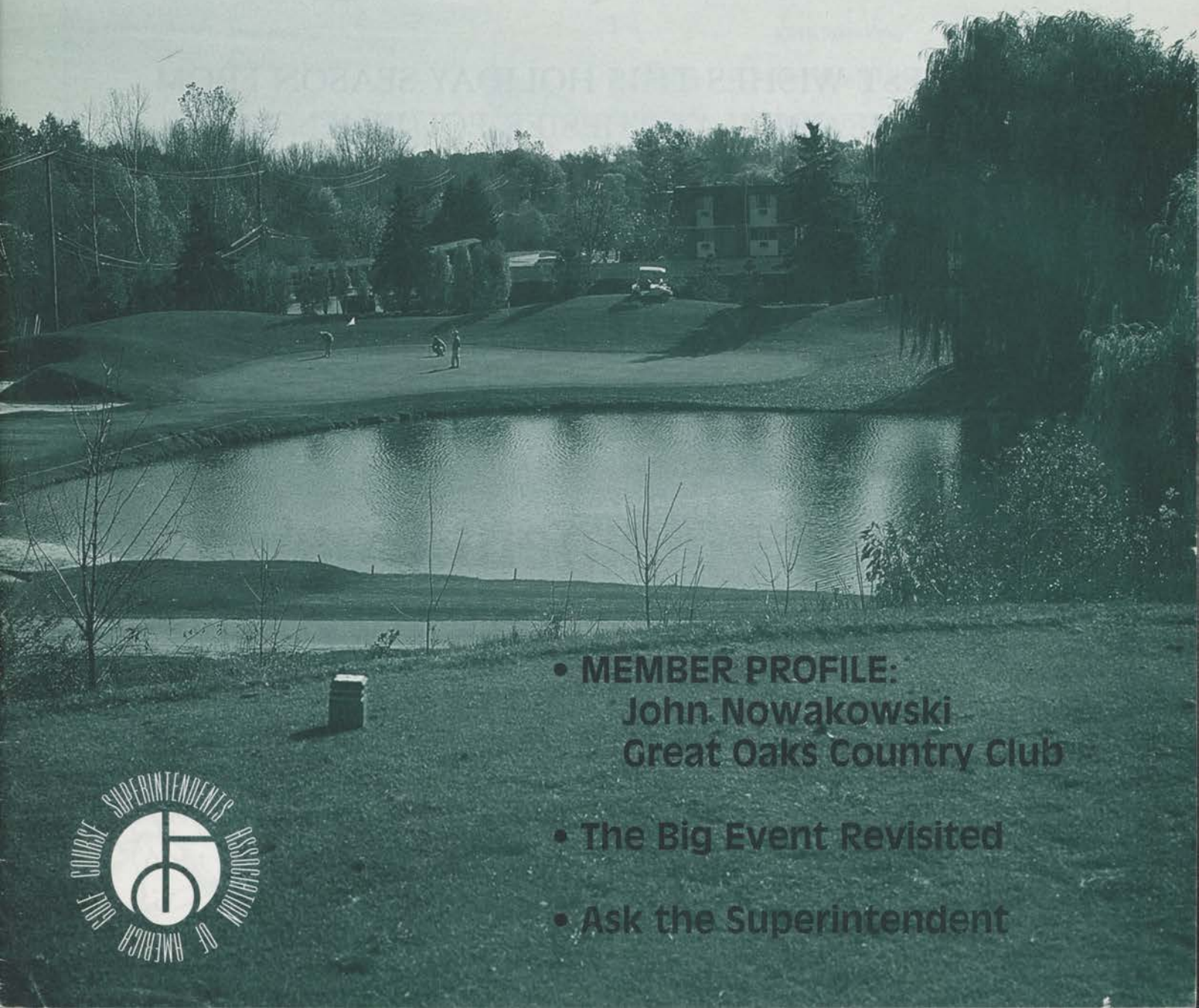


# A PATCH OF GREEN

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1994



- **MEMBER PROFILE:**  
John Nowakowski  
Great Oaks Country Club

- The Big Event Revisited
- Ask the Superintendent





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## Contact for MBCGCSA Information

KATE MASON

Executive Secretary

MBCGCSA

P.O. Box 173, Troy, MI 48099

(810) 362-1108

Fax (810) 362-1736

## Executive Editor

Paul Kolbe

## Publishers

Kolka & Robb, Inc.

