



CHIPS & PUTTS

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
POCONO TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION

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APRIL 1997

A CONVERSATION WITH
PETER MCCORMICK.....
President, TurfNet Associates

You are providing a valuable service to G.C. Superintendents. What prompted you to provide an information service to the Golf Course Industry?

I was on the supply side of the industry for twelve years (with both Toro and Jacobsen distributors), and saw tremendous changes take place over that period of time. Not only were there more products from more suppliers, but the equipment was also becoming increasingly complex from a technology standpoint. Ten years ago, if you were to buy a triplex greensmower you would have two choices, A Greensking IV or a Greensmaster 300. Today, you can probably choose from close to thirty models and configurations, from four major suppliers. I also saw many purchasing decisions being made for the wrong reasons, which indicated to me a lack of substantive knowledge about the products. And I saw some people paying more than they should for the products they were buying — so I thought some information along those lines would be valuable to the new breed of superintendent who doesn't really care who took him to lunch last.

My initial thought was to develop a service which would help everyone do their jobs better and work a little smarter. I started with an idea to develop a pool of information, experiences and opinions regarding the turf equipment you use, and thought a newsletter would be a fun thing to do to keep our service in front of you during the year. Thinking back, I could never recall reading an article about turf equipment in one of the mainstream trade magazines that was written by someone who had the least idea of what they were talking about. For whatever reason, I have been blessed with a gift for the written word, and saw an opportunity to use that talent in an industry I really enjoyed.

When I lost my job just after Christmas, 1993, I had nothing to lose but to give it a shot. Six weeks later I launched TurfNet, and it has broadened in scope considerably since then.

You could be described as the “Bill Gates of the turf industry”. In many ways you had the insight or fortitude to bring the “info-world” to this industry. Any thoughts on that?

While that is flattering, Bill Gates and I will always be separated by a series of multiple zeros and commas in the “net worth” column! It's also ironic to be classified in that sense, as I don't consider myself a geek or computer nerd. My degree is in Horticulture, not computers. I bought my first computer less than five years ago (on the verge of middle age), and taught myself how to use it.

The initial concept of TurfNet was not specifically computer-related. I knew I wanted to integrate an online component into TurfNet at some point, but wasn't happy with the software that was available at the time. There were several online bulletin boards operated by superintendents then, including *Turfbyte* in Kansas, *Metbyte* in the regional NYC area, and *TurfTalk* in Chicago. They all used the same software, which was just black text on a white background. They were functional to a point, but boring and very difficult to use - if you didn't know what to type in next, you couldn't get to square one! I'm sure many superintendents tried them, as I did, and found them so frustrating they just shut them off and walked away. I saw no sense in merely replicating what they offered.

I wanted graphical, Windows based, intuitive, point-and-click and a little bit of fun thrown in, as well. I found the software I was looking for about a year later, and launched *TurfNet Online* in June of 1995 (after about six weeks of the steepest learning curve of my life). Much has changed since then, with the advent of the Web. I always thought it was a challenge to keep up with new products and technologies in the golf course business, but trying to stay abreast of the computer world, and then weaving them together is almost daunting at times!

Insight? Foresight? Fortitude? Yes, I suppose there was a bit of each in conceptualizing and launching TurfNet. The concept was ahead of its time, no doubt, but the industry is catching up.

continued on page 7



President's Message.....

It's been a very mild winter this past season. It has proved to be a very productive one for most of us. At my club, the mild weather allowed us to continue course improvements throughout the winter months.

Your Association Board of Directors has also continued to improve the Association in many ways these last few months. The first of many to follow social events was staged this past March at Shadowbrook Resort in Tunkhannock. An excellent evening was put together to both honor Past Presidents of our Association and to get together socially with our members and their spouses for an evening of good food, good fun and good fellowship. Boy, can Jeff Peters dance!! The night reminded many of us how fortunate we are to have a strong partner / spouse who can support us through our very challenging profession. Thanks must also be extended to Jeff Lansdowne, CGCS for assisting to set up this great evening.

