



CHIPS & PUTTS

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Silver Creek Country Club

Andy Dumas, Superintendent

This April we return to Silver Creek Country Club, where Donald Ross' career ended. One of the last courses designed and visited by Donald Ross will host our first gathering of the spring. Silver Creek was opened in 1947 by the Bethlehem Steel Corporation and was originally called, simply, the Bethlehem Steel Club. In 1960, William Gordon was brought in to add nine holes to the course. The new layout generated a combination of old and new to form the current Championship 18.

Ross' original holes that were replaced are currently called the Hill 9. The name "Gordon" is also well known in the Bethlehem area golf community. William Gordon, with his son David, worked for Donald Ross, Willie Park, Devereux Emmet, and J. B. Mc Govern. Some of the Gordon work in the area was done at courses such as Saucon Valley (Grace Course), Bethlehem Municipal, Locust Valley, Mahoning Valley CC, and Brookside. The club sits on about 250 acres in Northampton County. The 18-hole layout we will be playing is a Par 72, 6599-yard test of skills. There is water that comes into play on 6 holes, helping to add to the difficulty of this course.

Andy Dumas, CGCS, and Rick Conners are charged with managing the summer staff of 17 and a winter crew of 2. The staff maintains 3 acres of Greens, 3 Acres of Tees, and 35 Acres of Fairways and 65 Acres of Rough.

Projects since our last visit have included extensive tree work near the 13th Green and 14th tee and the addition of several new tees.

Silver Creek will typically see somewhere around 35,000 rounds annually spread across both the Championship 18 and the Hill 9. Speaking of the Hill 9, some consider these holes spectacular. This Par 35, 3200-yard loop has only 15 bunkers, but the trees and elevation changes make for a true test of golf. There is mercifully no water on the Hill 9 but the awkward stances and dramatic elevation changes make it a challenge. These holes are all Donald Ross and some say that they could be some of his best.

An interesting tidbit of the collaboration between Ross and the Gordons is the final Ross work; *Golf has Never Failed Me.*, which was published in 1996. The manuscript came into the Gordon family in 1951 after another Ross compatriot, J.B. Mc Govern, passed away in 1951, and William Gordon was allowed access to his notes and memorabilia. It took another 45 years to see publication, but this writer has seen the book at many courses and owns a copy himself.

Thanks to Andy and Rick for hosting us on April 13. Please make your reservation early and enjoy this day of golf and education. Our speaker will be Rudi Huber of Aquamaster. Rudi will be speaking on water quality issues, aeration of water sources, the causes of poor water quality and some solutions on how to improve the water quality of lakes and ponds. Thanks also to Lawn and Golf and Atlantic Irrigation for sponsoring this month's meeting.



President's Message.....

Now that Spring is here, everyone has had a chance to get on your courses and see how you came through the Winter. It has been a rainy Winter with lots of ice. It's no surprise I have heard of many courses with ice damage. I had a few greens affected to some extent.

Along with budgets getting squeezed, there isn't much room for error bringing back dead turf. It's times like this that working relationships created through our Association will become most valuable. Ask around, you'll hear many excellent solutions. One's bound to work at your course.

Darrin Larkin

Editor's Notes.....

Spring is here ... I think. We have had some great weather already, but the nights have sure been cold. Degree days say primo/proxy should have gone down already, but, frost and seed heads? Hopefully this is the worst of strange weather this year.

If you have been under a rock or working on a ski slope and humming out loud every time someone mentions golf you might not have heard grumblings about budget cuts. These have taken place just about everywhere. Hopefully, you were able to explain the differences in maintenance standards that the club should expect. This year could be a year to remember if the economy stays sluggish and the summer is a bear.

I know budgets may be tight but monthly meetings may not be one of the items you should cut. Meetings provide a great opportunity to gain insights on how everyone else is coping. You might be quizzed by a member on why we don't look as good as so & so; Remember he might have had the round of life there and the conditions don't even matter to him. Take the time to reach out and ask, or better yet, see him at a meeting and get the real story.

Good luck to all, and remember, communicate with your members! Sorry, I tried to stay away from using the "c" word but I couldn't stop myself.