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Katie Elsila, Editor

Tiffanie Howell, Associate Editor

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## Advertising & editorial offices are at:

30700 Telegraph Road

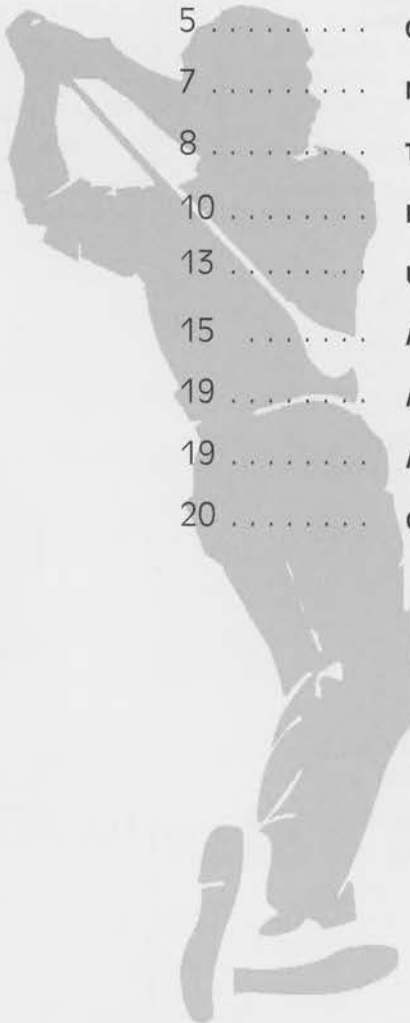
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Cover Photo: The sixteenth hole,  
Great Oaks Country Club  
by Tim Davis



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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## January 17-19, 1995

65th Annual Michigan Turfgrass Conference  
Holiday Inn - South Convention Center  
Lansing. For more information,  
call (517) 321-1660

## February 20-27, 1995

GCSAA's 66th Annual International Golf Course  
Conference and Show, Moscone Center, San  
Francisco. For more information,  
call (913) 832-4430.

Attention Nature Lovers: For a future article in  
A Patch of Green, we would like to talk to any  
MBCGCSAA members who are members of the  
Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for  
Golf Courses &/or  
those who have incorporated wildflowers in  
their planting program  
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## kate speaking

"Michigan and Border Cities...Kate speaking."

**"Hello, Kate. This is Pete Miller."**

"Hi! What's up, Pete."

**"Kate, I THINK I'm interested in joining the GCSAA."**

"THINK? What do you mean, THINK?"

**"Well, why SHOULD I join? Other guys are members of the 'National,' but do I NEED to join?"**

"Look, the bottom line is...it's an investment in your profession...in your future."

**"Yeah. How so?"**

"For a number of reasons. First, GCSAA represents the profession on national issues. You know...environmental..uh, regulatory matters.."

**"True, we really get a bad rap. I'm glad to hear somebody cares."**

"Right. And the Association is there in Washington, representing YOU. They also represent the superintendent with other golf groups...You know, club managers, pros...The golf industry working TOGETHER."

**"Okay..."**

"As a member you'll have great and many opportunities to further your education. Get the scoop on new developments regarding turfgrass, etc...mmm..administrative, handling personnel, AND personal. The possibilities are endless. There are some really great seminars being offered at the conference in San Francisco this February. And there are seminars offered regionally, too, throughout the year."

**"Sounds good. Almost got me hooked."**

"The GCSAA also has a great magazine. It's full of great articles. Lots of info..."

**"Okay! Okay! Where do I sign," chuckle.**

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# on par with the president



As we have a chance to sit back and reflect on the 1994 season, we can envision the superior weather that made our public and private memberships play many rounds of golf under sunny skies on almost every weekend of the summer. However, as usual, Mother Nature made portions of the season challenging for turf managers, with early summer droughts and August rains. Sometimes we might feel that it is more difficult year after year; but we must remember that our turf management skills are improving, and our business, as well as our field of work, is booming.

As Mother Nature held out blue skies, the Michigan Special Olympics Superintendents Championship and our Annual Golf Day were played under outstanding conditions and were very successful. My thanks to all the committees who worked on these events. They were successful because of your hard work.

