



WESTERN VIEWS

Official Publication of the West Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association

President's Message

Greetings friends and compatriots. Hopefully your spring has gone smoothly and your health is well.

Recently many of you attended the meeting at St. Ives and April's meeting at Heritage Glen. If so, you had the opportunity to spend the day with some fellow professionals. In doing so, you were able to swap information on how you have handled problems and projects at your facility this past winter and

spring. You may even have had the chance to review with a sales representative on how their products could benefit your golf course. Often some of the best information is shared just riding together to the meeting. Carpooling is a great energy saver as well as management tool. Most of the time I feel the meetings are the best information tool our association offers. Remember, for meal and golf car arrangements, the meetings

are prepay, with a close-off date. Please respect the host club and the people that organize the meetings and sign up on time. Our next meeting will be June 13th at Pilgrims Run. Hope to see you there.

That's it for now. Hope the remainder of spring treats you well.

Sincerely,
Al Bathum, President

Heritage Glen and St. Ives Meetings Held

We had a great time this spring at two great facilities in West Michigan. Both meetings went well and many informative turfgrass subjects were covered at each meeting. We would like to thank the owners and staff at each golf course for their great hospitality. We would es-

pecially like to thank Dan Litogot at Heritage Glen and Paul Schaffer at St. Ives, the superintendents, for giving us the opportunity to come and enjoy a round of golf at the courses they each manage. Thanks again and see you at Pilgrims Run in June.

Welcome... New Members

Please welcome these new members to our organization:

Mike Herbst, Superintendent
Newberry Country Club
Edward Perdue, Superintendent
Mt. Pleasant Country Club

2000 Monthly Meetings and Locations

- June 13 Pilgrims Run Golf Club
- July 18 Quail Ridge Golf Club
Chapter Championship
- Sept. 18 Egypt Valley Country Club
Golf Day
- October 9 Muskegon Country Club
Annual Meeting and
Elections

SERIALS

Editor's Note: Please write me if you have any corrections or if you are interested in doing an article for us at:

Western Views
8121 Cowan Lake Drive
Rockford, Michigan 49341

West Michigan Spring Roundtable Held

On Monday, March 13th, we held our Spring Roundtable at WaterMark Country Club in Grand Rapids. We had a group of around fifty that gathered to discuss turfgrass and listen to new product information. I think the day was well spent

and very informative. We would like to thank Steve Tedhams and the staff at WaterMark for the great lunch and fine hospitality. We would also like to thank the sales representatives who helped facilitate this meeting.

G.A.M. and W.M.G.C.S.A. Host Spring Meeting

The Golf Association of Michigan hosted their spring meeting at the Pohlcat on May 1st. Some fifty people were in attendance to listen to the program which included talks by local turf

experts. The day's weather was great and in the afternoon the group enjoyed a fine round of golf. Thanks go out to Roger Barton and the G.A.M. for hosting this meeting.

Greetings, West Michigan Golf Superintendents

by Dr. Kevin Frank, *The View From M.S.U.*

I have recently been appointed to Michigan State University as the Turfgrass Extension Specialist and would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and present my ideas for my extension and research programs. I am a native of the great state of North Dakota, so there is no need for concern over whether I will be able to survive the winters in Michigan. As an undergraduate, I attended the University of Wyoming and majored in Crop Science and participated on the golf team. From Wyoming, I moved east to the University of Nebraska, where I completed both my Masters and Ph.D. in turfgrass physiology and management and learned all about Husker football. The title of my dissertation was Nitrogen Allocation of Three Turfgrass Species and Turf-type Buffalograss Management. I defended my Ph.D. dissertation on February 4th and have spent time since then moving to Michigan and finding my way around Michigan State. As I am writing this the temperature has dropped about 50 degrees from the previous day. I guess it isn't spring in Michigan just yet.

That's enough about me, it's time to talk turf! My appointment here at Michigan State is 60% extension and 40% research. As a new faculty member, I'm not entirely sure what the first year will bring but I'll give you my best guess and my plans for extension and research. When I first learned there were approximately 800 golf courses in Michigan, I quickly realized I won't be able to visit all of them in the first year. I have already been scheduled to speak at several of the Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association chapter meetings and look forward to attending as many meetings as my schedule allows. Being new to Michigan, there are many places to see and faces to meet and I am ready to hit the ground running and discover all that Michigan golf has to offer and the challenges the diverse climate presents to managing turf. With the proximity of the West Michigan area to Lansing, I anticipate significant involvement in this region and will look to the golf course superintendents to find out what problems they are facing and strive to develop a research program that can help solve some of the difficult problems commonly encountered in growing turf.

