



# THE NEWSLETTER

September 2018

of the **Golf Course Superintendents Association of New England, Inc.**

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## *Presidents Message*

In our world, the summer of 2018 will go down in the books as one to remember...or forget? It started on a mild note in June, delivered a quick dose of high temps at the beginning of July and then poured on the heat from mid-July, never letting up until the beginning of September.

Below are some fun weather facts provided by WBZ in Boston on 8/27/18, so this data may change by the time you are reading this:

- Sixth hottest summer on record (73.5), and only .6 degrees below the all time record (74.1)
- Warmest August ever recorded in Boston (76.7)
- 17 days over 90 degrees
- Two days shy of most days with 80+ temps
- 27 nights in Boston above 70 (3 nights shy of record set back in 1983)

I have talked with many of our peers throughout New England, and I am confident in saying that if you didn't lose any turf this year, you are definitely in the minority. No matter what tools or technology is available and used by most, turf managers experienced similar turf loss during the same time frame on or around August 15th. Rain events led to saturated surfaces with 100% humidity for days on end. High performance turf just melted away and it happened to us overnight in a matter of hours. We looked fine at days end and when we arrived the next morning Pythium was present in some fairway locations and wet wilt was wide spread in other areas across the property. Feeling helpless is a gut-wrenching sensation that was felt by many Superintendents in New England during the summer of 2018.

With this said, I hope everyone has their course on the road to recovery and your personal health and family are strong and doing well. If anyone is not feeling so good about your season, golf course or family relationships, I encourage you to reach out to your neighbor Superintendent friend to talk things out. If that is not an option, please feel free to reach out to your Association as this available support, is the root of GCSANE's existence. I am always available to talk and Don Hearn is in the office on most days, so please reach out.

All the Best,  
**David Johnson,**  
President GCSANE

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Email: donhearn@gcsane.org

### **GCSANE Headquarters**

300 Arnold Palmer Blvd., Norton, MA 02766  
Tel: (774) 430-9040  
Web Site: www.gcsane.org

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## *Thoughts from a GCSANE Member* *by Eric Richardson*

GCSANE Members,

For those of you who do not know me, I have been the Director of Grounds at Essex County Club in Manchester, MA for the last eleven and a half years. Before ECC, I was the Assistant Superintendent at Myopia Hunt Club, Chicago Golf Club and Heather Hills Golf Club (a public golf course in Michigan). I have lived and worked in New England for the last 15+ years, but I am originally from Southern California (long story).

I have recently spent time reflecting on my career, I am only 40 years old, but I have been in the industry since I was 19. I have been fortunate in my career with where I landed as an Assistant and Superintendent, and I have accomplished most of my career goals in this industry. With that said, there are a few holes, one of which is participating more in our local association. I will be the first to tell you that, while I have done my part in a few select areas within our association, I have not participated enough. I have missed meetings and even skipped out on a few Annual Meetings. I could record the reasons why I missed this or that and play it back for most of you who have done the same; I know I am not alone.

Increasing member participation in the association, even just a little bit, is essential in its survival as a valuable resource for every New England turfgrass professional. I believe in common sense approaches to problems, and I believe our first issue is a simple one. The association members need to know who you are, and we need to do a better job of welcoming new Superintendents, Assistants and other turfgrass professionals. So, every month I am going to type a profile for the newsletter on people in our industry, with the focus on introducing recently hired professionals in New England. I will blend in a few of you old timers from time to time. The article will accompany a photo of your choosing. The process will be easy, and pain-free, one phone call or email is all it will take to create a positive profile.

Secondly, we are going to create a welcoming committee for newly hired professionals. A protocol will be developed to make sure there are adequate support mechanisms and outreach during their first year. Speaking from experience, I think this simple process will help increase participation earlier in a Superintendents career and help to create longer-lasting participation in the association.

Please contact me at [erichardson@essexcc.org](mailto:erichardson@essexcc.org) if you have any interest in having a profile created for the newsletter or if you are interested in participating on the welcoming committee.

Sincerely,



**Eric Richardson**  
Director of Grounds  
Essex County Club

## *Now You're A Superintendent by Don Hearn*

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Now you're a superintendent, can you remain friends with those you worked with?

Is it OK to be friends with your employees? Should you be aloof? What's the right balance and what can I do to achieve it?

These are thoughts of many who have risen through the ranks and become superintendents. It can be particularly daunting when you've been promoted at the same club where you were working at the same level as those who now are reporting to you.

Managing can be extremely rewarding, but it also has its challenges. In terms of the behaviors you want to exhibit as a manager, aloofness should not be one of them, but you are right to question and examine the kind of relationships and boundaries that you should have with your employees.

People you manage can't be the friends you go out with for drinks after work on a regular basis, even if you used to. It's reasonable to arrange occasional social events with your direct reports — and as the boss, you can expect to pick up the check — but it would be wise to keep them to a minimum.