Now that we're all finishing up the season and getting back to a normal life with our families and friends, we also must remember to look ahead to the important conventions that guide and support our membership. The annual Michigan Turfgrass Conference will be held in January, and if you haven't had the chance to attend, now is the time to get involved. This conference offers an informative learning experience and includes an opportunity to share new ideas and make new friends.

February '95 is the month for the GCSAA Conference, Trade Show and Golf Tournament, which will take place in San Francisco. This conference is a grand opportunity to compare turf management techniques with other superintendents from across the country. It is a chance to observe the latest innovations in turf grass equipment. In addition, it is an excellent professional experience, where we have time for friendly camaraderie and to play a well-deserved round or two of golf.

I would like to take this occasion to congratulate and welcome our new board members. A special thank you is in order to Fritz McMullen and Gary Thommes who are leaving the board after contributing many years of dedicated service to our organization. It takes hard work and dedication from the board members to provide leadership to the membership. A heartfelt thank you must go to Kate Mason, our executive secretary, for her exceptional performance in the organization of our fundraisers and the day-to-day operations of the MBCGCSA.

As another year comes to a close, I wish everyone success with the top-dressing of the greens in preparation for the cold winter elements. I hope to see everyone at our annual Holiday Party at Lakeland's Country Club and, after a few months of rest and relaxation, I'm sure we'll all be anxious to dive into another year of managing our little piece of this Earth.

A Joyous and Safe Holiday to All,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jay Delcamp'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jay Delcamp





*Thom Martinek, Superintendent,  
Shaker Heights Country Club, Cleveland, Ohio*

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That's certainly true for Thom Martinek, course superintendent at the 80-year-old Shaker Heights Country Club located in that prestigious neighborhood near Cleveland, OH. He's used a seven- to ten-day schedule of Daconil 2787 Flowable Fungicide at low label rates for more than a decade. And the result? Throughout the season, Leaf spot, Dollar spot, Brown patch and even algal scum are kept well under control.

### **Seven-day schedule**

"We've been successful with this program for years," Thom says. "Daconil 2787 is a good contact fungicide, but with daily mowing, frequent irrigation and that sort of thing, you're bound to lose some of it. So, from a preventive standpoint, I like to use a seven-day schedule at the very lightest end of the recommended rates." In warm, wet weather, though, when disease pressure is highest, Thom uses Daconil 2787 at higher label rates, or tank mixes with systemics.

While the course at Shaker Heights Country Club is short — just 6300 yards — it has a reputation for tough, tight holes and fast, subtle, undulating greens. With bentgrass turf throughout, Thom knows he can't take shortcuts on maintenance.

### **Cornerstone for disease control**

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# MEMBERSHIP MEETING UPDATE

Report and Photos by Tiffanie Howell

## September Membership Meeting Features Dr. Paul Rieke

Dr. Paul Rieke, Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, was the featured speaker at MBCGCSA's September Membership Meeting at Moravian Hills Country Club; the host superintendent was Howard Ellis. Rieke reported on the importance of proper topdressing of greens.

Topdressing is important for smooth putting surfaces, thatch control, modification of surface soil, winter protection, tool establishment and for the addition of nutrients.

The selection of sand varies from particle size, shape, ph free, mineralogy, cost and availability. The frequency of sand topdressing depends on traffic, seasonal and stress effects and environmental conditions.

The objective for cultivation is to reduce compaction, as well as to improve gas exchange, root and stress tolerance, infiltration and resilience.

The objective in topdressing is not to have dramatic changes in your topdressing. Most important, you don't want to see lines in the soil sample. Always keep samples of the sand you currently are using to be sure to get the same type the next time you order. If you know the type of sand you desire, look at the samples you have and compare it to the new sand you receive. If the sand doesn't match, don't accept it. It is very crucial that you don't get dry sand; when it is blown differently from the spreader, it will change the rate of application.

Remember you don't want serious layers showing in your soil sample.

Questions for Dr. Rieke may be addressed to: A Patch of Green, c/o Kolka & Robb, Inc., 30700 Telegraph Road, Suite 1401, Bingham Farms, MI 48025-4531.



*John Cooney tees off as Dale Bauer looks on.*



*Greg Seago, Don Fields, Dale Bauer, John Cooney take a few seconds for a photo.*



*Dr. Paul Rieke answers a question.*



*John Cooney putts as Greg Seago observes.*



*Don Fields putts.*

# "THE BIG EVENT"

## A Big Success



A BIG Thank You to all those who helped make The Big Event so successful. More than \$29,000 was raised, which will be donated to the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation and scholarship recipients. Once again, we thank the clubs which generously donated their facilities for the day and MBCGCSA members and friends who came out and supported the event.

