll-on roll-off solution to grinding, with the machine sitting at floor level. ... Yamaha Golf-Car Company has developed the DRIVE H2, a hydrogen-powered engine golf car concept model.



**Blitz**  
STAND-ON BLOWER

26HP & 40HP EFI ENGINE OPTIONS  
INDUSTRY FIRST HIGH PERFORMANCE INDEPENDENT SUSPENSION

SAVE TIME  
SAVE MONEY  
MOVE ALL COURSE DEBRIS FAST

**BUFFALO TURBINE**  
The Original Turbine Debris Blower | Made in the USA  
(716) 592-2700 BuffaloTurbine.com

10 YEAR BUFFALO TURBINE WARRANTY

BUFFALO TURBINE Best On Earth



**STEELGREEN MANUFACTURING**


**SGXL**  
with Granular Attachment Kit

**SPRAYER TO SPREADER, STEEL GREEN DELIVERS**

The SGXL can now be converted into a high-capacity spreader with the SGXL Granular Attachment Kit.

Learn more about the SGXL Granular Attachment Kit: 





**The secret to perfect greens  
is somewhere on the next page.  
Can you find it?**





It's not a secret. Floxcor™ is a fluoxastrobin fungicide that has exceptional efficacy, better control of a variety of turf diseases, long residual activity, plus quicker plant intake that keeps your greens pristine.

**Get perfect greens at [Corteva.us/FloxcorGCI](https://Corteva.us/FloxcorGCI)**

**Floxcor™**  
**FUNGICIDE**

# Natalie Russell

COUNTRY HILLS GOLF CLUB

**N**atalie Russell was literally in the eye of the storm.

As a volunteer working the recent AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, she was part of the crew that kept one step ahead of the weather for most of the week. Their efforts allowed 54 holes to be completed before a storm forced the cancellation of the final round.

Speaking on the *Wonderful Women of Golf* podcast with host **Rick Woelfel**, Russell, a second assistant superintendent at Country Hills Golf Club in Calgary, Alberta, recalled the situation at Pebble Beach. “For the first few days, we really got the best that we could have asked for,” she says. “We had some overnight rain (on Monday night) and the property was incredibly wet from rain that they had previously.” The crew spent Tuesday making the course tournament ready.

“It really held for the next few days,” Russell says. “We were constantly prepared. We would go out every morning with all of the tools that we needed to fix bunker washouts and things like that, and they suspended mowing a good chunk of the course because of (the rain). But we really didn’t need any of that until Saturday night when the weather really changed.”

Around 3 inches of rain fell Saturday night accompanied by winds coming off the Pacific.

“The wind was really what did us in,” Russell says. “The wind picked up to over 60 mph, and with the saturated ground, just took out everything in its path. There were trees down everywhere, TV towers. ShotLink was down. It just tore through all of the on-course structures like I’ve never seen before.”

In response to the storm, Monterey County officials issued shelter-in-place and evacuation orders. The tournament’s final round was postponed from Sunday to Monday, but it soon became apparent that a Monday finish wasn’t going to happen.

“By late Sunday night, looking at the course conditions, and the conditions of the infrastructure on the course, you could see there was no way they would be able to put things back together,” Russell says. “The grounds crew gave their best effort to put things back together, but I don’t think they were going to reach any sort of playability conditions that would have made sense to continue on Monday.”

Russell credits the greens staff at Pebble Beach for what they did to get through the week.

“They knew just what to do in that situation,” she says. “Everyone sort of jumped into action

over the few days that we were able to prepare for the tournament. Everyone did their part, manned their post. For what it was worth, the conditions they were able to produce, we did have really positive feedback on. The Tour was happy with where we were at, the golfers, as happy as they could be, dealing with the wet course conditions.

“I think the product that was put out by the crew that was there that week, especially the Pebble Beach grounds crew, really just spoke for itself with what they were able to do.”

This was not Russell’s first visit to the Monterey Peninsula. She was part of the crew of volunteers who worked last year’s U.S. Women’s Open at Pebble Beach.

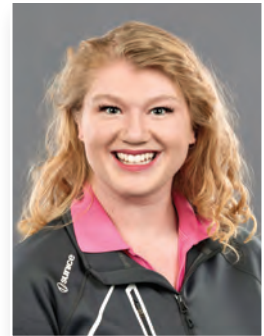
What perhaps impressed her most at the two tournaments was the grace of the Pebble Beach crew under fire. She’s trying to implement that mindset at Country Hills.

“Just how calm, cool and collected,” she says. “I don’t know if they actually feel that way on the inside. I’m sure that there’s some stress levels happening internally. But the way that they come across to the crew, the way that they deliver the information they received from the Tour and the way they’re able to sort of plan and take what’s being thrown at them and run with it to create the best product that they can. ... It really shows how insignificant some of the things that we deal with in our day to day are.

“And the way they are able to keep their calm demeanor and just work with what’s thrown at them is a testament to them, and something that I strive to implement in my day to day here now.” **GC**



They knew just what to do in that situation. Everyone sort of jumped into action over the few days that we were able to prepare for the tournament. Everyone did their part, manned their post.”



**SUPERINTENDENT**  
R·A·D·I·O N·E·T·W·O·R·K







# VerdeLNX™

## INTRODUCING A REVOLUTIONARY LINE OF ADVANCED NUTRIENT PRODUCTS

The **VerdeLNX** line of nutrients showcases several formulation revolutions. VerdeLNX formulations: utilize humic and fulvic acids that contain increased levels of biologically active soluble carbon than traditional sources, ensuring consistent plant availability; incorporate proprietary fermented plant seed extracts that capitalize on natural plant-to-plant interactions; and include a new-to-the-world surfactant blend that provides exceptional infiltration and distribution uniformity.

Developed with Lamberti Chemical, our proprietary surfactant blend comprises natural and renewable materials that improve foliar absorption, humectancy, rootzone infiltration, and tank mix compatibility. Experience superior plant health and playability for yourself by using the VerdeLNX line of nutrients.

**UNLOCK A NEW ERA OF NUTRITION**

READY FOR SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY? LEARN MORE AT [WWW.AQUATROLSCOMPANY.COM](http://WWW.AQUATROLSCOMPANY.COM)







## CHANGING LANES? NOT SO FAST

**A**re you bored in your current job? Ready for a change? Primed to take on a completely new challenge? After all, how many more stimp readings, bunker rakings or hole cuttings can you do in a career? If you're really ready, great. Believe in yourself and go for it. But also proceed with caution.

Nothing galls me more than people who claim to be expert — even competent — in a field and expound without factual, practical or even basic knowledge behind their pronouncements. You've read my rants about green committees, so you know how I feel about those without any experience in golf, other than as club members, telling us how to do our job. In many ways it's worse when it's someone who thinks just because they've been around the profession in one capacity they're qualified in all aspects. Mostly all they're doing is just spouting opinions.

Let me give you an example, and trust me, this is only one of many. I heard recently about a club where one of the non-agronomic employees was telling others that a certain feature on the golf course reflected a well-known and well-researched historic design element. His information and perception were wrong, pure and simple. Even the course architect did not agree with him. But he continued to declare it so. Why? "Because I'm the boss." That may be, but it doesn't make him right.

Until you are truly qualified to comment, stay in your lane. Whether it's architecture, playing features, club operations, mer-

chandise, food and beverage, whatever, learn it first, talk about it second.

Here's another example, one even closer to my heart. And my wallet. Everyone I meet thinks they can do a personnel search for superintendents. When I ask for their qualifications, the answer is always the same: "I know a lot of people." That's a good start, but do you know what you can legally ask a candidate? Or how to put together an employment package?

I'm not saying these people can't become qualified. I did. But it takes years of study and learning to work your way up a ladder of experience and credibility. Making a commitment to a job and getting as good at it as you possibly can takes focus.

Every other phone call I get these days is from someone who wants to be a consultant. Good luck. But besides knowing something about the industry, they need to consider the cost of everything from printer ink to liability insurance and wear-and-tear on a personal vehicle. Are they capable of writing a clear, concise report explaining the problems and suggesting the solutions? Do they have the patience to sit by a phone that doesn't ring, waiting for the first opportunities? Are they suited to work on their own, from their home, with no support staff? Are they sitting on a little nest egg that can support them and their family in the lean early years?

I'm not trying to be discouraging. I am saying to ask all the questions. Weigh the risks and the benefits.

How do you gain experience? Part of it is research. Read the

right books and take classes. But real knowledge comes from getting to those people already doing the work, asking questions and listening to the answers. Roll up your sleeves, get a job in the field, learn by doing and work your way up. Doing all that also has the advantage of letting you know along the way if this is really what you want to do.

One limitation I see in many experienced people trying to make a shift is the inability to listen. They think they already know everything and are especially unable to learn from someone younger or whom they consider "junior." Well, they're not junior if they've been in the business even a few years when you've been in it a few weeks.

I think you're not cut out for an industry if you're not willing to do the dirty work, absorbing all the information you can from whoever you can. Shadow those already in the business and learn what people do at all levels. It's not like you became a head superintendent without being an assistant first, right?

When you are ready, make 100 percent sure you are up for the task and have the network you need to succeed. Nothing travels further or faster than bad news or bad performance.

You can't brand yourself an expert based on one experience: one championship, one construction project, one golf course renovation. You have to prove your worth and your knowledge to others. If you can't, others will quickly realize that you are not the real deal.

But if you are, once you get out of your lane, be ready to step on the gas! **GC**



**TIM MORAGHAN**, principal, ASPIRE Golf (tmoraghan@aspire-golf.com). Follow Tim online at Golf Course Confidential at [www.aspire-golf.com](http://www.aspire-golf.com) or on X at @TimMoraghan.



# SG PRO HOLE CUTTER | NEW FOR 2024

## WHERE PRECISION MEETS EFFICIENCY

Crafted with German technology, this innovative machine-grade tool guarantees a flawless and perfect cut every time, setting a new standard in cup cutting. Its unparalleled precision ensures that you achieve the perfect hole effortlessly, eliminating any room for error.



WATCH IT WORK



**STANDARD**  
**GOLF** COMPANY  
EMPLOYEE OWNED



Setting the Standard in Golf Course Accessories since 1910  
866-743-9773 · StandardGolf.com © 2024 Standard Golf Company. All rights reserved.





**HOW  
DO  
YOU**

# **HIRE?**

**In this transient labor era, astute superintendents are still finding ways to construct high-achieving teams. What are their secrets?**

By **Lee Carr**

**R**eady to grow your team? Nice. A series of thoughtful questions can help you make the most of hiring opportunities. What is your team doing well and where are your challenges? How can your next hire make the team stronger? How can a new person be placed in a position to succeed? These answers can guide you toward the ideal candidates.

At Midland Hills Country Club, in Roseville, Minnesota, culture is the foundation of everything they do. The omnipresence of this culture makes it easier to determine who is likely to be a good fit. “High achievers move

up the proverbial ladder quickly,” superintendent **Mike Manthey** says.

The Midland Hills maintenance crew consists of three assistants and two equipment managers who work full-time. The seasonal staff numbers 22 with three of those workers being year-round. They are culturally diverse with individuals representing Ecuador, Mexico and Russia in addition to the United States. One staff member lives only a few blocks away.

The team is also diverse in age and experience, from young new hires to the lead equipment manager, an industry veteran with an incredible tenure of 40 years. “We hired six individuals last fall who have embraced the culture and opened the eyes of established seasonal staff with their work ethic,” Manthey says. They have quickly garnered responsibilities.

It helps that Midland Hills is a 15-minute drive from downtown Minneapolis and not much farther from St. Paul. There is a large population of workers to draw from. The setup is different at Highlands Country Club, in Highlands, North Carolina, where most of the staff drive more than 30 minutes to get to work.

“Our labor pool is more like a labor puddle,” says **Brian Stiehler**, the scenic club’s superintendent since 2001. “Highlands is a mountain community, a second-home community and a very affluent community. It’s a challenge to find workers locally.”

Several people on the crew have been there as long as Stiehler and a few have been there for less than five years. Caring for this scenic 18-hole property covered in bentgrass and *Poa annua*, there are 17 year-round staff with the head count rising to 30 in the summer. College and high school students round out the team, as well as five H-2B employees.

While the commute is a consideration, culture and compensation are

the primary factors in hiring, attracting and retaining labor. People want to work somewhere that is a good fit and they want to be well compensated for their commitment and effort. At Highlands, “We are paying more than most other businesses in the area,” Stiehler says. “Everyone is making more than \$20 per hour.”