Another part of maintaining appropriate manager/employee boundaries involves the way you present yourself at work. Make sure your attire, behavior, and communication style are all professional. You don't have to dress as if you're a model for a clothing company that specializes in golf attire. But, at the least you shouldn't be dressed as if you were leaving for a beach volley ball tournament.

Also consider the kind of management style you want to adopt. Do you want to be a very hands-on manager? Do you want to be a laissez-faire manager? Determine what the right role is for you, your people, and your organization's culture. Now would be a great time to look back at the managers you had who were

the most effective — regardless of their age — whose style you could learn from and emulate.

You should also focus on what the essential role of a manager is: ensuring that your employees have the skills, tools, support, and energy to understand and succeed at their responsibilities and remain engaged with the organization. In this role, you will be providing reviews of your team members' contributions and areas for them to develop. It's crucial to provide feedback to employees in the right setting. If the dynamic of your relationship or the situation is too casual and overly friendly, the important feedback you provide may not come across as serious or the person may not react professionally — they might see it as an invitation to have a friend-based discussion or disagreement, as opposed to recognizing that this is a manager/subordinate situation. Imagine a friend saying, "I can't believe you wore that to work" versus your manager saying, "You are dressed inappropriately." The latter carries an entirely different weight and should elicit a more professional reaction. You may find that employees who are closer in age — and with whom you share a more friendly relationship — could be more sensitive to your managerial feedback.

Work on making sure your communication and actions are framed positively, no matter what the age of the employee. The difference between thinking of your job as supporting employees' success versus catching them doing something

wrong will help you establish appropriate relationships. Regardless of age, this is less of a friends/not friends issue and more of a management approach.

New managers, especially, need to pay extra attention to confidentiality. There are a number of things you can no longer discuss with your co-workers that you may have formerly discussed over lunch or a coffee break. You and your team need to recognize this shift, so that your employees don't put you in a position of asking for more information than you're able to give. Being close in age may mean that this line feels less solid than with an older manager and younger employees, but it is no less important to maintain confidentiality.

If your relationship with your employees is overly casual and friend-based, you might experience challenges to your authority or unprofessional reactions to feedback. On the other hand, if you are too aloof, you are not presenting your real self, which is key to good workplace dynamics.

Managers want to have good relationships with their people. This means understanding and acknowledging who they are outside of work on a regular basis; it does not mean being best friends who share everything over a couple of drinks. A supportive and understanding management style will help build long-term successful relationships, exceptional productivity, and long-term success with employees of any age.



## Gazing in the Grass

Frank S. Rossi, Ph.D.

Widespread heat continues to create intense abiotic stress for much of the Northeast US but especially along the I-95 corridor. Temperatures are expected to be slightly cooler this week, but in practical terms plants will see little relief except inland and higher elevations that will see evening lows into the upper 50s low 60s.

Excess moisture is increasingly adding stress to already stressed turf areas. Recently, short intense



high volume bursts of rainfall that settle and accumulate in low spots, followed by bright sunny skies and warm temperatures invariably has led to scalding (inset picture). Water creates an anaerobic environment that inhibits normal gas exchange and warms more rapidly due to higher heat capacity than air. Consequently the submerged plants experience **lethal** heat and anoxic (lack of oxygen) stress. Additionally plants adjacent to the scalded area are rooted in warm wet soils that will add enough stress for "secondary" issues such as anthracnose, brown patch, and Pythium to exploit weakened turf. Under excessive moisture conditions, fungal issues are modulated by temperature, not inhibited. Therefore, expect intense pressure from fungal pathogens and expect algae to develop in thin turf areas that will lead to further decline.

Finer textured soils with high percentages of silt and clay particles will be prone to compaction under the excess moisture conditions and will be difficult to manage. Aggressive approaches to restricting and rotating traffic are warranted due to the high risk of turf thinning from wear and confounding soil compaction. Sports turf managers with synthetic turf available for use would be wise to move sports traffic to those surfaces. Maintenance on very wet soils should be restricted to the driest areas to avoid rutting and shearing associated with turning. If mowing is restricted consider raising the height of cut when able to return to mowing to avoid stimulating excessive growth that results from warm wet soils. If Nitrogen fertilizer has been applied recently expect significant release and stimulation of top growth.

Normally this would be an ideal time to begin renovating turf areas in the Northeast. This is still an acceptable practice as it can capitalize on any favorable weather with the the following caveats: if soil is saturated wait until surface 1-2" dry, avoid aggressive soil amending at this time to avoid damaging soil structure, use disease resistant improved turfgrass species and varieties especially for gray leaf spot (GLS), and request fungicide treated seed (Apron-treatment) to reduce risk associated with seed bed Pythium.