**COMMITTEE:** Roy Szyndlar, Chair  
Tim Barno  
Jerry Cyr  
Paul Dushane  
Dick Matthews  
Carey Mitchelson  
Dave Picot

**HOSTS:**

**Bay Pointe Country Club**  
Superintendent Rick Murphy

**Dearborn Country Club**  
Superintendent Fred Green

**Country Club of Detroit**  
Superintendent Carey Mitchelson

**Lochmoor Club**  
Superintendent Mike Jones

**Wabeek Country Club**  
Superintendent Ken DeBusscher

Photos by Tiffanie Howell

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*Host Superintendents for the Big Event are Fred Green, Dearborn Country Club, Ken DeBusscher, Wabeek Country Club, Carey Mitchelson, Country Club of Detroit, Rick Murphy, Bay Pointe Golf Course (not pictured Mike Jones, Lochmoor Club)*



Winners at Country Club of Detroit, +5



Raffle anyone...What's the prize?...Gary and Carey of course.



Winners at Dearborn Country Club, +5



Raffle anyone? You said twenty, correct?...Don Fields



You should have used Benham Chemical products..Don Benham



Winners at Lochmoor Club, +13



Mike Bay, in charge of prizes.



Gary Davey, Golf Association of Michigan



Winners at Wabek Country Club, +4



Tim Barno, Dick Matthews, Al De Grazia, total scores.



We'll take the raffle for the television instead.



Winners at Bay Pointe Golf Course, +15



# Family Comes First with Superintendent John Nowakowski— **Great Oaks Country Club** .....

Photos by Tim Davis

John Nowakowski is a man who has his priorities straight. "My number one priority is my family. Then comes our employees and then the course," says Nowakowski, superintendent of Great Oaks Country Club in Rochester.

John encourages his employees to set the same priorities. "If a member of our crew has a family function to attend or a vacation in mind, I urge them to take time off," he says. The result is that people want to be here. They don't complicate the work schedule by unexpectedly calling in sick or neglecting to show up.

"In the past I have worked for managers who thought the golf club had to come first," he says. "I never understood that. My philosophy is life is short. Enjoy it while you can—especially in Michigan, where the summers are way too short."

To show that he is serious about fun, John encourages his staff to golf as much as possible and to invite family and friends to the course so they can show off their work. John has the freedom to allow this flexibility because he has a larger staff than most clubs. "None of our staff works more than 40 hours, and I do a lot of part-time hiring," he says. "Eliminating overtime allows us to hire extra individuals. We go as high as 35 people in the summer," he says.

The key to John's success as a manager lies in his organizational ability and communication skills. He believes in surrounding himself with key individuals like Assistant Superintendent Robert McMurray, who is "absolutely outstanding." It's important to make sure they have the necessary tools and giving them encouragement and growth opportunities. My favorite part of this job is helping my staff move on in this profession," he says. Several employees have gone on to school and now are successful golf course superintendents.

John originally planned to become an engineer, but in his senior year he transferred to Michigan State University's golf course management program. He and his wife Martha, who is a registered nurse, then moved to Florida, where John received an invaluable education by working for several sea-

soned golf professionals: Robert Trent Jones, Sr., the famous golf course architect; Ken Venturi, TV golf sports commentator; and Gene Sarazen, the inventor of the sand wedge. The Nowakowski's eventually returned to Michigan, where John worked for TPC of Michigan, a Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course, before coming to Great Oaks in 1990.

What did he learn from these pros? Detail, detail, detail. "Attention to detail is critical. It's what separates the good from the great."

John brings this commitment to his work at Great Oaks. "My grandfather drummed into me that cleanliness costs nothing" he says. "A clean shop and a clean course go a long way." Interviewed during mid-fall, Nowakowski said the manicuring of the golf course and painting and prepping of course accessories would continue late into the season. "If you do that, you have an easier transition in spring and can start the season off on a good note."

John says the 16th hole at Great Oaks is his favorite. It's par three and plays about 130 yards with a 100-foot drop from the top plateau to the postage stamp green. "Golfers reach it as they are coming to the last few holes of their round. If they're down, they will get aggressive and shoot at the flagstick. If they're up, they usually will play safe and hit to the fat of the green. It's a great challenge hole and allows players to get back into the game at that point."