The Board has met all necessary requirements to complete the GCSAA re-affiliation agreement. Many hours of work has been devoted by most of of

our Board members to complete this process. Great job, men, on fulfilling these requirements.

The PTGA Executive Secretary position has been filled with the appointment of Mrs. Melinda Wisnosky. Melinda currently is also the backbone to Scott Schukraft's very successful Huntsville staff. Congratulations to Melinda!! We are confident that the addition of Melinda to our Association will insure the continual growth of our great Association.

I will continually remind you throughout my Presidency that this Association is only as good as the members of which it is comprised. We need to hear all feedback, positive as well as the negative, in order for us to provide you with new and improved association support and service. The PTGA is being looked at as one of the model local chapters in our state. This is due to the fact that the PTGA Board of Directors, both past and present, have taken all feedback from the membership body and along with membership participation to revise and improve all Association business.

Ronald C. Garrison, CGCS



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From The Editor's Desk

I could see from the gleam in his eye that it had been a good conference and show for Peter McCormick. Las Vegas had been good to him. Actually I think I saw him shortly after he had been paid the greatest compliment he received since launching this thing called TurfNet several years earlier. As I remember it, it went something like this. An industry leader, a fellow who has been around for a long time, mentioned that TurfNet has the potential to impact this industry more so than any innovation that has come along in the last twenty years. *Wow!* I often thought that but was never quite able to put it into words. Peter and I have been talking about this interview for well over a year now and it has finally become a reality. I urge you to take the time to read it. It was exciting for me to conduct the interview, all electronically I might add, and I sincerely believe the message is one worth remembering.

The editorial committee has been hard at work over the past several months. We hope you are enjoying all the improvements to our Association publication. As always comments, good or bad, to further enhance *Chips and Putts* are welcome.

IRRIGATION SYSTEM START-UP.....

It won't be long before many of us will begin thinking about irrigation. Offered below are a few tips for a properly planned and well executed system start-up procedure that will save you time, money, turf, and hairlines.

It is recommended that you decide on a target date for your system to be fully operational. Once you have picked an "F.O.D." (Fully Operational Date), begin working backwards on your calendar, allotting time for each of the following steps:

STEP 1 - INSPECTION

CONTROLLERS: Check for 110v power at each field satellite, vandal damage, nesting animals, frost heaves to footings (possibility of damaged wires), and snowmobile damage. Have grounds meged at central and all satellite locations to meet manufacturer specifications. It is also a good time to check solenoids at each satellite station by checking ohms resistance.

Allow 1-2 days for inspection, 5-7 days for replacement parts and 2-3 days for repair.

PUMPHOUSE: Check for required incoming power supply, vandal damage, ice damage to control valves and pump casings, and nesting animals.

Allow 1 day for inspection, 5-7 days for replacement parts, and an additional 5-7 days if your local utility has to be contacted.

GENERAL COMPONENTS: Check for raised heads, broken valve box lids, and damaged exposed piping.

Allow 2-3 days for inspection, 5-7 days for parts and 2-3 days for repairs.

STEP 2 - PRESSURIZE THE SYSTEM

Begin to fill your system. The key word is S-L-O-W-L-Y. Water entering an empty system meets little resistance and can easily achieve velocities of nearly three times that of a filled system. Your carefully winterized system can be blown

out of the ground in a matter of minutes! Following these procedures may help:

Open drain valves and air release assemblies and fill your system with your jockey pump only.

Try to maintain a fill rate that will not exceed 2 feet per second.

An 18 hole system holds from 20,000-60,000 gallons of water. Expect filling time to be between 4 and 8 hours and don't fill overnight. Allow at least 1 whole day to fill the system.

Use the main isolation valve to keep some back pressure on the pump.

After your system is filled and pressurized, keep a watchful eye on it. A short cycling or hot running pump could point to a leak.