## Thoughts From Your Executive Director *by Don Hearn*



*left to right, Dave Pease, Executive Secretary of the ATG; Steve Rabideau, this year's honoree; Bob Ruzsala, President of the ATG*



*Gill Hanse*

The Dr. Joseph Troll Classic Tournament, sponsored by the Alumni Turf Group (ATG), was held at the Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, New York, September 4. It was a blistering day with temperatures in the high 90's and it seemed humidity to match. The heat index was in the low 100's. Because of this a few people had to cut short their round. Better safe than sorry. Approximately 230 players enjoyed the day with both the East and West courses being used for the event.

Steve Rabideau, CGCS at Winged Foot, a Massachusetts native and a graduate of UMass was this year's honoree. Steve and his talented team had both courses in magnificent condition.

The Winged Foot staff members were extremely friendly and accommodating and handled all the details of the lunch, dinner and refreshments with precision and made everyone feel comfortable.

Speakers included Craig Currier, superintendent at Glen Oaks Club in Westbury, NY; Winged Foot's club president; Dr. Michelle DaCosta and Dr. Pat Vittum from UMass; Gil Hanse who spoke about the importance of Steve Rabideau's role in the recent renovations that took place at the club and Dr. Tricia Serio, dean of the College of Natural Sciences who presented a Normal Rockwell print to Steve to honor his achievement as this year's honoree.

The purpose of this event is to raise funds for the turfgrass program at UMass and this year's event may have been the most successful to date.

The Fall 2018 issue of Mass Golfer magazine has a lot of pages devoted to the role of area superintendents and their relationship to the game enjoyed by so many. Virtually all the superintendents featured are members of the GCSA of New England. Please take the time to read about others who help make golf enjoyable

for the golfers in our state. Special thanks to Jesse Menachem, Executive Director and CEO of Mass Golf; Becky Blaser, Director of Communications at Mass Golf and Rick Dunphy, Publisher of Mass Golfer magazine for putting this together.

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# The Blistering Summer Of 2018 by Don Hearn

*The following article appeared in the most recent e-revision sent to all MA golfers by Mass Golf, and is posted on their website. Our thanks go to our friends at Mass Golf for offering to "spread the word" on our behalf.*

As a golfer and interested observer of course conditions, you might wonder why the course you play is having problems this season. I've heard some say, "This must be a good year for grass because of all the rain." While a "lot of rain" might be good for a lawn, it's not what you want when coupled with high heat and humidity on golf course turf.

The summer of 2018 will be a memorable one for all the wrong reasons. Golf Course Superintendents, veterans and fledglings alike, experienced conditions that haven't been so widespread for many years.

Spring started for some with winter injury and difficulty germinating seed due to the cold air and soil temperatures. As temperatures warmed and seed germination began, saturated soils and extreme heat and humidity beginning in June led to more turf loss. Areas of poor drainage and shallow pockets called "bird baths" filled with excess water from frequent heavy rains. This led to more turf loss when the hot weather cooked the turf in these spots.

Turf disease such as pythium thrives in wet, hot, humid temperatures. This year these conditions were frequent and created an ideal environment for pythium to take hold. Many superintendents couldn't apply fungicides because of the frequent rains and heavy downpours. This created a helpless feeling. The only hope was for the rain to stop long enough for fungicide applications to stem the rampant diseases present.

August rolled around, which is the month many superintendents aerify because they believe it to be the best time for the process and generally is a good time for seed germination. Others believe it's the only time they will have the staff needed to complete the project. There is risk that in some years the weather will prove to be the conqueror. This was that year. In many instances the process is devoted to a date on a course golf schedule and no optional date is included for adverse weather. So, the process proceeds and chances are taken. Sometimes you win. Sometimes you lose. Some were fortunate to be the former. Some were, unfortunately, the latter.