Although he shot a 79 two years ago and currently is a 10 handicapper, John doesn't get out to play as much as he used to because he and Martha are busy raising their young family: Lewis, born last August; Carson, two-and-one-half; and Lorena Augusta (named after the premier course), six years old.

John attributes a large degree of his success to Martha. "Like so many wives in this profession, she is understanding about the unique demands of this business. She listens to my complaints and is consistently supportive. She is wonderful!"



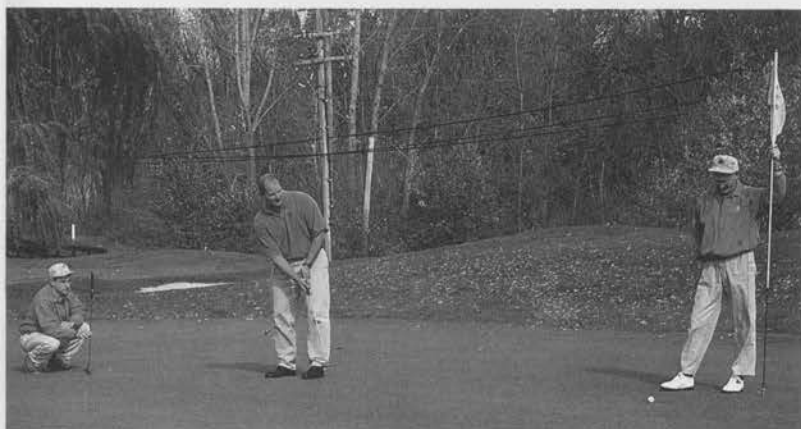
*John Nowakowski and the crew at Great Oaks Country Club.*



Personal communication is important on a daily operation. John Nowakowski explains an irrigation repair job.



Assistant Robert McMurray looks over the new bunker sand with John Nowakowski.



Crew members (LF TO RT) Dennis Jannetta, Mike Casey, and Don Show play golf.



Equipment technician, Jim King, reviews the computerized QQuest program for preventative programs.



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# UNDER THE DOME

Growing grass is challenging enough under natural conditions, but try doing it under a dome with only 20% light penetration and 90% humidity.

Those are the challenges faced by Mike Weger, owner of Willow Creek Golf & Sports Center, which is located two miles north of the Palace of Auburn Hills on M-24. Weger, a former safety for the Detroit Lions, purchased the driving range in 1979 after a two-year search for the right land.

Weger wanted to feature natural grass tees on his public facility and maintain them like a private country club year-round. Working with Jay Siddock of Turf Chemicals, Inc. (TCI), Weger has accomplished his goal. To keep the turf rejuvenated during outdoor play from May through October, TCI recommended an outdoor program. It calls for alternating phosphate and potash in the readily available form, while overseeding the tee area with triple play rye grass blend. Moving the tee markers also was a big factor in recuperation.

But, it was in November 1992 that the plot (or shall we say turf?) thickened. Unlike most golf domes, Willow Creek's was designed to go up and down each year in the center of the outdoor range. However, Weger wanted to maintain that turf. "I didn't want it to look unnatural during the summer with a patch of artificial grass right in the middle of the range."

TCI's mission? To help Weger keep the grass alive under the dome for six months. Analyzing the problems, Jay Siddock suggested a strategy that not only worked, but has kept the grass growing throughout the winter to the point that Weger has to mow it each week. "It's a real trip to smell fresh-mowed grass during the cold days of winter," he says.

Jay's recommendation involved turning off the water and using large fans (three to four feet in diameter at turf level) to move the air around and cut down on humidity. In addition, through the winter months, one application each of 13-0-44 and 18-3-18 multicote were used. Also an application of Turfcide 10 g (PCNB) was used to keep the cottony blight in check after the dome went up.

"Jay's interest in helping me accomplish my goals was extraordinary," says Weger. "He gave us a lot of personal attention by looking at the condition of the grass, taking soil samples and studying our problems. He made recommendations on a monthly basis. If we had a unique problem, he would always come back with a solution."

Weger has seen business increase substantially since he opened Willow Creek Golf & Sports Center in 1979. It is obvious that golfers appreciate his commitment to maintaining high-quality turf, year-round.