Jim Gurzler



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Spring Means Different Things To Different People

By Stanley J. Zontek, Director

April 8, 2009

Spring is great; the grass begins to grow, birds sing, flowers are blooming, and, following a drab winter, spring brings renewal. Interestingly, as it pertains to golf and turfgrass management, spring means different things to different people.

The Golfers. Obviously, it is a chance to get out and finally play some golf. The winter has been long and harsh enough in the Mid-Atlantic Region to have made winter play either miserable or not possible. Spring temperatures mean golf and more golf. In today's economic climate, play could be up as golfers travel less and use the facilities closer to home.

Spring is a time to try out the new clubs you got for Christmas and to hit those new "hot" golf balls that you always wanted. It's also a great time to get some exercise and burn off those extra pounds gained over the winter.

Turfgrass Managers. Agronomists look at spring differently. With the coming of spring and working to prepare the course for golfers, many tasks need to be accomplished in a short period of time. Golf course presentation at the start of the season is very important.

Are the twigs, leaves, and winter debris collected?

Are the bunkers tilled/raked and edged? Has the bunker sand been redistributed that shifted over the winter? Does new sand need to be added?

Have pre-emergent herbicides for crabgrass control been applied? (Note: Whether it is a golf course or your home lawn...now is the time to do it in the Mid-Atlantic Region.)

Have your spring preventative applications for insect control been applied? The Hyperodes weevil is on the move and grubs are migrating back to the soil surface.

Have the weeds been controlled before they flower?

As we look towards the 2009 season, remember two things. First, the game of golf is in fact just a game. We sometimes take golf way too seriously. Enjoy yourself out on the course. Second, the game of golf is played on grass. It is important to do what is necessary so that the grass is in good condition. Thus, it takes a team effort to accomplish all of these goals.

The Mid-Atlantic Region agronomists are part of your agronomic support team. If you have questions or concerns, give us a call or send an e-mail. Stan Zontek (szontek@usga.org) and Darin Bevard (dbevard@usga.org) at 610/ 558-9066 or Keith Happ (khapp@usga.org)



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Bunker Down

By Mark Fine and Tom Ferrell

The game of golf has spread from the linksland of Scotland to nearly every point on the globe. Modern construction techniques and equipment have made it possible to build a golf course almost anywhere, and yet almost every layout in the world shares something with those first courses—the bunker. The bunker is the original hazard, having appeared among the dunes as natural hollows and blowouts where windblown sand collected. Sculpted by the hand of nature, they captivated, tormented and enthralled the earliest golfers, and as the art of golf course design emerged to help spread the game beyond the linksland, the man-made bunker became an architectural fixture and remains today the quintessential strategic hazard.

Sand bunkers play many roles in modern design, always challenging the golfer's nerve and skill in a timeless equation of risk and reward. Some obscure the view or distort the perception of the golfer, introducing doubt and calling for faith and trust beyond the first glance. Others demand a heroic shot or carry. And still others are mere shadows of their windblown ancestors, serving only to enhance the view of residential lots or provide a token penalty for a wayward shot. It's common to hear TV announcers explain that a Tour pro would rather be in a well maintained bunker than in the high grass surrounding the green. Fortunately, modern architects have rediscovered the strategic, psycho-logical and aesthetic value of golf's oldest obstacle.

One of the first lessons an American visiting Scotland must learn is to give up the notion of fairness as it relates to bunker placement. For years after World War II, American architects moved bunkers out of the way. Play that used to go over or around strategically shaped and placed bunkers began to be dictated between bunkers almost always placed at the outside margins of the fairway. A trip to any of the great links courses provides a sharp and shocking contrast. On these historic layouts, pot bunkers may reside in the center of the fairway or be scattered about randomly in landing areas. How can this be fair? The answer is that natural layouts didn't adhere to a down-the-middle approach. In order to adapt to shifting winds, turf conditions and other elements, the original golfers learned to play to the edges, to control their distances, to pick a "line of charm" that might change from hour to hour or day to day. There's little strategic value in bombing the ball straight down the center of the fairway. The bunkers posed strategic considerations and tempted the golfer to seek an advantage by playing in their direction.