They also keep a close eye on the clock. People know their schedules, working eight-hour days, 12 days on and two days off. “We limit overtime because the staff appreciates that,” Stiehler says. The consistency yields a happier workforce and it’s easier to stay on budget. Overtime is costly. Mastering the labor budget also helps with hiring decisions.

Do you need another person, or will overtime cover? How does the current staff feel about overtime? Do you prefer a large or a lean operation? How is the total compensation presented, and how does it compare including wages, vacation, continuing education, health insurance, a 401(k) and other benefits?

“I’m proud that our membership values our department,” Manthey says. “They want to interact with us on-course and learn about what we do. It’s a club-wide culture to value your staff, get to know them and treat them like friends.” This is tangibly demonstrated in how employees are compensated.

“We invest in staff personally and professionally,” Manthey says. “The most tenured employees have six weeks of vacation. According to the new federal law, new employees accrue personal time off after two weeks of employment. Seasonal staff have benefits: 401(k) with match and personal paid time off. Staff can volunteer at big golf tournaments and further their education. This human-capital thought process translates to high retention levels.”

Aiming for high retention levels is a hiring strategy. With success, less hiring is necessary. The result is a more highly trained workforce.

## STEP-BY-STEP

Before new hires can become retained staff they have to be attracted to vacancies. Online resources like Indeed, TurfNet and ZipRecruiter can help advertise a position. Social media can be your friend. Ads can be placed in community publications, on bulletin boards, in property communications or shared through high school or college guidance departments. (Pro tip: high school athletes are great workers if you can be flexible with their training schedules.)

Developing a pipeline with the nearby vocational programs or technical schools is also a good idea. For positions requiring more responsibility, consider specialized recruiting organizations such as **Tyler Bloom Consulting**, **Denehy, Aspire Golf Consulting** or **Kopplin Kuebler & Wallace**. Assistants and equipment technicians often submit résumés and cover letters.

After you connect with a candidate, what do you look for?

“Someone reliable with a good attitude,” Stiehler says. “I care less about background unless we are discussing being an assistant superintendent when the education is required.”

Educational requirements vary depending on the position and the operation but there has been a distinct shift away from hiring for technical skills while seeking beneficial soft skills. “The days of pounding someone into a shape that you desire are over,” Manthey says. “Practicing getting a read on people is something we work on. Evaluating their feedback when introducing them to our program is important.”

Trust your instincts. “We focus on the soft skills and candidates show us who they are when talking about those skills,” Manthey adds. “Every potential candidate speaks with existing staff whenever possible. It might only be for a few minutes, but their instinctive input is valuable.” People naturally want to hire others who will contribute to the work they



**Our labor pool is more like a labor puddle. Highlands is a mountain community, a second-home community and a very affluent community. It’s a challenge to find workers locally.”**

— *Brian Stiehler*



# TEAM SANCTITY

care about.

Once hired, empower people to succeed. Train and retain them and let them help recruit. It's cyclical. "Our assistant superintendents, **Mark Ries, Tina Rosenow and Justin Hemauer**, shine at this," Manthey says. "Tenured staff share the training and if a new hire has a high ceiling, they get more technical.

"Proper introductions, getting people set up with uniforms and PPE, making sure they know you are investing in them integrates them into the team right away. Remind them the entire staff is on property and to seek them as a resource if there is a question. A golf course can feel big to a new hire and maintaining contact makes them more comfortable."

Part of that comfort is feeling valued. "When people come to work here they are treated like professionals," Stiehler says. "This is not just a job. It's not just something to do, it's something people can invest their talent in. Our staff have access to continuing education and can get their spray licenses and other certifications. Engaging people leads to ownership. Give someone a career, not just a job." In other words, hire like you mean it.

"This is why we find people through word of mouth," Stiehler says. "If you work here, you are going to be respected and get good benefits. We make the work fun. We create a culture that perpetuates itself."

And there are more benefits to the right culture. "People share opportunities with their acquaintances," Stiehler says. "When your staff recommends someone for a job, they ensure that the arrangement works. It's a good way to attract qualified people."

When people are hired and stay, the team can work together toward common goals. Transparency in every aspect of the operation is attractive to staff and helps new hires. Let them know what is coming, what calendar events might require some extra hours and preparation, and if there is any property-wide information that can affect them. "I remember being treated on a strictly need-to-know basis," Stiehler says. "That is frustrating as an employee."

Transparency is evident to new hires. So is an effort to get to know them. "I am a certified practitioner of the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator test and I administer this personality assessment when someone starts work," Stiehler says. "Learning this information helps me determine how to help them succeed. The fun part of the Meyers-Briggs is that there are different kinds of games you can play with it, so we do that throughout the year, along with safety training and other team-building activities." Hire to make your team stronger and don't hesitate to integrate new teammates.

Midland Hills has also found success from personal recruiting. "We provide cash incentives for staff to

The idea of parting ways with an employee feels counterproductive during a labor shortage. To maintain standards and preserve team culture it is sometimes necessary to make that tough decision. When an employee is a poor fit for the job, the team, the culture or all of the above, make sure that employees in question have been treated fairly, encouraged and given the opportunity to perform. If that doesn't work, it's time to move on.

bring in new people," Manthey says. "Staff get a bonus after the new hire has worked for a month and another if their recruit finishes the season. Some of our staff have earned a few thousand dollars by recruiting quality individuals. It works even better with cash. There's something special about a handful of **Ben Franklins!** For the first time in years, we are fully staffed."

Hopefully the labor challenges are easing. "A few years ago, we were just trying to hire bodies to operate equipment. Now we're refining the staff based on their skill level and effectiveness of each task," Manthey says.

Every team can get there with a strong culture and fair compensation. With every hiring opportunity, start by asking the right questions, take it step-by-step and integrate candidates quickly for hiring that helps. **GCI**

*Lee Carr is a Northeast Ohio-based writer and senior Golf Course Industry contributor.*



## SPECIALTY SKILLS

In addition to technical skills, there are proficiencies that will add to the depth of your team and increase engagement. Thinking through the skills your team has and still needs can influence how people are hired and develop.

Number crunching and budget work is valuable in its own right, but it also helps with asset appreciation. Human resources skills help people maximize their benefits including understanding overtime, wages and taxes. Communications training means someone else can help with newsletters and administrative messaging. Leadership is always valuable.

Other useful skills include specializing in health and safety, strength and fitness training, managing inventory, environmental sustainability, working with media or sales representatives, managing assets and equipment leases, troubleshooting technology, data analysis, compliance issues, and social media management.

It never hurts to have someone who is a grill master on staff, too!

# INTRODUCING

# 3-D FOAM

## A NEW POST-EMERGENT HERBICIDE



## KILLS WEEDS, NOT THE GRASS!

3-D Foam is a 3-way post-emergent herbicide with 2,4-D, mecoprop-p, and dicamba, to enhance weed control efficacy. It's the perfect addition for on-the-go golf course superintendents, LCO's and turfgrass managers. Quick and highly effective for spot treatments.



For more information, visit [quali-pro.com](http://quali-pro.com)

Contact your local distributor or CSI representative for more information. This product may not be registered in all states, please check the CSI website or the state's department of agriculture for registration information.



# A CASE FOR MORE YEAR- ROUND HIRES

**Full**

**Part**

**T**

**I**

**M**

**M**

**S**uperintendents are choosing to employ more year-round staff. Why? Instead of relying heavily on seasonal hiring and firing, they are embracing the potential of a larger, more consistent team. After navigating several years of a difficult labor market and increased play, this move has significant advantages.

Full-time staff can strengthen team stability, increase their skillsets through additional training and engage in year-round camaraderie. Year-round staff can be more invested in a position because of better compensation, benefits, the potential for promotion and being steadily connected to the operation.

When seasonal employees are terminated, even if they are assured of being rehired, it's possible those workers will not return. It's a competitive market and they can find employment elsewhere, lose interest or face other prohibitive circumstances.

Think about the hours spent advertising for candidates, contacting and communicating with them, hoping they will be present for interviews (and the first few weeks of work), and training new hires. Sometimes you find that gem who's going to be a rock star, and that's exhilarating.

But it's still a lot. It's a lot of hours, not to mention the emotional energy expended and potential frustration. Conversations about work ending for the season can be awkward. Adding year-round employees won't eliminate seasonal labor requirements, but it will reduce pressure if fewer positions need filling.

"The vast majority of superintendents struggle to find labor," says **Tom DeGrandi**, a recently retired superintendent with more than 35 years of experience. High school students can be great, hard-working summer employees but they're not usually available to help during the shoulder seasons. "Today's high school students have camps, sports and a lot of options for summer activities," DeGrandi says. "The vacation time they need limits what they can help with." Year-round employees will grow with the operation and become more experienced. Imperatively, they will be there for every season.

Seasonal employees can return to the course with fresh energy after some time off, but they can also be reluctant to return to the routine. When seasonal employees do join the crew, the full-time staff will be in a stronger position to train and integrate those workers. The full-time and seasonal balance shifts.

Another obstacle to overcome with seasonal workers is that many do not want or cannot work

full-time hours each week. That is less of an issue with year-round workers because the schedule is established.

"A lot of people don't want 40 hours," DeGrandi says. "It's smart that some of them are looking for more balance, but life can be hard if you aren't making or saving enough money. With inexperienced team members, I tried to help them understand the 401(k) plan and other financial tools offered by our employer."

Drawbacks to hiring year-round labor include a higher cost for team members that will require benefits and year-round pay. Year-round staff also translates into a more consistent budget for labor, month-to-month. Increased pay can be offset with an increase in vacation time (a different benefit) or adjusting hours among a greater number of staff. Be transparent with everyone about the changes and be prepared to highlight the advantages.

Depending on the length of the slow season and how many people shift to full-time employment, it might initially be a challenge to find enough work for everyone. Days that are less pressured are a great time to enhance mechanical skills, work on maintenance techniques, introduce budget concepts, reinforce safety training, organize and clean the maintenance facility, and engage in team-building activities (Texas hold 'em, anyone?).

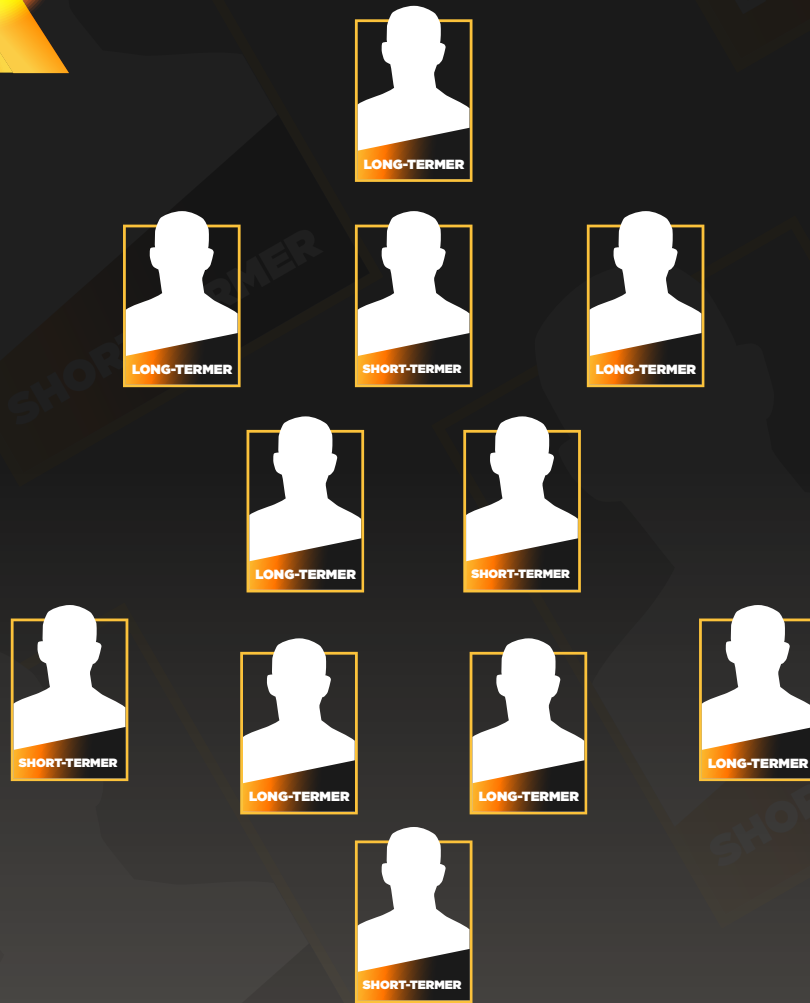
Education through online classes or webinars (there are many free options) and a more dynamic environment is inspiring and promotes individual confidence. No one wants to spend unnecessarily on labor, but investing in employees with some extra time is a real opportunity and can be a long-term financial gain.