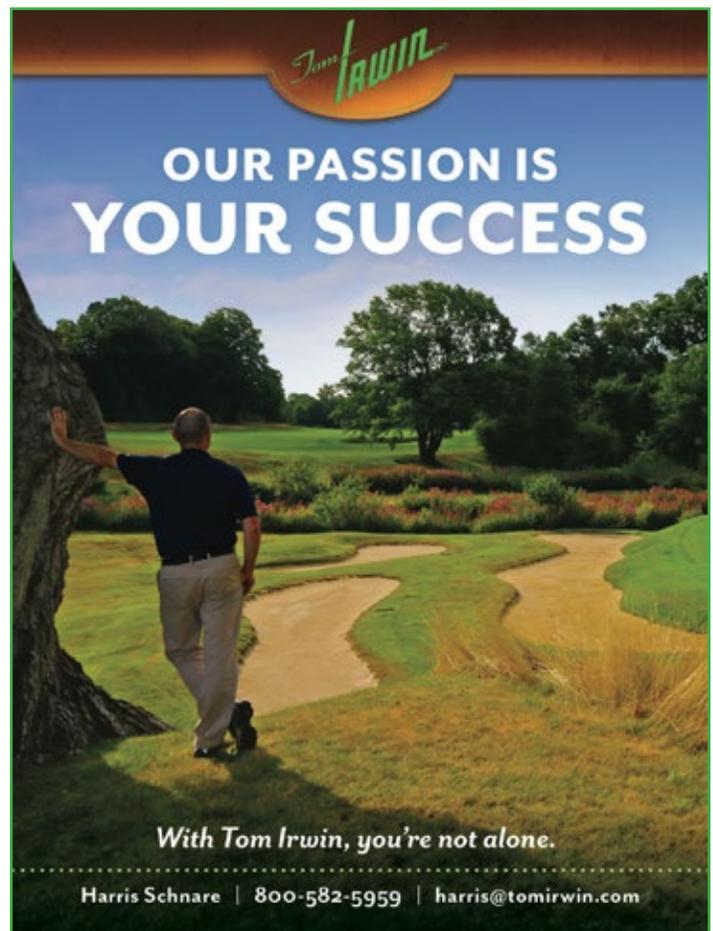
Among golf course superintendents in the region, the consensus is, no matter what tools you had in your kit, around August 15, turf loss was evident. High performance turf (that which is grown on golf courses) just melted away. Some turf was lost literally overnight. Turf that was in good condition at day's end was devastated by pythium during the night-time hours. Additionally, an insect known as ABW (annual bluegrass weevil) decided to make an out-of-season visit in early August. This caught some by surprise and created more stress and damage to the already stressed plants.

The most basic of maintenance procedures – mowing, was a huge task and the cause of much damage for many courses this season. For some it became a "damned if you do – damned if you don't" situation. Because of the heavy rain, one course reported not mowing fairways for close to a week. An immense crop of clippings was the result after mowing. Certainly, there was a setback of the turf from the shock of having so much growth being removed.

As of the end of August, this was the 6th hottest summer on record, missing the all-time record by .6 of a degree. In Boston, there were 27 nights when the low temperature was above 70 (3 nights shy of the record set back in 1983). Farther inland the temperatures were even warmer! This low evening temperature is an important one for a turf manager since some diseases are very active if the temperature does not drop below 70 in the evening.

In addition to the stress to the grass plants, there is a physical and emotional component to this season. People get tired, worn down, a bit grouchy at times and relationships can suffer. Tempers flare, and courtesy and social graces can become scarce. Cooler weather will bring all back to normal.

*This article was compiled from personal observations and input from superintendents and commercial representation from the field.*



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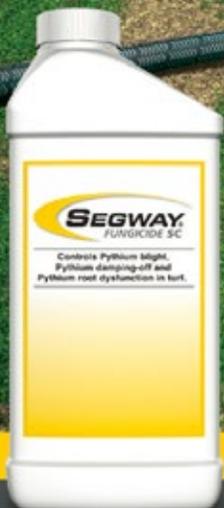
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## September 2018





A woman sued after she nearly died at a golf course when a swarm of yellow jackets attacked her.

A California woman who sued a golf course after she nearly died from being attacked by wasps on the greens had some success this week. In an appeal, a court has ruled that property owners, including golf courses, have a “duty” to protect patrons from dangerous insects on their property.

In July 2013, Carolyn Staats was taking a private golf lesson at Vintner’s Golf Club in Napa Valley. While teeing up at the fifth hole, she was suddenly swarmed by dozens of yellow jackets—a predatory social wasp that has black and yellow stripes and is really nasty.

Getting attacked by wasps is no fun in any circumstance, but this was a particularly horrible case. Staats was stung more than 50 times, missed more than a month of work, and was “within 15 seconds of dying,” according to a paramedic who treated her at the scene, the court record shows.

Staats—who is now deathly allergic to the wasps and has to carry a cache of EpiPens everywhere she goes—sued the golf course for “general negligence and premises liability.” The trial court that first heard her case threw it out, claiming that protecting golfers from stinging insects management didn’t know were there goes beyond the scope of maintaining a “reasonably safe” property. (The day after the attack, it took an exterminator 15 minutes to find the tiny nest, which was hidden under a lump of grass.)

But in the appeal, the judges ruled that protecting folks from deadly insect stings falls under the scope of a reasonable expectation of safety.

“Golf course operators are not exempted from exercising reasonable care to protect their patrons against the foreseeable risk posed by yellow jacket nests on their premises,” stated the decision.



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(Cont. from page 8))

The case will now go forward to determine whether or not the club did everything that was reasonably expected to protect patrons. But it's now been formally established in the state of California: if you own a golf course, you should probably do a regular sweep for wasps.

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**Mike Holton**

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## Congratulations

to **Eric Still** on his new position as Superintendent at The Meadow at Peabody Golf Course.

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