At this year's U.S. Open, Pinehurst #2 received well-deserved praise as a demanding test. Its difficult greens challenged the best players in the world to consider every angle of approach. But what of the cavernous sand bunkers that Donald Ross had so meticulously placed at the elbows, on the rises and in the dips of his masterpiece design? In order to toughen the old girl up, the USGA characteristically narrowed the fairways of Pinehurst #2 to ribbon width. During the telecast, blimp shots showed wonderful, strategic bunkers languishing 10 to 20 yards outside the fairway line. Imagine if the golfers had been able to seek advantages by playing toward these hazards in order to gain a more direct line or favorable angle. These are the bold and creative decisions and executions that truly identify the best golfers in the world. As Ross himself said, "bunkers should be placed in such locations as to make all classes of players think." Go to Pinehurst yourself, and you'll see what Ross meant. Unfortunately, the world's best were denied this aspect of his strategic challenge.

By contrast, the 2002 U.S. Open at Bethpage Black showcased one of the game's great strategic bunkers. At the long, par-4 5th hole, architect A.W. Tillinghast served up a tantalizing tee shot by placing the tee well above a fairway set at a left-to-right diagonal. The hole greatly favors a drive down the extreme right side of the fairway, as that opens up a shorter and clearer approach to an elevated plateau green. Tillinghast, however, wouldn't let the golfer off so easily. The carry bunker that he created is one of golf's best. It's set on an angle to the fairway, allowing players to select how much they would choose to bite off. Sensing that better players wouldn't fear a simple sand pit, Tillinghast added islands, ragged edges and noses to heighten the psychological challenge. Now, a misfire doesn't necessarily take you out of the hole, but it introduces a variety of factors. A conservative play to the left of the bunker results in a much more difficult approach. A perfect combination!

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"EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF TURF SINCE 1937"

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Think of the world's most famous bunkers. Some are vast expanses of wasteland—Hell's Half-Acre at Pine Valley—that demand a heroic carry and offer no alternative route. Others are small but mighty. The Road only in its steep, sod-faced wall, but also in how it brings other obstacles—the road and the stone wall beyond—into play for those who seek to avoid it. Still others—the bunker in the middle of the 6th green at Riviera, for example—take an ordinary hole and transform it into a thrilling strategic test.

The high point of bunker design may well have come at Oakmont Country Club, outside of Pittsburgh. Designed by Henry and William Fownes, with assistance from Emil Loeffler, Oakmont boasted more than 350 bunkers at one time. Not content with the challenges they posed, the designers commissioned a special rake that didn't smooth the sand, but furrowed it. Over time, Oakmont has softened its penal stance, but the famed Church Pew bunker—a massive pit interrupted by a series of three-foot high islands down the center—remains one of the most recognizable and lethal bunkers in the game.

Bunkers come in all shapes and sizes, but the one thing all great ones share is memorability. John Low, a course architecture critic, wrote in the early 1900s that "bunkers, if they be good bunkers, and bunkers of strong character, refuse to be disregarded and insist on asserting themselves; they do not mind being avoided, but they refuse to be ignored." Amen.

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The Stimpmeter

Invented by Edward Stimpson, in 1935, the Stimpmeter was created to give superintendents a way to compare and equalize speeds of different greens.

Edward S. Stimpson, an amateur golfer who invented the widely used Stimpmeter for measuring the speed of greens. The Stimpmeter, adopted by the United States

Golf Association, in 1976, has established standards for tournament play throughout the country.

Mr. Stimpson was captain of the Harvard golf team. He graduated from Harvard Business School in 1929, and began a business career that he mixed with wide participation in amateur golf.

Stimpson was a spectator at that year's U.S. Open at Oakmont. After watching a putt by a top professional (Gene Sarazen) roll off a green, Stimpson was convinced the greens were unreasonably fast, but wondered how he could prove it

From the Golf Committee:

This year's courses are booked. You can see the line up at our web site, www.ptga.org. Some great courses have stepped up this year. So now it's our turn to step up and attend our monthly meetings.