My first major research project is to assume leadership of the Sloping Green Project. I, along with Dr. Baird, Dr. Crum, Thom Nikolai and several of the other turf staff at Michigan State will carry out the research on water retention and movement in an undulating green that was originally initiated by Dr. Rieke's group. Two problems on putting greens, Localized Dry Spot and Black Layer, are often associated with moisture extremes in the root zone of putting greens. In an undulated putting green the high areas often experience deficit moisture conditions while the lower areas of the green are often saturated with water. With these problems in mind a putting green was constructed with variable rootzone depths in order to investigate whether a more shallow rootzone depth on the high area of a green and a deeper rootzone depth on the lower area would alter moisture retention. Our research objectives are two-fold: first, to study the effects of different rootzone depths and materials (sand, sand/peat, and sand/soil) on water flow and soil moisture content in an undulated USGA specification putting green; secondly, to investigate if altering the rootzone depth would increase the water content near the soil surface in high areas and decrease the water content of the rootzone mix in low areas. If effective, the altered rootzone depth would alleviate moisture stress from the areas of elevation extreme and result in improved turfgrass quality. I am very excited about the Sloping Green Project and believe the potential for additional research on the green is unlimited.

When I look to the future of my research program I am interested in investigating turfgrass fertility and developing fertility programs that ensure the applications applied are being used by the

turfgrass and not lost from the system. Potential areas of research include investigating the interaction of nitrogen rate and irrigation frequency and analyzing the effects of micronutrient applications of turfgrass quality.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite everyone to the Michigan Turfgrass Filed Day, which will be held on August 23rd at the Hancock Turfgrass Research Center in East Lansing. The field day is one of our key events and gives us the opportunity to showcase the research projects underway at Michigan State. I hope to see many of you there! I look forward to meeting you and learning all about growing turf in Michigan. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance in the coming year. I can be reached at (517) 432-9461 or by e-mail at frankk@msu.edu.

Networking basics keep you connected

Leo Smith, general manager/Corporate executive of sales and marketing at Best Western Hotels Corp.

I was lucky to be a sales representative at the start of my career. In three short years I was promoted to senior sales manager of a major gaming corporation, as I had increased tour and travel business 100% in one year.

How did I do it? Aside from providing great service, I found networking to be a strong contributor, but maybe not the way most people think. Here are some helpful tips to maximize your networking opportunities:

- Don't "mix" at an event, take your time and have genuine conversations with the people to whom you enjoy speaking. Centered conversations have a way of building their own networks.
- Never flatter unless you mean it. Sincerity should be your trademark.
- Never criticize anyone. It's bad business, and life is simply too short to spend on negativity.
- Don't make promises unless you're convinced you can keep them.
- Be yourself — as long as that means polite. It doesn't take any effort.
- Listen a lot and speak very little. It'll make you a great conversationalist.
- Treat everyone like your best business prospect. Sometimes they are.
- Follow up and follow through on good connections. Let them know you'll call.

Every wake-up is a networking opportunity.

Tornadoes affect most states

Average number of tornadoes per year, 1989-98:

Texas	108	Wisconsin	20
Florida	79	Kentucky	18
Kansas	75	Michigan	17
Colorado	58	New Mexico	15
Nebraska	57	Wyoming	15
Oklahoma	55	California	14
Iowa	44	New York	14
Illinois	43	Virginia	13
Louisiana	37	Montana	12
Minnesota	35	Maryland	11
So. Dakota	32	Idaho	7
W. Virginia	30	Arizona	5
Mississippi	29	New Jersey	5
No. Carolina	29	Oregon	4
Georgia	26	Utah	4
Missouri	26	Nevada	3
Alabama	25	Connecticut	2
Indiana	24	Delaware	2
So. Carolina	23	Massachusetts	2
No. Dakota	23	Washington	2
Arkansas	22	New Hampshire	1
Pennsylvania	22	Maine	1
Ohio	20	Rhode Island	1
Tennessee	20	Vermont	1

How to Create an Equipment Replacement Program

Mike Mumper, Park Ridge Country Club. Reprinted with permission from *On Course*, January, 2000.

Editor's Note: Mike Mumper wrote this article during his recent tenure at Ravisloe Country Club. Ravisloe's new superintendent is Ed Esgar.

How many of you have ever been asked, "What do you do during the winter?" Between a few of those much-needed breaks, this is the time we prepare and plan for the upcoming season and beyond. Here at Ravisloe Country Club, we are in the second year of a 10-year equipment replacement program. For those of you who have undertaken a similar program, this is the time to update the records on, and conditions of, the current inventory. For those of you who do not have a replacement program in place, this will be an overview of how I put my 1-year program together.

The first step is to write a letter informing the Green Committee of your equipment review and recommendations for replacement. Include your capital expenditures from the last five years or so to give committee members an idea of what you are dealing with. Ravisloe's previous five years' expenditures were a real eye-opener for the Green Committee as they realized that average dollars spent on capital equipment was \$11,750! Explain to committee members that a good replacement program will cut into such costs as labor and repairs.

From here, you should start planning what kind of report you will put together to present to the Green Committee. At Ravisloe, I compiled a report that contained the following:

Equipment Inventory

Obviously, several reasons to have an inventory exist, but in this case you will be able to determine and prioritize your equipment needs. List every piece of equipment your course has, as well as its year of make, model number, serial number, condition and any comments associated with it. Update the condition of the piece and any comments every year. Also, make sure that you add or delete equipment from the list appropriately.