Other ideas are reading a pertinent book or articles and discussing them, cooking up a fantastic meal together, or participating in a group yoga or photography class (those social media posts are advertising for you!). Don't be afraid to be creative. In addition to more help, what motivates your crew? A healthier, stronger, bonded group will only benefit the operation when course care is more intense.

Take a holistic look at what labor is necessary all year and think about how the operation can be better organized, more efficient and more productive by turning some seasonal positions into full-time opportunities. Crunch those numbers and prepare for honest discussions with the administration. Hiring more year-round staff and relying less on seasonal workers can make a lot of sense.

— Lee Carr





# The **SHORT-** and **LONG-TERM** of it

Why an experienced superintendent uses coach-like thinking to build his annual golf course maintenance teams.

By **Ron Furlong**

If you had asked me, before I became a superintendent, what were going to be the most challenging aspects of the job for my future career, I don't think I would have put hiring a team very high on the list. I guess I believed that was something that would just take care of itself. Hire the best people. Move forward. Bada bing, bada boom. Simple.

But simple it is not.

Although hiring and retaining a staff has definitely become more challenging in the last few years,

it has never been as easy as I had originally thought it was going to be. This is an industry where turnover is simply part of the deal.

One way to keep a little control and not get overwhelmed is to think of your crew in two parts:

- A group of full-timers (long-termers)
- Seasonal workers added to complement the full-timers during busy months (short-termers)

Approaching it in this way — and starting with and taking care of that first group — will make the “Build-

ing a Team” concept much more manageable.

I should mention that keeping those long-term folks has gotten much more challenging in recent years. But let's put that on hold for a second and address the seasonal staff part of the equation first.

## THE SHORT-TERMERS

A good analogy to a superintendent hiring the seasonal part of his or her staff involves comparing it to being a head coach in college sports.

As a college coach, you recruit

players to come play at your school, wooing them toward your institution and away from the competition, either down the road or even across the country. Nowadays you can even offer them money — something not available to collegiate coaches in the past. But it's still temporary. You only have these young men and women for a few years, if that. You then build it all over again. Any success you had with these people will not carry over. You must start from scratch every few years or, worst case, every year.

In this fashion, superintendents resemble college coaches. We have to continually woo and hire short-termers. But that does not make them any less valuable to us. Finding the right people for these positions is positively vital and often essential to annual success.

One important factor in hiring seasonal workers is trying to get folks who might possibly be interested in working for more than just one season. I love nothing more than hiring a seasonal person who turns out to be a hard worker and actually comes to work every day, and then having that person return for a second summer. Or, if you are extremely fortunate, even a third! This is rare. Normally those “quality” short-termers are on their way to something else in their careers. You are a bridge or a stepping stone.

But that isn't such a bad thing. Embracing this turnover and accepting that you are going to lose good, well-trained workers every year is really the only way to truly not get exasperated by it. Think of them as what they are and understand it's simply part of your job to move on without them.

The other key factor when hiring seasonal workers is utilizing the golf benefit privilege to its full extent. I think this is an even more effective tool when hiring seasonal workers as compared to full-time workers. Don't underestimate the value of this privilege for many young folks looking for a job. They can't play 18

holes for free after finishing their shift at McDonalds.

### THE LONG-TERMERS

I've been fortunate to have hired a fairly strong group of long-termers over the years. These workers stayed with the course for many years. In some cases, they remained for a couple of decades. Although I would consider this a mostly positive thing, it can catch up with you. One day you arrive at work and realize the youngest person on your full-time staff is in their late 40s.

Added to this conundrum is that I also tend to like to hire two or three retired “seasonal” folks each year for a non-physical job like mowing rough or fairways. This can really elevate the average age of those on the crew.

Don't get me wrong, I love having older folks on the crew. Heck, I'm one myself. But having a mixture of young and healthy with the “seasoned” workers on your crew is essential. It can be a physical, demanding job, especially in the heat of the summer. It only makes sense to have enough folks on the crew who can handle this physicality combined with the weather extremes of golf course maintenance.

I mentioned earlier the somewhat newer problem of actually retaining the long-termers. Anyone reading this article will not be surprised by me saying it has become harder in the last few years to not only hire but also retain our workers. Our long-term staff has definitely not been immune to the phenomenon.

The golf industry and the workers who comprise this industry have been left a bit behind with skyrocketing wages in other industries. Golf course maintenance workers, in particular, are finding that they can make more money leaving the industry and finding work in another field.

One example: My assistant came to me last August and gave his two-week notice, stating he was going back to school and switching industries. He had been in golf course maintenance his entire working

career after studying it in school.

It is in all of our best interests to try and keep our long-term, loyal employees from flying the coop and heading for the greener grasses on the other side of the fence (golf maintenance pun intended). As simple as this sounds, it can only be accomplished with money. Paying them a wage lower than what they could get by switching industries is just not sustainable for the future of our industry.

So how do we go about changing this? Well, it pretty much starts and ends with convincing ownership, general managers and boards that the labor budget, as it currently stands, is no longer adequate. Wages need to be competitive with jobs outside of golf course maintenance, not just with the golf course down the street.

Labor budgets need to be reflective of what is happening with jobs worldwide. In the past, I was directed to keep wages at about 54 percent of my annual budget. To be honest, I could never do this. It always ended up around 57 percent. That number is now at 64 percent, and it honestly needs to be even a tad higher.

Golf popularity is strong, and revenues for most golf courses are also robust. Sure, this is going to peak — and probably already has begun to at some level — but that doesn't mean we are not in a good place as an industry. The only way we can stay there long-term is by keeping the people who are vital to keeping golf courses in great shape to want to stay in the industry.

There are many ways to build your golf course maintenance team. As much as I hate to say this, in today's world, the No. 1 factor for all of those different ways is most likely being able to offer a high enough wage to generate interest.

Without that first step of getting them onto the diving board, they are unlikely to ever jump in. **GCI**

*Ron Furlong is the golf course superintendent at Avalon Golf Club in Burlington, Washington, and a frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.*

## ROSTER







# GOLF GAINS AND YOU

**R**iding the euphoria of a record-setting year — according to the National Golf Foundation, rounds were up, participation was up, revenues were up, and more women, beginners and minorities found their way to the course in 2023 — those fortunate enough to be part of the business of golf streamed through the doors of the industry’s major trade shows and were greeted with an abundance of innovation, ideas and possibilities.

The GCSAA Conference and Trade Show revealed new products and equipment alongside proven science. The PGA Show was highlighted by new technologies in swing analysis and gaming. The CMAA World Conference featured new capabilities for member services and more data for club managers to ponder.

Four big takeaways stand out for consideration by superintendents and club leaders who exited the aisles of the 2024 show season with the same question every new year brings: “What does it mean for our course, our facility, and for the men and women who care for them?”

## WOMEN

The impact and influence of women in and around golf is proving considerable. The NGF reports four straight years of gains, yielding a 1.4 million increase in female participants since 2019. Females now comprise 26 percent of all on-course golfers, according to the NGF.

*What does this mean for golf courses and the men and women who care for them?* Enhanced alertness to women’s on-course needs, preferences and expectations should be a top priority for golf course set-up, management and service levels. Women are golf’s biggest, most influential and potentially most valuable cohort. Treating them that way is not only the right thing to do; it’s the smart thing to do.

## GOLF TRAINING

New technological advances supporting enhanced measurement and performance tracking, and the underlying sciences for kinesthetic and visual learners are growing more rapidly. Golfers’ awareness of tech that can accelerate improvement and their enjoyment of the game appear to be the leading segments of emphasis and commercial success.

*What does this mean for golf courses and the men and women who care for them?* The growing market for tech-enhanced products suggests more golfers are more serious about improvement. Those players want and need more space for practice and training. As expectations rise, short-game training spaces will need to be comparable in design, care and upkeep to the course. Practice putting surfaces will gradually require more square footage, care and renourishment. Each of these spaces requires fit and finish at the same high caliber as the course.

## SMALL GOLF

What were once considered out-parcels within master-planned communities and resorts are finding new purpose and promise as golf relaxes its definitions and perceptions. Architects and builders are getting more calls these days from clients interested in 3-, 5- and 7-hole formats often tucked into small spaces. Hybrid work environments, which have persisted past the COVID pandemic for many, have made available small segments of workdays for golfers who can sneak out for a few holes.

*What does this mean for golf courses and the men and wom-*

*en who care for them?* In a word, opportunity. Do you have access to some land adjacent or near your course that can be repurposed as a short course? The after-work crowd, beginners and juniors who know they have a place that meets their needs for a taste of golf, translate to incremental revenue.

## ENERGETIC CAPITAL

Favorable economic conditions for golf, which have helped support an increase in rounds and revenues and led to a 3 percent decline in supply, have brought investors off the sidelines. Capital continuously seeks opportunity. As long as golf segments continue to show favorable return possibilities, new investments will likely follow.

*What does this mean for golf courses and the men and women who care for them?* Supply chain impacts and global economic patterns will more closely affect supplies and suppliers. Thoughtful forward planning and developing budgets and agronomic plan agility are essential to those who must successfully work the Rubik’s Cube of agronomic sciences, golfer preferences, weather and the global economy.

The question anyone in golf-related businesses has been asking the past several years is whether the COVID-induced spike in popularity is sustainable. Whether the record-setting post-COVID years have been an anomaly or a new normal now seems a less important question than a more inviting one: What are we going to do to take advantage of the recent advancements in science, participation and golfers’ expectations? **GCI**



**HENRY DELOZIER** is a partner at GGA Partners, trusted advisors and thought leaders. He is currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of Audubon International.





COMPARISON

NOT WHEN IT COMES  
TO PYTHIUM.



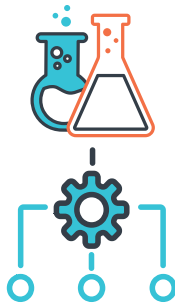
There's only one Segway.®



Learn more at [PBIgordonTurf.com/Segway](http://PBIgordonTurf.com/Segway)

Always read and follow label directions. Segway® is a registered trademark of Infratec Sengyo, Korea Ltd. 09233-3722





# FUNGICIDE REFRESHER

By **Guy Cipriano**

## THE FUNGICIDE FACTOR

**T**he numbers in this section prove fungicides remain as important as ever in curtailing disease on golf courses.

To understand how superintendents and their teams view and use fungicides, *Golf Course Industry* partnered with PBI-Gordon for a “Turf Reports” on the subject. The findings in this report demonstrate superintendents are confident tinkerers when determining how and when to use existing and new fungicides. Translation: They’ll add a fungicide to a greens or fairways rotation following results-focused convincing.

The data in this report includes the results of a 20-question survey collaboration between *Golf Course Industry* and Signet Research, a New Jersey-based independent research firm. The survey was distributed during a two-week stretch in January to a list of 5,732 subscribers holding director of agronomy, superintendent and assistant superintendent titles. Results are based on 166 returns with a confidence level of 95 percent and sampling tolerance of approximately +/- 7.6 percent.

**D**r. Brian Aynardi spends large portions of his days studying fungicides and the diseases they are intended to control.

Aynardi is PBI-Gordon’s Northeast research scientist. His role requires managing the company’s university and contract research efforts within his territory. He joined PBI-Gordon shortly after earning his doctorate from Penn State in 2016. He’s a go-to source for all things fungicides.

*Golf Course Industry* spoke with Aynardi about selecting the right fungicides for your course and ensuring they are maximized when controlling disease. His insight will help you develop a solid fungicide approach in 2024 and beyond.

### WHY FUNGICIDES ...

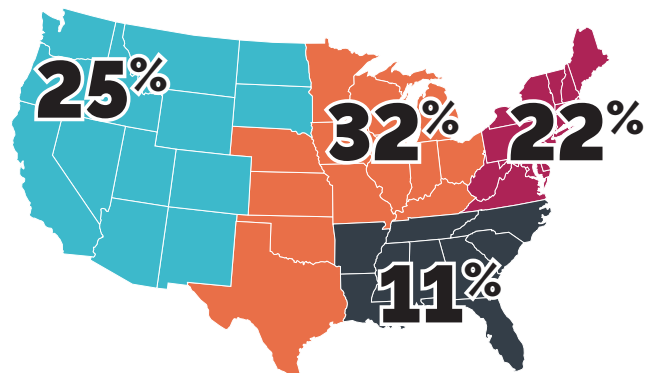
Disease is a little different than weeds. If

you see a broadleaf weed, you can go out and make one or two applications depending on the type of weed and you’re typically going to control that weed. With diseases, you want to prevent them from occurring. Fungicide is really a misnomer. Fungicides actually go into the plant if they are penetrant fungicides. They will cause fungitaxis in the plant and temporarily stop the pathogen from causing disease. But as leaf tissue is regularly removed or the chemical degrades, and as the concentration of that toxicant becomes low, the fungus is able to start growing again.