Please pre-register. Accurate counts are needed so our hosts know how many to prepare for and the day runs smoothly. This can be done by calling Melinda or myself, or emailing either of us.

Strict enforcement of the extra fee for same-day registrants will be enforced this year. Additional fee is \$10.00 over meeting cost.

Also, to help make the day run smoothly, registration will close 15 minutes prior to tee off. If you are late, find an open group, throw your bag on the cart, and have a great day. If you want to play golf with a specific person or group, please let me know ASAP.

We want to see as many of you as possible. Make a meeting or two, if for no other reason than to see how two brothers maintain their courses.

The Golf Chair
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Staying Sharp

By Don Cotton President and CEO of Turf Pride

Reel maintenance has finally evolved to the "high tech" arena. Aside from using micro chips to monitor engines, drive lines and hydraulic systems, reel and bed knife sharpeners offer the equipment technician more options and control over reel mower performance than ever before. With the demands placed on turf managers to achieve and maintain superior quality turf, the equipment tech is challenged to provide properly sharpened and adjusted cutting machines to help meet those demands. Board members and greens committee members now understand the relationship between quality turf and quality turf equipment. Thousands of dollars and countless man-hours can be poured into an effort to grow grass, only to see those efforts destroyed with one pass of a poorly maintained mower.

HISTORY OF SHARPENERS

It wasn't too long ago when it was impossible to service a reel mower back to the same condition it was when it was brand new. Some of you might be able to recall the time when back lapping was the only method available to an end user. This process was time consuming, messy and produced less than perfect results. With the introduction of the single-blade reel grinder, names like Peerless and Ideal made it possible to regrind reels and bed knives to an acceptable condition. The finished results and the accuracy of grinding the units rested in the experience and patience of the individual who was operating the grinder. The next generation of grinders addressed set up and alignment issues; names like Foley Belsaw and BRL began to appear in the turf market, but even those models required a concentrated effort on the part of the operator. When the "spin" grinder entered the picture in the 1970s, MMM, Leader, Jupiter, Atterton & Ellis, Neary and Foley were some of the pioneers. This process made it easier to produce a sharp reel that was, at the time, more than adequate for cutting in most turf conditions.

However, golfers were starting to demand and expect tournament conditions year round. Heights of cut were getting dangerously low — levels lower than anyone would have previously believed could have been maintained. Researchers and scientists were beginning to develop dwarf varieties and later ultradwarfs. Soon grounds care professionals were being challenged to maintain a quality of cut equal to the expectations of the new varieties of turf. Manufacturers of mowing equipment responded by improving their mower designs and paying close attention to improving the tolerances on their reels, bedknives and even rollers. Terms that were being used to describe distances and spaces were in thousandths of an inch and then changed to be described in microns. Dial indicators, micrometers and feeler gauges became an essential part of the tools of trade for the technician. Reel sharpener manufacturers responded with advances in technology, making it possible to return a reel to OEM specifications with the "touch of a button." The introduction of the reel mower for use in professional turf maintenance resulted in all reels coming from the manufacturer with the added advantages of the relief grind. Developers and engineers of the reel mowers recognized the advantages and increased performance of reels that incorporated relief, and that hasn't changed in all these years.

SPIN GRINDING VS. RELIEF GRINDING

The most advanced reel sharpeners offer features and methods to accomplish a complete regrind that includes single blade relief and spin functions. Others cannot, so the debate between spin grinding only and spin plus relief has emerged as a hot topic — as is the comparison of "scything" vs. "scissor" actions. Spin grinding alone produces a sharp cutting edge and is often compared to a scythe, which produces a good quality of cut as long as it remains sharp. Keeping the reel sharp can require the time-consuming task of regrinding during the busy periods of summer. If the reel blades are not maintained to a sharp edge, then the bed knife must be kept sharp by facing or filing the front edge of the bedknife. With no relief, the reel blade thickness could cause increased drag as debris is brought between the reel and bed knife. A gap of one to two thousandths of an inch is recommended between the reel and bed knife when you spin grind alone.