USGA Sample Equipment Inventory

I made a phone call to the USGA and had them send me a sample of a typical golf course equipment inventory. This allowed the members to have the ability to compare our inventory with a recommended inventory created by golf's governing body.

Ravisloe Equipment Description

In this selection, I identified Ravisloe's most utilized pieces of equipment and gave each of them a brief description, history and replacement cost. I also included a color photograph of each piece so that the Green Committee members could actually visualize and, therefore, better under-

stand what was being described.

Capital Budget Survey

I called nearly 20 other private clubs that were similar to Ravisloe or familiar to it members. I listed those clubs and their operations budgets for the year, their previous three-year average for capital equipment expenditures and their previous three-year average for capital improvement expenditures. This was another eye-opener for some of the committee members.

Ravisloe Expenditures

I dug into my files and put together a list of our expenditures over the last 10 years. This was more than just a figure for a particular year. I listed everything individually, to illustrate exactly what was being spent on capital.

Future Equipment Requirements

I organized this section in the same manner as the section featuring descriptions of Ravisloe equipment. I listed pieces of equipment that would be needed in the near future. I described each piece, listed its purpose and cost and made some comments on how it would be utilized to make our operation more efficient. I included color photographs in this section, too. By the way, you can find such pictures in the equipment brochures readily obtained from any of our commercial representatives.

Equipment Replacement Program

I developed a 10-year replacement schedule for Ravisloe. I simply determined our immediate needs and planned from there. Because of our lack of expenditures during the past five years, the numbers projected for the first couple of years on the new schedule were fairly high, but the number tapered off after that. For the most part, the schedule received approval and the membership has been good about following through with it.

Articles on Equipment Replacement

I included articles from various magazines that discussed how important a good equipment replacement program is. I attached these articles to provide me with backup support.

My experience bears out that equipment evaluation requires a joint effort from the superintendent, assistant superintendent and equipment technician. Don't be afraid to supply you Green Committee with too much information. If your report is professionally done, the members are more likely to respect and understand the information you are providing. As a matter of fact, our finished report constituted approximately 130 pages of information compiled into a 1" binder. The members appreciated our work and effort.

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Another opinion about "The Professional Initiative"

Submitted by Steve Rebhan, CGCS, Battle Creek C.C., Battle Creek, Michigan

No, I do not think PDI (The Professional Development Initiative) should stand for "Pretty Dumb Idea", but it is really necessary. There are some good points, some that are arguable, and some that are bad. While I don't think everyone should drop their current opinion about the subject and adopt mine, I would like to raise some issues on the subject.

First and most important, no other professional association that I am aware of tells its members it must complete a "self-assessment". Self-assessment is a very good idea. It might be the best thing one could do to not only be a better golf course superintendent, but a better person. However, a professional group should never require such a subjective test. Testing members to assure competent knowledge is a great idea. Other professional groups, such as lawyers, electricians, and many other groups have ways of certifying their membership. A class that teaches us how to, or improves how we evaluate our own weaknesses is a great idea. But a professional association, which is what the GCSAA is, should not assume that responsibility. The evaluation of a golf course superintendent should be between himself and his supervisor.

Another fallacy is that we need to change the entire classification system that we currently use. It may not be perfect, but it is two things. It is objective and it is similar to many other professional associations. Our employers, many of whom are not in the golf business, but relate due to similarities in their own field of work. If we feel the need to raise our standards, as members of the association we can decide to toughen certification by requiring more education or increasing the amount of knowledge required. But if we do, let's include a wide sample of opinions and ideas.

Another argument for PDI is that our association needs to raise our average salary. Twenty years ago that was a good argument. We should all be thankful to the senior members of our association that did all the work that raised the professionalism of our association. But these days it is not uncommon for the value of a superintendent's total compensation package to be almost 20% of our entire operating budget and 40% of the entire

payroll budget. In the past several years, I personally have known more superintendents let go for budget cutting purposes than any other reason. Do we really want to end up in a situation like the PGA where assistants make under \$20,000 while their bosses sometimes make five times that or more?

One last point is that almost all golf course superintendents are judged on job performance. Similar to professional coaches, lawyers, and salespeople, the opinion of our competency is based solely on the product we provide. A lawyer loses too many cases, he won't have any clients, and if a salesperson doesn't sell, he's going to be terminated. How many times does a coach get let go despite having many successful seasons because he or she has a few bad years? No collection of letters behind one's name or college degrees on the walls are going to protect a superintendent's job when they fail to meet the expectations of their employer. We all need to continue to improve all the skills that make a golf course superintendent successful. But that should be a personal choice depending on what he or she wants out of life.

While some members dream of being at a top club and being elected to the GCSAA Board of Directors, others want no more than earn a good wage, keep their golf course in better shape than the one next door, and to coach their kid's little league team. Our association needs both types and everyone in between.

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