Allow 7-10 days for locating, getting parts and repairing a mainline leak.

STEP 3 - TEST THE SYSTEM

Once you are confident that pump station and mainline pipe are intact, begin running test irrigation cycles to check the remaining components of the system.

Begin with your greens and check: controller operation, valve operation, head rotation and distribution, and lateral piping integrity.

A reasonable starting date of one month prior to F.O.D. should put you in the ball park.

TO SUMMARIZE:

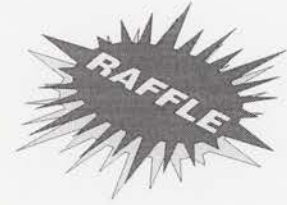
STEP 1 - INSPECT: Controllers, Pumphouse, General Components

STEP 2 - PRESSURIZE SYSTEM: Fill system SLOWLY, Check mainlines.

STEP 3 - TEST THE SYSTEM: Check component operation. Check lateral lines. Run a test program.

Now that your system F.O.D. has arrived and you're fully prepared, you can stop praying to the rain gods and start enjoying the sun, along with the rest of the world.

Thanks to George Skawski from Philadelphia Toro and Paul Roche from S.V. Moffett, Co. for providing this information.



Raffle tickets are now on sale. Each board member has been issued tickets to distribute to PTGA members. If you do not receive tickets soon, you may contact any member of the board. There will be a donation of \$5.00 per ticket.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those clubs participating in this year's raffle for their support. It is our hope that the membership will show their support and sell every ticket. The drawing will be held at our monthly meeting on June 10 at Woodloch Springs Country Club.

The winning ticket will receive a round of golf for 4, including green fees and carts, at one of the following courses:

1. **Glen Oak Country Club**
Clarks Summit, PA
2. **Old Homestead Golf Club**
New Tripoli, PA
3. **Locust Valley Golf Club**
Coopersburg, PA
4. **Southmoore Golf Course**
Bath, PA
5. **Hickory Valley Golf Club**
Gilbertsville, PA
6. **Green Acres Golf Club**
Bernville, PA
7. **Country Club of the Poconos**
Marshalls Creek, PA
8. **Wyoming Valley Country Club**
Wilkes-Barre, PA
9. **The Hideout Golf Club**
Lake Ariel, PA
10. **Bethlehem Golf Club**
Bethlehem, PA

Note: Winning ticket holders will be subject to individual club rules, dress codes, availability of tee times, conduct, etc.

STEVE STRANZL.....

Scholarship & Research Chairman

NEWS RELEASE

HUNTSVILLE GOLF CLUB RATED #23 AMONG AMERICA'S TOP 100 BEST MODERN COURSES...

Huntsville Golf Club in Lehman was recently ranked as the #23 Best Modern Golf Course in America by *Golfweek* and its sister publication, *Golf & Travel*. These magazines recently published the annual listing of the 1997 Top 100 Best Classical Courses and the Top 100 Best Modern Courses in America.

According to the rating, "modern courses" include those built after 1960, which encompasses about half of all golf courses in the United States. The rating was conducted by a national panel of 121 raters of diverse playing skills under the leadership of noted golf writer Bradley S. Klein, and is based solely on the architectural quality of the holes. Factors considered include integrity of routing, design distinctiveness, putting and chipping contours, and strategic flexibility of the course layout. Other standards of measurement included the complementarity of the course with its natural and cultural surrounds, the unobtrusiveness of cart paths, housing and surrounding structures, compatibility of landscaping, overall land plan, and course conditioning.

The final judging factor is *Golfweek's* "walk in the park test", which judges whether the time spent outdoors on the course was "enjoyable, worthwhile, memorable and enlightening."

Rated at #23, Huntsville Golf Club is the only golf course in Northeastern Pennsylvania to be included in this exclusive listing of America's Best Top 100 Modern Courses.