Stop in this winter to sharpen your driving and putting skills, say Hi to Mike and see the green in winter. It's quite an outfit.

Virtual Golf Reality Allows Golfers to Play the Great Courses without Leaving Michigan.

When the dome goes up on November 1 at Willow Creek Golf & Sports Center, golfers can experience the thrill of playing Pinehurst, Harbortown, Firestone or even Hawaii's Mauna Kai via two \$50,000 simulators.

"Golfers can't believe how accurately the equipment simulates actual play, whether they hook, slice or put a backspin on the ball," says owner Mike Weger. "Players can hit virtually every club in their bag with a regulation ball. The simulator presents the next shot just as it would lie on the course."

Barring an actual trip to your dream course, virtual golf reality seems the way to go!



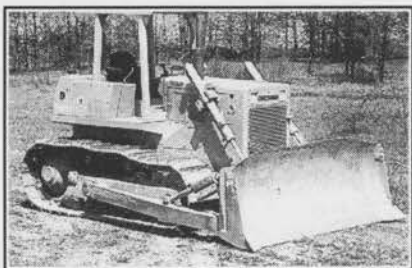
Inside: New golf simulator allows golfers to play their dream course.



Second tier inside the dome. Original turf is in center.

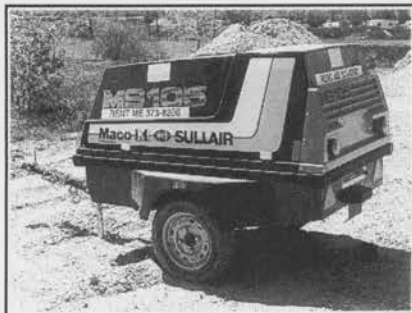


Ground level is healthy and strong after four months inside the dome.



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## Did You Have Ice Damage Last Year?

**Tim Barno** -

Warren Valley Golf Course

**Ed Carmody** -

Rackham Golf Course

**Jay Delcamp** -

Katke-Cousins Golf Course

**TB:** No. Greens are high enough that water does not sit long.

**EC:** No really ice damage, but more or less desiccation from being unprotected from wind with no snow cover. Several greens lost some turf and the west edges of several tees were very thin.

**JD:** No ice damage in 1993.

## Are you going to do any- thing different this year?

**TB:** We will keep organic fertilizer on hand just in case there's prolonged ice. (Organic fertilizer applied to ice absorbs the sun's heat to help melt the ice.)

**EC:** We are going to try some "Vapor Guard" anti desiccant. I know this works well for ornamentals and was told it works well on turf. We will tank mix it with our snow mold application.

**JD:** I topdress all greens to cover the crowns before the last snow that stays. I've done this for 15 years and have yet to have any ice damage during a normal winter. I do spread a dark fertilizer if there is major ice accumulation, but the topdressing stops all desiccation even on high, exposed greens.



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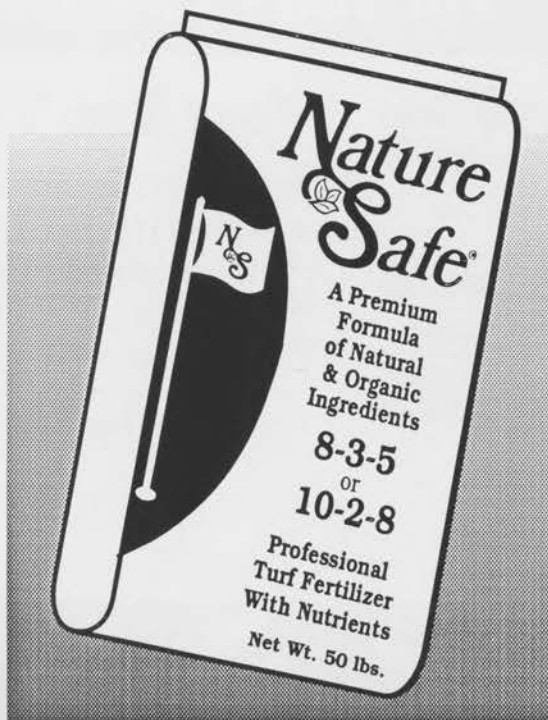
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# A WINTER PROJECT

by Tim Dopple

Are you a list keeper? I have lists that tell me which list to use first. And one of my most important lists is my "Winter Project" list. As I see something that needs to be done (but isn't really critical at the moment) I note it, and then start to plan for it later on. I've found that I have to write things down, otherwise I completely forget about it until it's too late. I usually start this particular list in March and keep building it all summer long.