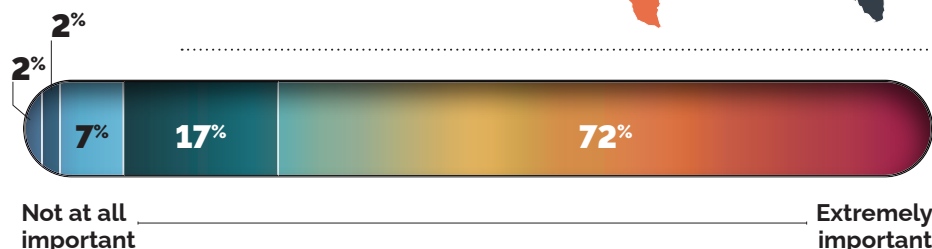
Let’s say you’re in the Northeast or Mid-Atlantic. Dollar spot conditions can persist for months on end and you’re going to have to make repeated applications. Because of the ability of pathogens to mutate and develop resistance to certain classes of

Canada and elsewhere 10%

Where  
is your  
course  
located?



Importance  
of fungicides  
to controlling  
disease





chemistry, and because of the degradation of the fungicide, you're going to make a lot more fungicide applications in a year than you're going to make broadcast herbicide applications.

**FUNGICIDE SELECTION METHODOLOGY ...**

Generally speaking, fungicides are safe across the board on most turf species. There are a few like some of the older DMIs you have to be careful with during transition around warm-season grasses.

The biggest things for a superintendent to consider when they are looking at a new fungicide ... What are my top one, two or three problems? What am I spraying that maybe isn't working or when I see disease pop up? What were the last one or two applications that I made prior? Perhaps a new fungicide will enhance control of those problems better than what is currently used.

When you're evaluating a new product, go to university partners and talk to people who have actually evaluated it under controlled conditions. Usually, those controlled conditions are more severe than what you're going to see in the field. Get some feedback and do your own demo. Talk to your distributor sales rep and see what they are willing to tell you about the chemistry and their background with it. If you can't get it from your distributor rep, ask if you can chat with the manufacturer rep.

Another thing to look for is that if I'm spraying for dollar spot and there are 15 products that contain an SDHI for dollar spot, look for a different class of chemistry. Don't just look for a different brand name. Make sure you are rotating different groups

properly, because if you are using the same group over and over, you're just using different names. Or if you are using post-patent products that have a different name — but it's the same AI—you're not rotating. You're creating a resistance scenario. You need to look outside the box and look for different modes of action that maybe you haven't tried.

**EVOLUTION OF FUNGICIDE CHEMISTRY ...**

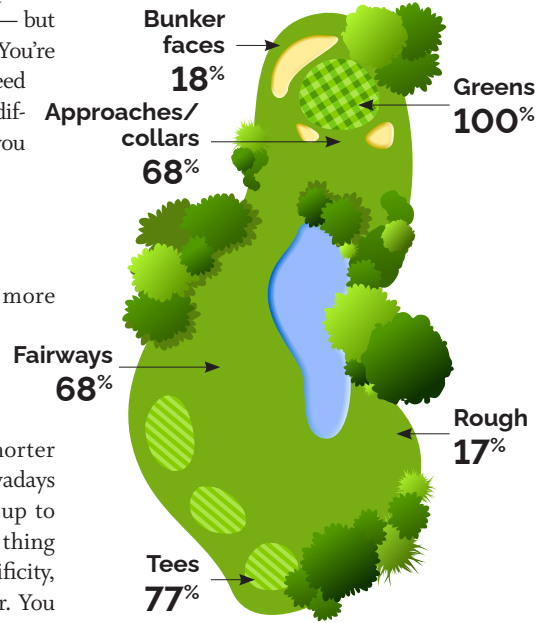
The chemistries today are a lot more site-specific than the chemistries of old. We use much more environmentally friendly chemistries. A lot of times that results in repeated applications and sometimes on shorter intervals. You have to reapply nowadays on a more traditional 14-, 21- and up to 28-day interval. That's kind of the thing with new products. Due to their specificity, the potential for resistance is greater. You might not get the longevity of stuff that you sprayed that's much older, but it's more environmentally friendly.

**TANK MIXING ...**

One of the most common calls we get in the R&D and tech sector is, 'Can I mix this with this, with this, with this, with this, with this and with this?' and they put 15 things in the tank. The short answer is that we don't always know, especially if you're putting in a product that's really going to drop the pH and the rest of the products in your tank mix are higher pH.

When you are tank mixing, just don't pick five different products, because if you pick five different products that all contain

**Areas of the course treated with fungicides**

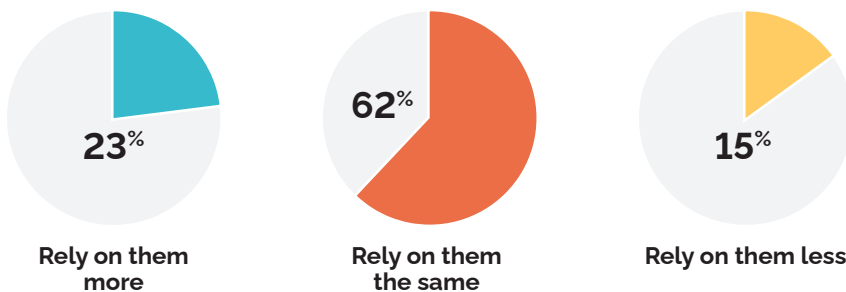


a DMI, and put five different DMIs in the tank, you're not tank mixing. You're just putting a lot of stuff in there with the same mode of action. You need different modes of action.

The benefit of tank mixing is that you are targeting the pathogen with a number of different modes of action. If you put chlorothalonil or another multi-site active in the tank, or if you use fluazinam, which is considered somewhat of a multi-site active ingredient (though designated FRAC 29), you're kind of confusing the pathogen because you're hitting it in a lot of different areas. A simplistic thing my advisor used to say during class, 'It's a shotgun vs. a rifle effect.' If you take a number of different modes of action and you target that pathogen of interest with a shotgun, you are throwing out a lot of different things at it. If you're hitting it with a rifle each time, and you're hitting the same spot, eventually the pathogen is going to evolve and get beyond that.

Any time you're doing a tank mix I always advise a jar test because you just never know, and it can vary by manufacturer. Even if you have the same AI, maybe they have a different milling process or maybe they have different co-formulation packages.

**Reliance on fungicides today compared to when you started your career**



**GETTING FUNGICIDES TO WORK AS INTENDED ...**

The biggest thing with fungicides is what is your target pest? Is your targeted pest a foliar pathogen or is it a root-borne pathogen? If you're going after a root-borne pathogen, something like spring dead spot, take-all root rot, *Pythium* root rot, you need to make sure you immediately get water on that after the application. Even fairy ring would be another one. For example, Segway, if you don't get water on that within three to six hours, you will start to lose some efficacy after six hours. I'm not saying it's not going to work. It might be a 5 to 10 percent reduction, but because you're spending a lot of money to make these treatments, water it in immediately.

But if you're doing a foliar application and using something like fluazinam or chlorothalonil, you absolutely don't want to water it right away because that's just going to wash it off the plant surface and reduce the efficacy substantially. Make sure you know what pathogen you are going for.

**WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A MANUFACTURER ...**

Our manufacturer sales reps work with distributors. If there's an issue, or somebody says, 'I sprayed product X and I didn't get the efficacy that I wanted to see,' talk to their distributor rep. They will contact the manufacturer rep and a lot of times it will go to the tech service and R&D teams. They'll ask, 'Why did this not work?' It could be a number of different things. But, at PBI-Gordon, we stand by our products and will support you.

If they want to problem solve on their own, questions will include: What is the carrier volume?

**Frequency of fungicide applications on greens**

Weekly	12%
Biweekly	53%
Monthly	15%
A few times per year	20%

Mean: 1.8 times per month

Am I getting adequate coverage? What disease did you go out for? If you went out for *Pythium* root rot, and you didn't water it in for 24 hours and you're getting break through, a little bit of that is on the superintendent to know the best way to use a product and best post-treatment application method if it's a root disease.

We are here to answer your questions if you are not getting control. Because there are so many products on the market and manufacturers have so many different recommendations, there's a chance maybe you're not using the product as entirely as intended. There are so many little things on a label that can be missed. But if you don't understand, or you do get break through and you still don't understand, there's a potential you do have resistance. If you're spraying SDHIs and you have SDHI resistance and you're not getting good control, the manufacturer should be there to explain that you probably should use different modes of actions and switch to different products. GCI

**Higher-level knowledge**

PBI-Gordon Northeast research scientist **Dr. Brian Aynardi** recommends a pair of free resources for golf maintenance professionals seeking deeper fungicide knowledge.

**"CHEMICAL CONTROL OF TURFGRASS DISEASES"**

The extensive project produced by researchers at the University of Kentucky, Rutgers University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison analyzes the fungicides and practices available to control 27 common diseases. A PDF of the report can be found at [www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/ppa/ppa1/ppa1.pdf](http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/ppa/ppa1/ppa1.pdf).

**TURFFILES**

The popular landing spot for everything related to the NC State turf program and team includes tips for identifying and controlling 29 diseases found on cool- and warm-season turf in North Carolina. The site is available at [www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/diseases-in-turf/](http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/diseases-in-turf/).

**Number of fungicides in your greens rotation**



Mean: 5.6 fungicides

**Number of fungicides in your fairways rotation**



Mean: 4.0 fungicides





# FIRST-PERSON THOUGHTS ABOUT FUNGICIDES

Superintendent **Ron Furlong** explains what makes a disease control solution the right fit for the course his team maintains.

**W**hen I first became a superintendent (around the turn of the century), fungicides were an important tool, although I honestly didn't put enough thought into why I was spraying what I was spraying. I just did what superintendents I had worked for in the past had done. You knew what worked and you went with it.

As I grew as a superintendent and began to educate myself more, including talking more with distributor and manufacturer reps and other superintendents, I slowly began to put more thought into fungicide selection and use. Around this time green speed became the ultimate goal, and the result of everyone lowering mowing heights and stressing out our turfgrass more than we ever had before produced increasingly higher disease pressure.

For instance, a disease like anthracnose, at least for us here in the Pacific Northwest, hadn't been the huge issue before the late 1990s that it is now. But as we all became obsessed with green speed and roll, suddenly a disease like anthracnose became a major issue for us.

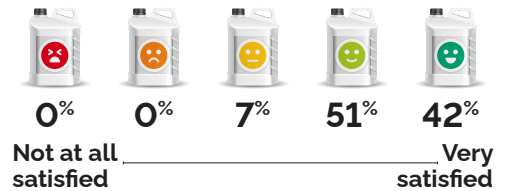
So, I began to question everything about

## Frequency of fungicide applications on fairways

Biweekly	36%
Monthly	38%
A few times per year	25%
Never	1%

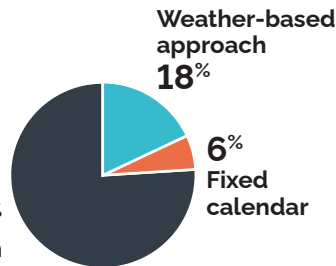
Mean: 1.2 times per month

## Satisfaction with the performance of fungicides in your disease control program



## Method for scheduling fungicide applications

76%  
Combination of both



disease and fungicide use. What was I trying to do as far as disease control? Was I making the right choices throughout the year? Was I flying from the seat of my pants, or did I have a plan? Curative versus preventive? Was I using the best possible products I could as far as protecting, to the best of my ability, our course and the environment?

As I started questioning these things, technology began helping us all as well. Better fungicides slowly became available. Not only were fungicides more effective, but their chemical compositions provided longer control at lower rates.

With chemical restrictions hitting our industry hard, superintendents had no choice but to look deeper into how we were controlling disease. And this goes beyond just chemical use. We began to experiment with cultural management practices that could help with lowering disease pressure.

Aerification. Raising mowing heights.