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Golf Digest Poll Laudes Superintendents.....

The results of an opinion poll conducted by *Golf Digest* and published in its January 1997 issue clearly reinforce the importance of the golf course superintendent of a golf facility. **Details:** Questions ranged from the lighthearted, such as which pro golfer you'd like to have at your side if a fight breaks out in a bar, to the more serious, about banning smoking in the grillrooms and clubhouses. **Most Notable:** The answers to the questions, "Who is the most important person at your club or course?" provide insight into golfers' understanding of the roles and responsibilities of golf course personnel.

Course Superintendent	48%
Club Pro	25%
Club Manager	14%
Beverage Cart or Halfway House Person	11%
Handicap Chairman	1%
Club Champion	1%

Source: *Golf Digest*, January 1997

Congratulations!

Congratulations to **Robert S. Brown** who has been chosen to receive the Patterson Scholarship Award this year. This award consists of a \$500.00 scholarship and an honorary membership in the Pocono Turfgrass Association for the calendar year.

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NATIONWIDE PERMIT 26....

The Army Corps of Engineers has taken action to phase out Nationwide Permit 26, a general wetlands permit used to grant approval for projects affecting less than ten acres of wetlands. The permit will now only apply to projects affecting less than three acres of wetlands, and the move is predicted to greatly hinder the progress of small development projects. The change is expected to create a huge backlog in the individual permit review process. *Inside EPA* reports there is already widespread support on Capitol Hill for expanding the nationwide permit program to cover more activities, rather than scaling it back. Observers predict a "long and bloody battle" ahead between industry and the environmentalists who want to do away with nationwide permits entirely.

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ALLIED NEWS.....

The Allied Golf Course Superintendents Association of Pennsylvania would like to thank the following companies, along with their representatives, for their financial support of the hospitality suite at the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in Las Vegas. We ask that you please support them in return.

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Thanks

JUST A REMINDER.....

After July 1, the PTGA will be mandated by the GCSAA re-affiliation agreement to require membership in both organizations, PTGA and GCSAA. Prior to this date, dual membership is not required to become a member of the Pocono Turfgrass Association. If you are interested please contact membership chairman, Kelly Kressler, or any Board Member for an application.

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MEETING NOTES

PTGA golfing in March?

It is the first time I can recall having a golf outing in March. Twenty-five golfers went out on a chilly, breezy day. Did I say chilly? It was downright cold, not to mention windy. But we managed. The scores showed some of us put our clubs away at the end of the season last year, while others somehow stayed in touch with the game. I must have put my clubs away about mid-season.

Following are the flight winners:

Third Flight:

3rd - Steve Stranzl
2nd - Ron Lee
1st - Gene Huelster

Second Flight:

3rd - Jim Carville - 95
2nd - Kelly Kressler - 92
1st - Rick Pany - 92

First Flight:

3rd - Jonathan Switch - 82
2nd - Bill Rahling - 81
1st - Tony Grieco - 80

Guest speaker, Peter McCormick of TurfNet Associates, gave an excellent talk and demonstration on the usage of computers in today's golf industry. Buying/selling equipment, employment, conversation, what's new and available for turf management are just some of the reasons to use a computer. Our thanks to Pete.

Tom Wilchak, our host, had greens rolled, topdressed, and fairways cut. Pin placement - this is the PTGA - not the PGA! Thanks, Tom, for a great day and all the extras you provided.

Jack Bird, Golf Chairman



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1997 MEETING SITES

APRIL 22, 1997 with Central Penn
Silver Creek Country Club
Hellertown, PA
Tony Grieco, CGCS, Host Supt.

MAY 20, 1997
Woodland Hills Country Club
Hellertown, PA
James Vedomsky, Jr., Host Supt.

JUNE 10, 1997
Woodloch Springs Country Club
Honesdale, PA
Mark Eisele, Host Superintendent

JULY 11, 1997
Edgewood in the Pines
Drums, PA
Anthony Barletta, Host Supt.