Now that the cold has set in, I can pull out my Winter List and get to work. What about you? What's on your Winter To-Do List?

If I may make a suggestion, let's all be sure to add "Train Employees" to the top of the list, shall we? Now, I know what you're thinking, there he goes again! Train, train, train. This guy has a one track mind!

Ok, so I'm always preaching to do more for your workers. I admit it. But let's think about why that is so important. Who does the work at your club? Yes, of course you work hard. But do you do it all? Certainly not. So those individuals who are fortunate enough to work under your tutelage deserve to be the best trained and most knowledgeable workers you can make them. Why, someday they might even approach your level of understanding!

All kidding aside, you know that it is only through constant building of your worker's information base, that you will be able to do a better and better job at maintaining your golf course. The real question is how do you do that? Unfortunately, there is no short answer. But there are options.

Unquestionably, at the top of your list should be the MTF Conference held in January. While many of us spend a great deal of time in the hallways "networking", there are

always some great educational opportunities going on in the sessions. Will your workers become over-night turf-grass experts by attending the MTF conference? Probably not. But they will come away with at least one new bit

of knowledge, and certainly a new respect for the industry. Every one of your employees should be encouraged to attend this event.

While sending everybody to the GCSAA event would be nice, that may not be really practical. So start looking for local training sessions. The MSU Extension usually puts on several workshops in the winter and various associations will offer different kinds of seminars as well. All of these are usually valuable, inexpensive and worth your time and the time of your employees.

But there is one more option you should consider. And that is to do some in-house training yourself. Oh, now don't roll your eyes at me when I say this! I'm not talking about some elaborate multi-media extravaganza with Ross Perot. How about showing a video dealing with diseases, insects, fertilization or whatever topic you want to discuss, and then share some of your own observations and experiences about that issue. Why not do it over a pizza and some Vernors at the lunch table. Make it casual and non-threatening (for you and your employees, both!) and allow your workers to learn from your years of experience.

Then, next spring when they hit the ground running, they'll have a much better feel about how you like to have things done, and why. And then, even though you can't be in every place doing every thing, it will be almost like you are. And then you'll start making new notes on your Winter Project list for next year, won't you.

## Around the Course



MSU's Hancock Turfgrass Research Center was featured in a front-page story in The Detroit Free Press in September. The article cited the Center's finding that, when promptly pulverized, leaves decompose quickly on the lawn. (This research was presented at the Field Day in August and an article about it appeared in the Sept/October issue of A Patch of Green.) Tom Gray, superintendent at Franklin Hills Country Club, was among those quoted. Gray reports that at Franklin Hills, leaves are collected into windrows then minced with rotary deck mowers. A screen over the chute collects the shredded leaves. When cutting is complete, the leaf bits are blown into wooded areas, on the roughs and even the fairways. "Before, the leaves were vacuumed and put in Dumpsters for removal," says Gray. "The mulching system saves money, makes sense and has helped thicken the turf."

*"Public Golf Courses Grow to Rival Private" was the title of an article in Crain's Detroit Business, September 5, 1994. Stating that "high-class, resort-style public golf has come to Southeast Michigan," the article cited The Orchards in Macomb County's Washington Township as an example. Writer Matt Roush says "One major reason for the rise in high-quality public golf courses is last year's Clinton administration tax bill, which eliminated the deductibility of private-club dues."*

W.F. Miller Turf & Industrial Equipment Company of Novi, Michigan, earned a Jacobsen Financial Services (JFS) Million Dollar Club Award. The awards was presented to Jacobsen dealers that helped finance more than \$1 million worth of sales through JFS. Jacobsen Division of Textron Inc. is a major manufacturer of professional turf maintenance equipment used worldwide.



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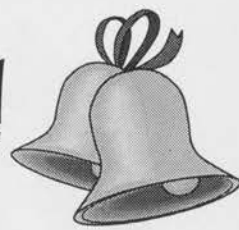
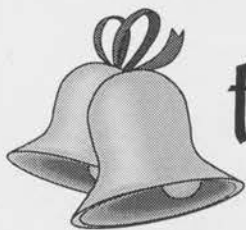
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