Rolling instead of mowing. Reducing shade. Timing and amount of irrigation. Fertility, which includes not only fertilizer selection, but how much of each product and the timing of those applications in conjunction with fungicides, plant

growth regulators and wetting agents. And, in drastic cases when nothing else was working, actually changing the turfgrass variety.

Superintendents never consider just fungicides alone in the battle with disease pressure. There's so much that can go into it.

But, for the sake of this article, let's get back to fungicides. And let's look at this simple question: What makes a fungicide a good one for me?

Here are the main things I look for in a fungicide:

1. Length of control
2. Is the use rate low?
3. What specific diseases does it control?
4. The effectiveness of the product when used in a preventive program

Let's take a quick look at these four things:

### LENGTH OF CONTROL

This varies depending on if you are using a fungicide curatively or preventively. The

## Diseases you spray a fungicide to control

Dollar spot	79%
<i>Pythium</i>	73%
Snow mold	72%
Brown patch	70%
Anthracnose	66%
Fairy ring	48%
Summer patch	47%
Take-all patch	45%
Gray leaf spot	28%
Take-all root rot	28%
Large patch	21%
Spring dead spot	19%
Mini ring	12%

fungicide program I am on, which I have been following religiously for about four years now, is almost entirely preventive. Because of the success of this particular program for me, curative applications have become rare.

So, when I do tweak the program from year to year and I'm considering adding or dropping something in the rotation, I'm always considering the timing of the product and how long of control I can get out of it.

Adding or dropping one chemistry in your program will literally affect everything else in the program if the timing of control doesn't quite fit.

### LOW-RATE USE

The first fungicide that I can remember coming available to us that advertised exceedingly low rates was azoxystrobin. I'm not saying this was the first fungicide to be marketed with an extremely low rate of use, but it was the first one that really caught my eye.

I was fascinated with a product that

## Projected fungicide budget in 2024 compared to 2023

20% or more increase	2%
10% to 19% increase	9%
1% to 9% increase	40%
The same	43%
1% to 9% decrease	4%
10% to 19% decrease	1%
20% or more decrease	1%

could be put out at such a low rate. It was an eye-opener. Unfortunately, not all low-rate fungicides are going to work for each particular situation. All golf courses are unique in respect to disease environments regardless if they have the same turfgrass varieties as other courses. For instance, azoxystrobin is labeled for both anthracnose and Microdochium patch, but has very little control on Microdochium in our region, so it's not currently in my program. But if I get an infestation of summer patch or yellow patch, it can suddenly become invaluable.

A product that may work well for golf course 'A' may not be nearly as effective for golf course 'B' despite similarities in climate and turfgrass species.

Today there are more and more low-rate fungicides available. This is a trend that had to happen, and most plant protectant companies have realized this and focused their attentions in this area.

### WHAT DISEASES DOES IT CONTROL?

I'm going to select fungicides that target the

## Mean projected 2024 fungicide budget by region

Northeast	\$100,550
Southeast	\$68,000
Central	\$70,210
West	\$34,030



diseases I must deal with. For me, that is primarily Microdochium patch (fusarium for us but also known as pink snow mold in other parts of the country), anthracnose, summer patch, Waitea patch and yellow patch.

Although you may share your diseases with many other courses in your region, nobody is going to have your exact environment or situation. There are just too many factors involved that determine disease pressure and frequency. But it all starts with knowing the products that may be able to help you.

Another beneficial trend by manufacturing companies has been the influx of combination products. Examples include: azoxystrobin and propiconazole; chlorothalonil, fludioxonil and propiconazole; fluazinam and tebuconazole; PCNB and tebuconazole.

These are just a few of the combo products making many superintendents' decisions a little easier.

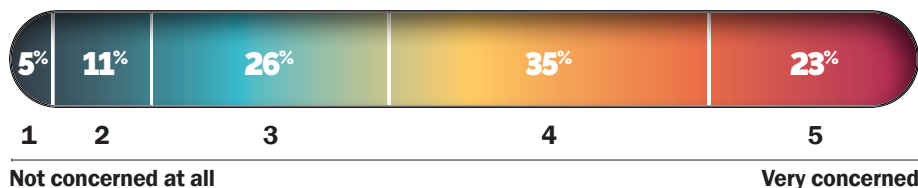
### CAN I USE IT IN MY PREVENTIVE PROGRAM?

Again, it's about finding fungicides that fit your program. It's not only about fitting it for the diseases you have, but it's also about being able to use it in your program and in your rotation. There are some great formulations that have come along that I simply cannot use on my property, in my program, at this time.

Which is not to say that some day I might actually switch to one or more of these. My fungicide program is annual. I examine it closely every year. You can't be afraid to adapt and make changes. GCI

Ron Furlong is the golf course superintendent at Avalon Golf Club in Burlington, Washington, and a frequent Golf Course Industry contributor.

## Concern about fungicide resistance





# THE TRAIL IS BLAZED. TAKE IT.



**ARKON**  
HERBICIDE LIQUID™

**It's time for sedge and  
kyllinga control to go  
somewhere new. Arkon™  
Herbicide Liquid is there.**

Arkon is labeled for use on both cool- and warm-season turfgrass across a wide variety of sites, including greens. Arkon controls sedges, kyllingas, and listed broadleaf weeds, and it's proven to reduce the number and viability of nutsedge tubers.

**PBI-Gordon has blazed a new trail for  
sedge and kyllinga control. Join us.**



Visit [PBIGordonTurf.com](http://PBIGordonTurf.com)

Always Read and Follow Label Directions. Arkon™ is a trademark and Vexis® is a registered trademark of PBI-Gordon Corp. 5/23 646498

**G** pbi/gordon  
CORPORATION  
Employee-Owned





# PROACTIVE



From rookies to experienced staff, everyone benefits from a conscientiously curated culture of safety. Your best friend for establishing that culture? Communication, but that's only part of the job.

By **Lee Carr**



**T**here are few dangers working behind a keyboard. Sure, people should be aware of being overly sedentary or developing poor posture but let's be serious, "physically dangerous" is not the leading descriptor for a desk job. It wouldn't be for golf course maintenance, either, but there are risks in a job requiring such physicality. Fortunately, there are ways to minimize the risks so that individuals, the team and the workplace are as safe as possible.

Safety starts with a culture that values and promotes it. "In this whole chain of responsibility from insurance companies to legislators to management to superintendent to employee, of everyone involved, no one cares personally about the employee as much as the superintendent does," says **Mickey McCord**, owner of McCord Golf Services and Safety.





Even though individuals need to be personally responsible and should care for teammates, the superintendent must set the tone.

“That’s where the message comes from most strongly,” McCord says. “No matter what you are obligated to do, you have your family and your work family. You spend a lot of time with the crew members. No one wants to see employees seriously hurt or killed but it happens.

“Superintendents want to run a safe operation. It’s just learning how to do it and understanding that it can be accomplished.”

**Brent Palich**, superintendent at Brookside Country Club in Canton, Ohio, believes “the most important step in maintaining a safe work environment is communication.” This belief is demonstrated at Brookside as a priority every day, early in the day.

“Each morning we meet with the entire staff. We address golf events and special projects that can impact our maintenance processes,” Palich says. “We also cover preventative safety measures including using sun block, staying hydrated or wearing the correct personal protective equipment. Managers can overlook

the importance of thoroughly communicating the day’s work and goals. When the staff is fully prepared, there is a reduction in mistakes and accidents.”

At Credit Valley Golf and Country Club, **Rachel Sullivan** is the health and safety coordinator and an assistant superintendent. At this 18-hole track in Mississauga, Ontario, health

and safety is paramount. “At the end of the day, the most important thing is that everyone makes it home the same way they came to work,” Sullivan says. “Everything between clocking in and clocking out pales in comparison to the value of your life.”

The timing of safety discussions is as important as the content. “By bringing attention to health and safety on a regular basis, worker comprehension is improved and accidents, injuries and near misses are minimized,” Sullivan says. “Addressing health and safety proactively is a great way to promote a culture reflecting their importance.”

### TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING

Culture and communication are the most important aspects of workplace health and safety, but technological advancements help. For instance, ride-on mowers have rollover protection systems. Sunblock lasts longer. Lighting for rooms and vehicles is improved, usually with superbright LEDs. Equipment designs include better guards and shields. Ear buds are another great development, with levels of customization for ambient noise and conversation-enhancing modes.

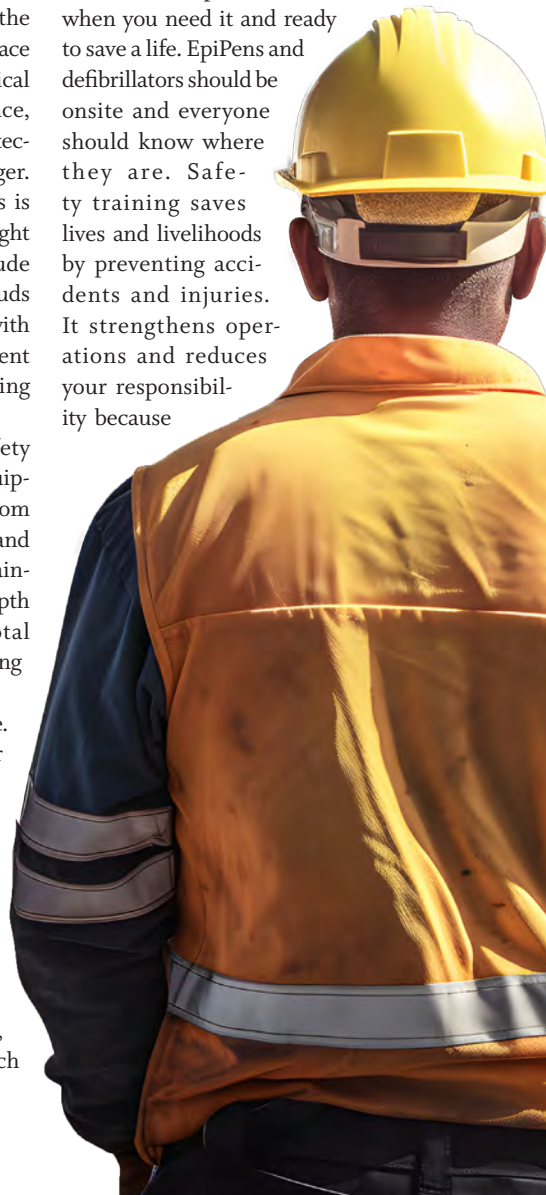
“The biggest changes in safety training haven’t come from equipment in the past 10 years but from addressing workplace violence and harassment,” Sullivan says. “Training in these areas is more in-depth and more frequent, two pivotal components of successful training programs.”

Safety training is all inclusive. “All employees, onboarding or returning after a seasonal layoff, must be trained on our violence and harassment protocols, first aid, emergency notification system, PPE, heat stress/sun safety, accident/incident reporting and working alone policies before they even step foot on the job,” Sullivan says. “Then, according to duties required, each

employee completes on-the-job safety training on each piece of equipment they will use. This is repeated every year.”

That may seem like a lot of training and a lot of time — because it is. But rookies need to learn and veterans should avoid complacency. It feels like an additional responsibility. That’s also true, but try this for perspective: EpiPens, used to counter anaphylaxis, are commonly carried by people with severe allergies. No one wants to use one. The decision to use an EpiPen and its administration is intense.

Now shift the perspective. What a device! Appreciate what a great resource an EpiPen is — there when you need it and ready to save a life. EpiPens and defibrillators should be onsite and everyone should know where they are. Safety training saves lives and livelihoods by preventing accidents and injuries. It strengthens operations and reduces your responsibility because



**SAFETY  
FIRST!**

### RESOURCES

Your peers are a phenomenal resource for technical safety information and sharing realistic best practices. Other resources for programming include dedicated companies such as Golf Safety ([golfsafety.com](http://golfsafety.com)) and McCord Golf Services and Safety ([mccordgolf.com](http://mccordgolf.com)). Local fire stations and police departments often offer on-site training for first aid and CPR. OSHA has compliance information you need to know. There are some helpful videos on the internet, but they take some vetting. The organization’s insurance provider will have its own safety requirements and should have connections to helpful resources. Equipment distributors and manufacturers will be able to instruct employees in proper usage and mitigating operational hazards. Want more? The book “Golf and Law” by **Dr. Michael Hurdzan** covers golf course safety, security and risk management.

through your caring thoughtfulness, a safe workplace culture is established. Workers who feel and are safe are more productive.