AUGUST 18, 1997 - PTGA Clambake
Blue Ridge Country Club
Palmerton, PA
Paul Weiss, Host Superintendent

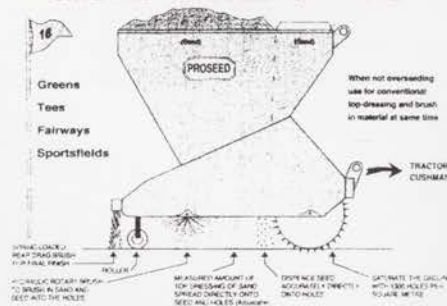
SEPT. 16, 1997 with Philadelphia
Paupack Hills Golf and Country Club
Greentown, PA
Mark Monahan, CGCS, Host Supt.

OCTOBER 7, 1997
PTC Valentine Tournament
Huntsville Golf Club
Lehman, PA
Scott A. Schukraft, Host Supt.

OCTOBER 1997
Split Rock Country Club
Lake Harmony, PA
Scott Seidel, Host Superintendent

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A message from your golf course superintendent and GCSAA

After a slow start TurfNet seems to be catching on and gathering momentum.

Slow is a relative term. Yes, compared to the advent of the Web, TurfNet's launch was slow. However, with just a newsletter and an idea to compile some reports, I was able to sign up 250 clubs in the first year. When you think about it, 250 golf courses is a lot of golf courses, particularly when superintendents for the most part were not used to paying for publications or other information (much less a service that charges \$295 a year!). Just finishing up our third year, we now have about 700 members across the country, into Canada, and as far away as Brunei in the South Pacific.

With any organization or project, there is a critical mass at which it starts to grow on itself, becoming self-sustaining. I see our critical mass at the 1000 member level, which we hope to reach by the end of this year. A friend of mine at Toro told me recently, "The first 1000 guys you get will be the hardest thing you ever do in your life... but the second, third and fourth thousands will come relatively easy." I hope he's right!

Realistically, I believe we can get 20-25% of the superintendents across the country involved - which translates into a member base of somewhere around 3000 within the next 5 years.

Being a relatively new concept for everyone, what do people seem to like best about TurfNet?

We offer somewhat of a smorgasbord of services, and different ones jump out at different guys. Some love the newsletter, others really get into the online service. Some guys have liquidated or bought used equipment that has saved them their membership fee many times over. Others have fine-tuned new equipment purchase prices, or avoided making a purchasing mistake using our database of product information. By hook or crook, the great majority find value in it and come back for more.

If I had to point to one thing that really separates TurfNet from everything else, it would be our non-commercial status. I decided at the outset that we would not take advertising or sponsorship in any

way, which has given us the freedom to address issues the mainstream trade press won't touch. And the guys like that. There's no sugarcoating and no BS — we call them as we see them. But we always try to tell both sides of a story, letting accuracy, fairness, common sense and good taste be our guides. That is also a reason why we have to charge what we do.

Do you still get a lot of price resistance?

Sure, but a bit less than at first. It is a continuing challenge to get people to look past a \$295 bill to see what they get out of it, not what it costs up front.

When someone tells me TurfNet is too expensive, I ask them whether they think Kris Spence at Greensboro Country Club in North Carolina thinks it's too expensive.... after he sold his old irrigation components—which were one step from the dumpster - for a total of \$10,000! Show me a company on the NY Stock Exchange that I can invest \$300 in and get a \$10,000 return, and I'll sell my home to get in on that deal! Naturally that won't happen every year, but so what! He has paid for the service for the next 30 years! And his is not an isolated instance—this has happened to a lesser extent for many others.

You say "we" occasionally. How big is your company?

I started the business, and my brother Bob joined me about a year and a half ago. He lives in Charlotte, NC., and operates out of there... sort of a "southern division". I basically do all the grunt work (the newsletter, online service, website and research reports), and Bob sells it. We have one of these "virtual corporations" that does most of our business electronically - another example of using technology to allow two guys to do what it would have taken four or five several years ago. It's just us.