“Training can be individualized when people log on and take the training and a quiz,” McCord says. “Management gets notification that it was accomplished but not everyone has online access. That can be mitigated by doing the training on a device at work. It is nice to have a digital record already available but digital records can be created for any training.”

Safety training at its best is a form of team building. “Training together is the best way,” McCord says. “There is a group dynamic in asking and answering questions and in customizing general information.”

People pay more attention in person and personal experiences can be shared to increase the relevance of the content. Equipment training can also be done as part of a group or with individuals.

“We have a rule that no new employee can operate a piece of equipment until they have been fully trained on the machine and the task,” Palich says. “Our equipment manager will go over the equipment with the new employee.

The employee develops a proficient understanding of how it operates, learns the safety features, learns how to wash and fuel the equipment and where it is parked.”

That’s not all.

“Each new employee will then work with an experienced staff member to learn how to safely perform the task and the associated expectations,” Palich adds. “Working with an experienced team member will continue



## TOPICS

Ensure it all gets covered but converse with staff regarding what safety issues they are drawn to and why. Areas to address include:

- Ear protection
- Heat illness
- Wildlife encounters
- First aid
- Respiratory dangers
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation
- Mental wellness
- Sun protection
- Defibrillator and tourniquet use
- Working in the dark
- Emergency plans
- Chemical safety
- Icy and extremely cold conditions
- Lightning safety
- Careless coworkers
- Eye protection
- Blade maintenance and shop dangers
- Wild golfers
- Working with electricity
- OSHA compliance
- Working with gas
- Skin care to prevent rashes and infection
- Encountering intruders
- Toxic insects
- Safety data sheet usage
- Tree maintenance
- Vehicle safety
- Fire prevention and containment
- Proper lifting
- Mower and equipment operation
- Professional etiquette and sexual harassment
- Chemical application protocols
- Personal protective equipment

for as long as necessary until new employees can safely and effectively perform the tasks on their own.” Cooperating in this way engages experienced employees in the safety process and empowers them to maintain a culture of safety. Their experience helps minimize accidents.

“Other safety measures include having properly maintained equipment that meets OSHA safety standards and having the right resources for the job,” he says. “Accidents occur more frequently when employees are

using antiquated equipment or don’t have the correct tools for their tasks.”

Golf course maintenance requires mental and physical exertion and employees need to professionally care for themselves and one another. For everyone — and especially for you — recognize, communicate and mitigate risks through promoting a culture of health and safety. **GCI**

*Lee Carr is a northeast Ohio-based writer and senior Golf Course Industry contributor.*





## TWO MODELS OF COURSE MANAGEMENT

When it comes to golf course operations, you can chase rounds or you can chase revenue. But as nice as it sounds to have a busy tee sheet and golfer demand approaching, if not exceeding, capacity, the real health of a facility comes in financial terms at the bottom line. Maximizing the round count is not only misguided; it could be disastrous for the business.

That's especially true in the public sector, where 73 percent of U.S. courses are found. The remaining facilities, the country's 4,000 private clubs, operate by different rules because exclusivity is one of their appeals and they can rely on dues, guest fees, private events and clubhouse operations to compensate for any deficit in green fee revenue.

But the vast bulk of the golf industry must draw people in steady numbers to thrive. Yet just filling the tee sheet needs to give way to a more sophisticated strategy of revenue management.

We've all seen examples of courses that focus on rounds alone. They pack the tee sheet at seven-minute intervals and don't worry about the resulting five-and-a-half-hour rounds. They have a long line of motorized carts between the parking lot and the pro shop, and automatically hook up golfers as if everyone wanted to ride. They offer discounted rounds, multi-play passes and heavily reduced local resident rates to appease the demands of folks who claim to be laboring (or retired) under the status of "fixed income." And they offer last-minute deals online and through third-party tee-time reservations networks to fill gaps in the lineup.

Big mistake.

They lose control of their green fee rate entirely and encourage daily-fee golfers to look for last-minute deals at the lowest possible price. The result is a negative spiral, a price discount war that afflicts every other regional competitor, leading to a downward cycle of more rounds, less revenue per round and more demand at the bottom end.

Overbuilt golf markets like Myrtle Beach tried that two decades ago and found it didn't work. It just made all the public-access courses worse off, leading to a dramatic closure of facilities to alternative uses of their real estate.

The problem with a golf course is that there are certain fixed costs of maintenance that must be met. And nowhere is that cost going down. Discount golf enough and the per revenue rate approaches or even sinks below the cost of producing a round of golf. That's when a crisis hits. Budgets get slashed. Conditions deteriorate. Morale sinks. The negative spiral continues unabated.

For years, the industry cry has been to "grow the game." Obviously, the cost of golf is a factor inhibiting play. Municipal courses are especially prone to succumbing to these appeals. The result is heavy discounts for residents and seniors, invariably with no due diligence investigation of the real demographics or finances of the community. Senior discounts become especially problematic considering that at many public facilities, seniors constitute a considerable share of play and thus are taking up tee times at discounts that might well go for higher market rates

if sold differently. Which is why forward-thinking courses with sophisticated tee sheet management and green fee systems utilize dynamic pricing to sell their most valuable tee times at a premium. The idea is to treat golf as a business and structure the tee sheet to accommodate the flexibility of market demand.

If you have a good product and the pace of play is four to four-and-a-half hours because of 10-minute tee times on a well-conditioned course, folks will be willing to pay more. Maybe you still give seniors a marginal discount for preferred tee times, but at a much higher starting rate. Save big discounting for the less desirable tee times.

This provides an incentive for investing in the facility and upgrading all aspects of the operation. In this manner, the goal of course operators should be to maximize revenue. Not that the round count doesn't matter. But the emphasis shifts dramatically, from sheer numbers through the turnstile to clients' overall willingness to experience a quality product and pay accordingly.

Everybody gains. Folks with money will be happy to pay for a quality product. Course operators get a greater return on their investment. The entire staff has an emotional investment in upgrading the facility to as much as the local market will bear. Those seeking discounted golf can always opt for available tee times at a lower rate. Or, if they want, they can go elsewhere.

For course operators, that's a risk. But the greater risk is giving away golf at a rate that barely covers the costs of producing the round. **GC**



**BRADLEY S. KLEIN, PH.D.** (political science), former PGA Tour caddie, is a veteran golf journalist, book author ("Discovering Donald Ross," among others) and golf course consultant. Follow him on X at @BradleySKlein.



## A TRULY EFFECTIVE, NATURAL, AND BIODEGRADABLE SOIL SURFACTANT

For over 65 years, **Aquatrols** has earned a reputation for reliable, innovative solutions, and Astria is no exception. This unique formulation will meet or exceed the performance of conventional soil surfactants. End-users can rest assured that **Astria** will deliver superior soil moisture while reducing fossil fuel consumption, synthetic inputs, and landfill inundation.



**EXPERIENCE THE FUTURE OF SOIL SURFACTANTS**  
 READY TO GO ALL-NATURAL? LEARN MORE AT [WWW.AQUATROLSCOMPANY.COM](http://WWW.AQUATROLSCOMPANY.COM)





Globetrotting consulting agronomist **Terry Buchen** visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He shares helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits — as well as a few ideas of his own — with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.



# AUTONOMOUS ROUGH & GRASS TENNIS COURT MOWING

**T**he storied Philadelphia Cricket Club is using autonomous mowers in the maintained roughs on all three courses and on the great lawn/grass tennis courts. The club initially acquired two Husqvarna Model 435X AWD

Mowers to test them out. The club then acquired 22 Husqvarna Model 550 EPOS Wireless Technology Mowers (the company's latest version) and one Model 535 AWD Wireless Technology Mower used on the 18-hole Wissahickon and Militia Hill courses and 9-hole St. Martins Course.

There are 18 grass tennis courts, with 17 normally used for tennis and one for croquet. All 18 courts are used during tennis tournaments.

Mowing height on the maintained roughs is 2.4 inches and four-tenths of an inch on the great lawn/grass tennis courts. The mowers have electric height adjustment used during excessive heat or rain events controlled by the Fleet App and Husqvarna Automower App on smartphones. The staff does not have to be actively using the apps when units are out mowing.

The 550 EPOS can mow for about three hours after a charge. Depending on the pattern and terrain, they will mow around a half-acre during that stretch. They can mow 2½ acres in a 24-hour period.

The CEORA will mow around three acres of low-mow turf in a 24-hour period. The staff is finding with the CEORAs at Militia Hill and Wissahickon courses they can easily cover six acres



in a 12-hour period. The team will continue experimenting with their mowing areas and schedule to learn the maximum number they can get that to. They think eventually they will be able to schedule the CEORA to take care of a 12-to 18-acre area over a 24-to 36-hour period of mowing.

It takes one hour (or a little more) to charge each mower. Units return to their charging stations nearby automatically when they have approximately 20 percent charge remaining. They return mowing automatically where each mower left off.

The Wissahickon course currently has four separate charging locations, with one, three, four and five chargers at each station, respectively. The Militia Hill course has six charging locations, with one, one, two, two, four and four chargers at each sta-

tion, respectively. The St. Martin course has three charging locations, with one charger for the great lawn/tennis courts area.

Electricity was spliced off the incoming irrigation satellites power lines and they ran power to a small breaker box that has two outlets going back to the newly installed breaker box. This was done so that if there was ever a power problem with the mowers drawing too many amps it would trip the breaker for just the mowers and would hopefully not trip any of the irrigation satellites.

The mowers return to chargers when the battery gets to a certain percentage below 20 percent, meaning it will still allow the mower enough battery to return to the charger. It will then charge for about an hour (or a little longer), which gets it back up to 100 percent, and it will re-

turn to where it left off and continue mowing its designated area. Each mower is designated to its specific area and will be the only mower that mows that area.

Last year, Philadelphia Cricket Club had some areas near the clubhouse being mowed every day to keep them perfect. Other areas were mowed every other day or once every three days. During the late fall when the grass was slowing down, they changed schedules to mow every three days or once a week depending on the area.

The mowers will mow everything inside of its boundary line unless a stay-out zone is set up. The Philadelphia Cricket Club team established stay-out zones to keep mowers off fairways and out of bunkers. They also established a few stay-out zones near drains that mowers would get caught on.

All the units mow at night and they take advantage of that to have areas freshly mowed when the members arrive for their first tee time. Mowers have a set schedule of what hours they are mow-



ing. The first year they let most of them mow from midnight to noon so they would mow at night and during the day. Members saw the robotic mowers during the day, but staff also received information on how they mowed at night. The schedule can be set for them to mow from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. the next day if they do not want members to see them in operation. This would mean the mower would mow its 2½ acres worth of turf over two days instead of one day.

The schedule can be changed at any time in the app, so the mower is going out only in a certain window that they want it to mow. They can't pick the exact time it will mow or charge in that window because that will be determined by the mower's battery-level status. Wheel brushes are not required when mowing at night or during heavy dew/moisture.

The metal shelves ordered for storage are 72 inches wide by 36 inches deep. The 550 EPOS mowers are about 30 inches long so they could fit three on a shelf. The shelves were purchased from Uline and put together and installed in-house. It took a few staff members one day to put them together. The three shelving units cost about \$1,600.

**Daniel L. Meersman**, chief planning officer and director of grounds and facilities; **Robb Moulds**, grounds maintenance manager; **Shawn Bergey**, equipment manager; and Wissahickon course assistant superintendents **Ben Rita** and **Will Reese** are all part of a great team at Philadelphia Cricket Club. **Keith Foster** was the restoration architect at the Wissahickon and St. Martins courses, and **Dr. Michael Hurdzan** and **Dana Fry** designed the Militia Hill course. **GCI**



**Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG**, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 51-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at 757-561-7777 or [terrybuchen@earthlink.net](mailto:terrybuchen@earthlink.net).



# Turf doesn't wear a Timex

**In D.C., legislators are lobbying to change how most of us change our clocks.**

**What would that mean for golf course maintenance teams?**

By **Matt LaWell**

**F**or decades, **Greg Brandriet**, like most Americans, turned his various clocks and watches forward one hour every spring and back one hour every fall. He never gave the practice much thought. Looking back, he now recognizes it likely disrupted his body, rhythm and sleep. It was just something everybody needed to do. There were no other options.

And then he moved to Arizona.

"I was kind of waiting for the change," he says, "expecting it subconsciously. And when it didn't happen . . ."