How do you feel the age of computing and the info-world will change the way superintendents manage their golf courses?

It will become less of a "hands-on-sport," if you will. Managing golf course turf has become so complex over the last several years that it requires you to leverage every avenue you have to help you do your job properly—and that includes information. The typical problem-solving scenario of the past includes playing telephone tag for a few days with two or three of your local buddies. Technology now allows you to pick the brains of hundreds of other superintendents, turf researchers or manufacturers in a matter of minutes. If that reduces a learning curve or eliminates a few hoops to jump through, you can solve the problem faster and get on to the next one.

Technology will allow (and require) the superintendent to become more of a true manager (in the hands-off sense), delegating to and empowering his staff to make decisions and implement them. We are on the verge of dramatic advances in the application of technology to the golf course industry, including GPS (Global Positioning Systems) and GIS (Geographic Information Systems). These will interact not only with irrigation application and scheduling, but also pesticide application, nutrient management, course construction projects, and equipment and personnel management. It is difficult to grasp the extent to which this industry will change over the next several years - but it will be huge.

What do you see as the future? Where do you go with it from here?

That is a tough one. One of the great things about a small company is that the chain of command is short. We can basically do what we want to do, and take it where you guys want it to go. Responsiveness is key. We will most likely be changing software platforms in the next six months, to something with a tighter integration with the Web. I don't know exactly what that will be—chances are it probably doesn't even exist today! A weather component would be nice, as well.

There is power in numbers, as well, so our continuing growth will open up further opportunities. Stay tuned!!

POCONO ROUNDUP

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE POCONO TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION

Speaking for Superintendents from around the area, many are looking forward to an early spring. By all accounts it has been a fairly mild winter. The presence of and damage from snow mold seems to be significantly less than last year at this time. The worst snow mold we have seen, in years, is in the back yard of our own James MacLaren. Must have been the overdose of that "glorious" fertilizer.

A green Masters golf jacket was among illegal bribes Pennsylvania Representative Joseph McDade was accused of accepting from the defense industry. McDade, a 17-term Republican, claimed that failing to report the gifts was an honest mistake. He was recently acquitted of all wrongdoing.

Good Luck to **Jim MacLaren** in his new position at Turf Specialty Inc. of Londonderry, NH. Turf Specialty's parent company is Eco-Soils. Jim wants to be involved with a company that has a more "hands on" approach to doing business in supplying the customer needs. Jim's telephone, fax and pager numbers have remained the same.

Also on the move, **Doug Whitcraft** is the new Superintendent at Apple Mountain Golf Course in New Jersey. Welcome back to the Superintendent ranks Doug.....and **Jason Brandt**, an Assistant to Mel Leaver at Brookside Country Club is the new Golf Course Superintendent at Berwick Golf Club. Welcome to the area Jason. We look forward to having you as a member of the PTGA.....**Scott McConnell**, an Assistant to Mark Eisele at Woodloch Springs is now the construction Superintendent at Wild Pines in Pocono Pines, PA.....and **Mike Maher**, formerly the Superintendent at Mount Airy Lodge is now the Golf Course Superintendent at the Robert Trent Jones Tamiment Resort. Watch for exciting things to happen!!

On the construction front, Alberdeen Acres in Mountaintop is under new ownership and has been re-named Blue Ridge Trail. The additional nine holes are currently under construction. **Joe Tribelpiece** is the Golf Course Superintendent..... Sand Springs is also adding nine new holes. They are presently under construction under the direct supervision of superintendent **James Kohler**.

In Sympathy....
Our sincere condolences are extended to family of Michael Petrilak, owners of Sleepy Hollow Golf Club in Carbondale, on the death of his son, Michael, and also to the family of Bill Templeton who recently passed away.



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