*When it didn't happen.*

Brandriet is a native of the Dakotas. He lived and worked there all his life before a sudden work shift spurred him, his wife, **Cori**, and their two sons on an epic road trip (see *One Superintendent's Job Search*, May 2023). The family landed in Arizona, where Brandriet is now the superintendent of the Ambiente golf course at JW Marriott Scottsdale Camelback Inn Resort & Spa—and where the natives haven't switched their clocks since 1966.

Arizona is one of two U.S. states, along with Hawaii that remain on Standard Time when the rest of the country switches to Daylight Saving Time. But that might not be the case much longer. Legislators from 11 other states have discussed switching their constituents to permanent Standard Time. Far more states are working on a switch to permanent Daylight Saving Time. And a pair of Florida

Congressmen have twice proposed the Sunshine Protection Act—potential federal legislation that would end the time changes and make Daylight Saving the law of the land.

What would a switch either way mean for you, your team and golf course maintenance in general?

Brandriet, for one, concedes that most golf course superintendents and maintenance team members are "up so early anyway, starting in the dark most of the time," that permanent Daylight Saving or Standard time might not feel like a big deal. After all, the sun still rises before the first tee time and plenty of daylight normally remains after the workday ends. "But looking back over this last year," he says, "it was noticeably more seamless. There's no disruption to the cycle, and you don't realize how jolting that is until you experience it both ways.

"There's no confusion about changing the clocks. There's no disruption to your sleep. It's only one day and one hour, but it can take a week to recover from that change."

The science backs up Brandriet. According to a 2020 study published in *Sleep*, the official journal of the Sleep Research Society, the week following the second Monday in March—after clocks spring forward an hour in 48 states—is filled with 18 percent more adverse events like traffic collisions and heart attacks than normal. The same study reports that the rate of adverse events is about 5 percent higher than normal the week after the first Monday in November after clocks fall back.



# UNVEILING TURF FUEL'S LATEST INNOVATION



*New cutting-edge  
formulation for conditioning  
high-performance turf to  
withstand extreme plant  
stress.*



**Blocks Stress**



**Prepares Turf**



**University Proven**



**Contact our team today to learn more about this latest product!**



✉ [info@target-specialty.com](mailto:info@target-specialty.com)  
🌐 [target-specialty.com/bpn](http://target-specialty.com/bpn)  
🌐 [turffuel.com](http://turffuel.com)  
📘 [TargetSpecialty](https://www.facebook.com/TargetSpecialty)

🐦 [TargetSpecProd](https://twitter.com/TargetSpecProd)  
📘 [Target Specialty Products](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Target-Specialty-Products)  
📺 [targetspecialtyproducts](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)







▲ Johnson

Much of that increase is normally pegged to disrupted and decreased sleep. A 2019 study published in *Journal of Health Economics* reports that most folks will lose about 19 minutes of sleep per night after the fall time change. Folks who start work before 7 a.m., though — pretty much everybody who works on a golf course — will lose about 36 minutes of sleep per night. **Dr. Karin Johnson**, vice chair for academic affairs in the Department of Neurology at UMass Chan Medical School-Baystate and vice-president of the nonprofit Save Standard Time, says, “Alignment with the sun is what’s really important.”

Brandriet agrees. “For our industry, overall,” he says, “I think not having to change would be beneficial.”

**Luke Bennett** experienced a similar transition and conclusion following a move to Hawaii. After long professional stints in and around Denver and California wine country, Bennett moved to the Big Island, where he is now director of golf course maintenance and grounds at Kohanaiki. And despite visiting the islands regularly before his transition, he didn’t know Hawaii had opted out of Daylight Saving Time during the 1966 passage of the Uniform Time Act. “It was one of those things that caught me off guard a little bit,” he says. “That and when I tried to go buy some scratch tickets to give to my guys for Christmas and they told me, ‘There’s no gambling here, dude.’”

Where Arizona favors permanent Standard Time because of its sweltering summers and falls, Hawaii prefers it because of its proximity to the Equator: The amount of daylight it receives during its shortest and longest days of the year differs by only about two hours.

“We get here at 5:30 and we work in the dark for a little longer than we would like to, but it’s totally fine,” Bennett says. “In the summertime, when it’s a little lighter in the morning, we can get out there and get out in front of everything a little more. It’s just not a big enough change for it to affect us.”

“And after going through a few seasons, you realize you don’t need to change the start time for your guys. There’s no benefit to switching things up for golf and golf course maintenance.”

Congress has discussed clocks regularly in recent years, with U.S. Senator **Marco Rubio** and U.S. Representative **Vern Buchanan**, both of Florida, sponsoring the Sunshine Protection Act in 2018, ’19, ’21 and ’23. The bill has gained co-sponsors but lost support over time. Representatives from states on the western edges of time zones particularly oppose the bill — and any shift to permanent Daylight Saving — because of later sunrises. (Brandriet, coincidentally, moved from South Dakota, which is more perfectly divided by an imaginary time zone line than any other state. Curiously, no Mount Rushmore State reps have lobbied for a permanent switch to either Daylight Saving or Standard.)

“My impression is that we are shifting the momentum from permanent Daylight time to permanent Standard time,” says **Jay Pea**, president of Save Standard Time. “Since we’ve been working on this, the number of bills for permanent Daylight have decreased every year and the number of bills for permanent Standard have increased every year. At the state level and in Congress, there have been fewer sponsors of the current Sunshine Protection Act than there were in the previous

Congress.” Pea mentions a recent vote in Nebraska that maintained the status quo but at least finished with more support for permanent Standard. “It’s very encouraging,” he says.

Pea says he thinks one state will soon pass a permanent Standard Time bill. “And once one state does that, then all the other states are going to see this is an option. Most legislators think Arizona and Hawaii have some special agreement, and that’s not the case. They’re simply following the law that was written in 1966.”

That 1966 law, the aforementioned Uniform Time Act, was enacted because “every city and town could make the decision whether they wanted to use Daylight Saving Time or not — and when they started and ended,” says **Dr. David Prerau**, a time change expert who favors Daylight Saving as what he describes as an “excellent” compromise and has written two books on the topic, including *Seize the Daylight: The Curious and Contentious Story of Daylight Saving Time*. “So one town could have it, the neighboring town could have it but start and end at different times, the next town could not have it all. And you wouldn’t know.”

Prerau mentions that Iowa once used 23 different time zones. Neighboring Illinois once used more than two dozen. A potential national patchwork wouldn’t likely be quite that disjointed, but different states could soon use different times as they did from 1918, after Congress first codified our four familiar contiguous time zones, until 1966. Pea expects regional pacts could develop, which would help still-hypothetical rollouts to permanent Standard Time.

Should the United States switch to permanent Standard Time, we would be joining the global majority: Internationally,



▲ Brandriet



▲ Prerau



▲ Pea





**ZLINE**  
*Bunker Systems*

**Get Off the ROCKS  
with ZLINE**

**THE LINEUP**

**Xtreme** ◀

**HIGH***Line* ◀

**LOW***Line* ◀

**FLAT***Line* ◀

**RANGE***Line* ◀

5 Liner Options | 1 System | Complete  
Bunker Cavity Protection | 15 Year Warranty

**DESIGNED TO  
EXCEED YOUR  
EXPECTATIONS**

**The Only Bunker Lining Systems Protected by 4 Patents**

**832 375 5110 | [www.zlineproducts.com](http://www.zlineproducts.com)**

2001 Timberloch Place, Suite 500 | The Woodlands, TX | 77380



## SPOTLIGHT



▲ Sunsets are later on the western edge of each time zone, leading to darker mornings.

61 countries still observe some variation of Daylight Saving Time, but nine have eliminated it just during the 2020s.

And we have international figures to thank for our time changes. Founding Father **Benjamin Franklin**, the first U.S. Minister to both France and Sweden, is credited with the creation of Daylight Saving back

century later to give himself more time to hunt for bugs. But before Canada, then Germany, and then the United States adopted it around World War I, a British man named **William Willett** campaigned hard for more evening sun.

He wanted later light so he could squeeze in some more golf.

Yes, a golfer is one of the reasons

in 1784 — though he suggested it only humorously to cut down on candle burning — and New Zealand entomologist **George Hudson** more formally proposed bending the clocks a

most of us have moved time and lost sleep twice every year our whole lives. Would it have been so hard for Willett to set his alarm for an earlier tee time?

No matter what happens in D.C., Bennett figures turf pros will roll with it.

“I think you adapt to anything that happens,” he says. “Daylight is daylight. We would all adjust to it accordingly. With or without it, most golf courses do have a time change for their staff once a year. This is the first place I’ve worked where we don’t.

“Nobody likes working in the dark, but sometimes you have to get the work done.” **GCI**

*Matt LaWell is Golf Course Industry’s managing editor.*

© SAVE STANDARD TIME

**ULINE**  
TEE-RRIFIC SELECTION  
BOXES, TAPE AND SO MUCH MORE

**ULINE INDUSTRIAL TAPE**

1-800-295-5510  
uline.com

ORDER BY 6 PM FOR  
SAME DAY SHIPPING

COMPLETE CATALOG 1-800-295-5510 uline.com





# A different kind of crop

The 1990s cranberry crisis spurred **Will Stearns** and his family to give golf a go. But they kept their bogs.

By **Matt LaWell**

**O**n the morning of his wedding, **Will Stearns IV**, often called Will, watched his father approach the first tee of Southers Marsh, the golf course they constructed around their cranberry bogs in Plymouth, Massachusetts. After a couple years of heartache, a couple seasons of building, and a couple months of pushing back the first rounds — the thinking being that, as soon as the team teed off, any work would end — **Will Stearns III**, often called Big Will, was ready to

swing away at the course's ceremonial first drive.

“This is going to be an omen for how this golf course is going to go,” Will remembers thinking. “He’s going to pipe one right down the middle. It’s going to be great.”

Big Will did not pipe one right down the middle.

Instead, after figuring out and navigating the best route to keep their family farm viable amid a long-running cranberry crisis, and hours before his only son tied the knot, Big Will shanked his shot hard toward the pump house, 60 yards at best, and smashed a window.

“It probably wasn’t an omen after all,” Will says.

If anything, that first shank and smattering of shattered glass can now be compared to breaking a bottle of wine or champagne against the hull of a ship before its maiden voyage. While hundreds of other cranberry farmers have struggled as their industry wades through the ups and downs of supply, demand and the desire for sweeter fruit, the Stearnses have thrived, averaging more than 20,000 rounds annually since Southers Marsh opened in July 2001 — and more than 27,000 since the start of the pandemic. Their humorous commercials, released annually on Super Bowl Sunday, have helped them become local characters. Their novel course layout, 4,111 yards and 45 acres of maintained turf weaved through 30 acres of cranberry bogs, has helped them thrive.

Nearly 23 years after turning over parts of their farm to the game, golf is their business. Growing cranberries is more of a hobby.

▲ Approaching the start of its 24th season, Southers Marsh weaves 18 holes around 30 acres of active cranberry bogs. (Don’t dive in after lost balls!)





▲ The Stearns family has run Southers Marsh since it opened in 2001, and has been a part of the Massachusetts cranberry scene since the 1950s.

The only reason the course exists at all is because back in 1995, when the cranberry industry was still centered in Massachusetts and farmers could still expect to bring home \$60 per barrel, Big Will planted grass around a bog to prevent erosion. *If we already have grass*, Will remembers his father saying, *let's build a couple greens*. A library visit led to four postage-stamp greens — the largest maybe 1,000 square feet—and a summer of whacking balls over and often into the bogs. “Golf was new to us,” Will says. “And we were having a ball.”

Will was hooked. He had just graduated from Harvard, where he studied mechanical engineering so he could design specialty equipment for cranberry farming, but now he was determined to build a life on the bogs. He moved to New York to work on the Mercantile Exchange just long enough to build up his bank account and buy his own bogs. He moved back to Plymouth in 1998 and started farming.

Everything changed less than a year later. Ocean Spray, the cranberry cooperative in which the Stearnses have long been owner-farmers, mailed letters in January 1999 telling farmers the price for barrels was dropping from \$60 to \$18. It would eventually crater at \$8. “Just brutal timing,” Will says.

were housing development or golf course,” Will says. “My father was pretty adamant about keeping the land in the family and making a go of it. Fortunately, farm credit was either nice enough or foolish enough to lend us the money!”

They persuaded local superintendent-turned-architect **Dahn Tibbett** and his colleague **Nick Filla** to design the course among the bogs, then gathered a neighbor named **Mike Pruett** and four high school kids to help them with the manual labor. They purchased used equipment, nicknamed by color, that would “just run until it wouldn’t run anymore.” There was the Green Hornet and White Lightning. The Black Widow survived the whole project. “The most expensive one, Trusty Rusty, it made one trip and burst into flames,” Will says. “It got loaded at the pit, caught on fire about halfway back and that was it. It never moved again. For Dahn to be able to put up with that, you have to tip your cap to the guy. It took a lot of patience.”

The Stearnses had previously owned an irrigation company and Will spent most of his teen years installing lines. No matter what other challenges they faced, irrigation would not be one of them. “We did all the earth moving and we put in the irrigation system, and Dahn shaped the tees and

Big Will gathered the family — his wife, **Nancy**, their daughters, **Laura** and **Betsy**, and Will — and everybody b r a i n - s t o r m e d ideas for a week. “The two things that were on everyone’s list

the greens and the bunkers,” he says. “Dahn made it look like it had always been there.”

Big Will’s errant first shot aside, the first year wasn’t a *total* disaster. Southers Marsh managed to hit 8,000 rounds from July 7 — Big Will’s 52nd birthday — to the end of the season. Word of mouth helped the number increase every year until they plateaued around 20,000 in 2004.

After a pandemic bump in 2021 and 2022, they hit 30,000 rounds last year. “For the first time,” Will says, “I feel like we might make it.” He laughs.

The only real blemish during recent years was losing Big Will in April 2021. He kept Southers Marsh humming — building a “Nut Squad” of high schoolers who could handle almost any job in the clubhouse, on the course, or in the bogs, and developing friendships with anybody who pulled in off Federal Furnace Road. Hundreds attended his celebration of life — held under a tent during a summer storm—at which Will’s older daughter, **Maddie**, joked that during her years at the course, “My dad was my boss and my grandpa was the coworker who kept me from getting my work done. He was going to do something epic every day.”

Big Will’s obituary, written by his family to make people laugh almost as much as he did, said his official cause of death was “a several year battle with heart issues, diabetes, skin cancer, lung cancer, pancreatic cancer, bladder cancer, and golfers who would not bring their carts in when it got dark.”

Will’s brother-in-law, **J.D. Marks**, has filled Big Will’s spot next to Will in the annual commercials — standing in the bogs in waders, selling the course with comedy—but there is no replacing him.

“It’s been a rollercoaster ride,” Will says, “and there have been more good times than bad. The No. 1 complaint we got in 2023 was, ‘I can’t get a tee time.’ I tell them, ‘You know, that’s my goal! That’s what I’ve been trying to do for 23 years!’” **GCI**

ADVERTISER	WEBSITE	PAGE
AQUA-AID Solutions	aquaaidolutions.com	51
Aquatrols	aquatrols.com	2,15,39
Buffalo Turbine LLC	buffaloturbine.com	11
Corvea Agrosiences	corvea.com	12,13*
DryJect	dryject.com	8
Envu	us.envu.com	52
John Deere	johndeere.com/golf	5
Lastec, Inc	lastec.com	10
Nufarm	nufarm.com/usturf	9
PBI-Gordon Corp.	pbigordonturf.com	28,34
Quali-Pro	controlsolutionsinc.com/quali-pro	21
SePro Corporation	stewardsofturf.com/poa	belly tip
Standard Golf Company	standardgolf.com	17
Steel Green Manufacturing	steelgreenmfg.com	11
Target Specialty Products	target-specialty.com	43
Turfco MFG, Inc.	turfco.com	7
Uline	uline.com	46
ZLine Bunker Systems	zlineproducts.com	45

**FOR SALE**

**Discount  
Small Engines & Parts**

Small engines & parts  
from Briggs & Stratton, Kohler,  
Tecumseh, Robin and more.  
**www.smallenginesuppliers.com**

Also, look up your own parts  
and buy online at  
**www.smallenginepartsuppliers.com**

**MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS**

**MILLER MANAGEMENT  
ASSOCIATES**

GOLF COURSE BROKERAGE  
COURSES FOR SALE  
[www.southeastgolfproperties.com](http://www.southeastgolfproperties.com)  
[brett@mmagolf.com](mailto:brett@mmagolf.com)  
828-775-7765

Place a  
**Golf Course Industry  
Classified Ad today!**  
Contact us at 800-456-0707

**GOLF COURSE**  
INDUSTRY

**SEEDS**

**NATIVE SEEDS**

Largest producer of native seeds  
in the Eastern U.S. Hundreds of  
species of grass and wildflower  
seeds for upland to wetland sites.  
Bioengineering material for riparian  
areas and erosion control.  
Contact **ERNST SEEDS** today.  
[www.ernstseed.com](http://www.ernstseed.com) – 800/873-3321

**NAMES INDEX**

**Chad Allen** Zach Bauer **Luke Bennett** Shawn Bergery **Will Bolin** Scott Bordner **Greg Brandriet** Vern Buchanan **Patrick Burton** Emily Casey **Tom DeGrandi** Nick Dunlap **Nick Filla** Laura Flynn **Keith Foster** Benjamin Franklin **Dana Fry** Ian Gallagher **Matthew Gourlay** Denver Hart **Justin Hemauer** George Hudson **Dr. Michael Hurdzan** Dr. Karin Johnson **Alex Loesch** Mike Manthey **Betsy Marks** J.D. Marks **Mickey McCord** Dr. Ben McGraw **Dan Meersman** Jeremiah Mincey **Robb Moulds** Brent Palich **Jay Pea** Dr. David Prerau **Mike Pruitt** Will Reese **Mark Ries** Ben Rita **Ty Robb** Tina Rosenow **Marco Rubio** Natalie Russell **Maddie Stearns** Nancy Stearns **"Big Will" Stearns III** Will Stearns IV **Brian Stiehler** Bryan Stromme **Brian Sullivan** Rachel Sullivan **Dahn Tibbett** Rob Uzar **William Willett** Rick Woelfel



# Have You Heard Us Lately?

New podcasts are being added WEEKLY to Golf Course Industry's Superintendent Radio Network. **With five unique series to choose from**, there's bound to be one that's music to your ears. Check them all out:

**Greens With Envy | Tartan Talks | Beyond the Page  
Wonderful Women of Golf | Reel Turf Techs**



**GOLF COURSE**  
INDUSTRY



**CONTENT IN EVERY DIRECTION.**



## MORE TRANSITIONAL GUIDANCE

Last month I shared the first part of my conversation with Hillcrest (Idaho) Country Club superintendent **Matthew Gourlay**, CGCS, MG, about the methodology and process surrounding his recent job change. Here's the second part.

### *What do you hope to achieve in your new position?*

There are several key objectives I aim to achieve:

**Optimal course conditions:** Strive to maintain and enhance the overall quality and playability of the golf course, ensuring well-manicured greens, fairways and bunkers.

**Environmental sustainability:** Implement and promote sustainable turf management practices to minimize environmental impact and ensure the long-term health of the course.

**Team collaboration:** Foster a positive and cohesive working environment among the maintenance team, encouraging teamwork, communication and professional development.

**Budget management:** Effectively manage the budget allocated for course maintenance, optimizing resource allocation and minimizing unnecessary expenses.

**Continuous improvement:** Seek opportunities for improvement in turf management techniques, equipment efficiency and overall maintenance processes.

**Pest and disease control:** Implement effective pest and disease control strategies to safeguard the course against potential threats to turf health.

**Compliance with regulations:** Ensure that the golf course adheres to all relevant regulations, including environmental standards, safety protocols and any other applicable guidelines.

**Enhanced golfer experience:** Strive to provide an exceptional experience for golfers by maintaining high-quality playing conditions, addressing feedback and continuously enhancing amenities.

**Professional development:** Invest in my professional development and that of our team, staying abreast of industry trends, attending relevant conferences, and pursuing ongoing education.

**Community engagement:** Build positive relationships with the local community, golfers and stakeholders, promoting the golf course as a valuable asset and contributing positively to the community.

**Effective communication:** Foster clear and open communication channels with both the management team and golfers, keeping them informed about maintenance schedules, improvements and any relevant updates.

**Long-term planning:** Develop and implement long-term maintenance plans, considering seasonal variations, anticipated challenges and strategic improvements to the course.

**Employee satisfaction:** Prioritize the well-being and job satisfaction of our maintenance team, recognizing and rewarding their efforts,

and providing opportunities for professional growth.

**Emergency preparedness:** Develop and maintain contingency plans for unforeseen events, ensuring a quick and effective response to emergencies such as extreme weather conditions or course damage.

Setting clear goals in these areas will contribute to the success of the golf course and my role as a golf course superintendent.

### *How different is Hillcrest from your previous course?*

Hillcrest is a privately owned country club, in contrast with the public course nature of Colbert Hills. While Hillcrest features 18 holes, Colbert Hills boasts 27 holes. At Hillcrest, there's a notable prevalence of annual bluegrass on both the greens and the rest of the course, a characteristic not shared with Colbert Hills. Transitioning from being the longest-serving team member at Colbert Hills, I now hold the position of the least-tenured staff member at Hillcrest.

### *What advice do you have for someone looking for that next opportunity?*

Discovering the next career opportunity requires a blend of strategic planning, networking and highlighting your skills.

- Conduct a thorough self-assessment
- Define clear career goals
- Build and nurture your professional network.
- Keep your résumé and online profiles up-to-date
- Focus on developing relevant skills
- Research potential employers

and companies

- Explore various job-search platforms
- Prepare thoroughly for interviews
- Seek constructive feedback during your job search
- Maintain persistence and a positive mindset

Securing the right opportunity takes time and dedication. Exercise patience, stay committed to your objectives, and be open to adapting your strategy based on your experiences and feedback.

### *Which has been more valuable to your career: education or experience?*

A person's career development is influenced significantly by both education and experience, with their importance varying depending on the field and individual circumstances. In many instances, an optimal approach involves combining education and experience. A robust educational background can create opportunities and establish a firm foundation, while practical experience enables individuals to enhance their skills, navigate diverse situations and showcase their capabilities to potential employers. The relative significance of education and experience is contingent on job requirements, industry standards and individual career objectives. Continuous learning, whether through formal education or on-the-job experiences, frequently serves as the linchpin for ongoing career growth and success.

### *What mistakes have you made in your career?*

Agreeing to have this conversation with you! **GCI**

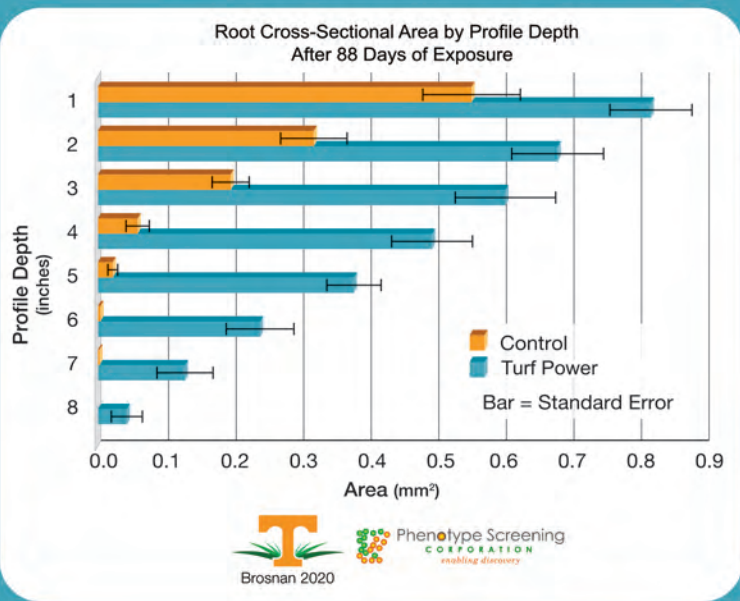


**MATTHEW WHARTON, CGCS, MG**, is the superintendent at Idle Hour Country Club in Lexington, Kentucky, and past president of the Carolinas GCSA. Follow him on X at @IHCCGreenkeeper.



# Turf Power™

*Innovative research collaboration, yielding an unprecedented look into Turf Power*





# Stay on top of root health



## A first-of-its-kind solution to protect your roots.

At Envu, we know the key to healthy turf starts with the roots. That's where some of your most challenging threats take hold – from soilborne pathogens to nematodes. That's why we developed Resilia™ root health solution. It offers broad-spectrum control and is the first-ever all-in-one product that:



Allows roots to reach full biomass and depth potential



Protects your roots from destructive soilborne pathogens for up to 21 days and most up to 28 days



Works well in combination and rotation with Stressgard® brand fungicides



Keeps your turf healthy and playable all season long

Learn more about the innovative solutions we're committed to providing you at [us.envu.com/root-health](https://us.envu.com/root-health).