On the other side of the debate, if you add a relief grind or grind the back side of the reel blade off as to produce a very thin land area, you can adjust the reel to the bed knife with virtually zero clearance between the two. With new varieties of ultradwarf turf and heights of cut well below 0.100 of an inch, you can measure the amount of leaf tissue being removed only in microns.

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A scissor action is attained when the reel in conjunction with the bed knife creates a shearing type action. Just like a pair of scissors, the two blades must be maintained extremely close to each other, so close that measuring would be impractical. The natural juices in the grass blades act as a lubricant and actually keep the reel blade and bed knife at near zero contact. If you want to have increased performance, you can do so by making the reel blades thinner by relief grinding, that is, by grinding away the backside of the blades. If you have relief grinded your units, a two- to three-minute back lapping replaces the tedious and time-consuming task of removing cutting units and regrinding. Also, doing so will help you maintain a much more precise relationship between the reel and bed knife than front facing the bed knife in an attempt to keep the units cutting properly. This is a very valuable asset in the busy mowing months. By keeping the reels properly adjusted to the bed knife, you ensure that a consistent sharp edge is always maintained. The key to keeping a reel mower cutting properly is in keeping it adjusted. A reel mower is often considered a self-sharpening instrument that will stay sharp if the gap between reel and bed knife is kept intact at "zero" clearance; however, if you allow the reel to become dull due to lack of adjustment, it will not sharpen itself.

BETTER TO BE SAFE

Safety is also an important issue in relation to reel mowers. Sharpening reels and dealing with the dust and sparks is not only potentially hazardous to the operator, but to also those in and around the grinding area. Grinding stones and turning reels often invite potentially dangerous working conditions. Some of the more advanced sharpeners protect the operator by being fully enclosed with safety switches that are designed to turn the machine off if unauthorized activity or improper operations are not observed and practiced. Once the machines are fully enclosed, many models use water to help eliminate dust during the grinding process. Water or coolant also helps produce a more accurate grinding job, in much the same way as the coolant used in milling or lathe work. Water also has the honing effects of a whet rock, keeping the stones clean thus allowing them to work more effectively and efficiently.

With improvements now offered in reel and bed knife sharpeners, almost any shop that operates reel mowers can afford to own its own reel sharpeners. The new breed of reel sharpeners can often exceed OEM specifications for reel and bed knife sharpness. These advancements in cutting units and reel grinders make it possible to achieve a pristine cut delivered from a reel that has been relief grinded at 10 to 15 degrees until each blade is to a "point." A "slither" of a land area no more than 0.0001-inch wide can be achieved through a spin grind that ensures an absolute perfect cylinder and allows the grinding stone to spark out. By adjusting the reel to a whisper to the bed knife so the purposely-achieved texture of the land area can polish itself against the bed knife surface and properly "seat" to the bed knife, a brilliant and perfectly matched result is achieved with only the natural lubricants of the grass separating the two.



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POCONO ROUNDUP

Congratulations!

Congratulations to **Chris Snopkowski**, Wyoming Valley CC, on the birth of his son Jonathan James Snopkowski. All are doing fine, although Chris doesn't get as much sleep anymore.

Congratulations to **Corey Pries** who has accepted the position of Golf Course Superintendent at The Inn at Pocono Manor

Congratulations to **Chris Young** who was promoted to Superintendent at CC of the Poconos. Good luck, Chris!

Get well to **Greg Boring** who had his appendix removed, I believe that is the only way to get Greg off the course for more than a few hours.

Good luck to **Mike Salinetti**, Mike has gone back home to take the reins at Berkshire Hills C.C. in Pittsfield, MA

PTGA MEETING SCHEDULE

2009 Golf Schedule

April 13	Silver Creek Rudi Huber, Aquamaster
May 19	Berwick Dave Doherty, ISTRC
June 24	Eagle Rock John Kaminski, Penn State
July 21	Jack Frost National Speaker TBD
Aug 17	Elmhurst Clambake
Sept 15	Huntsville Golf Club Speaker TBD
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NAME & ADDRESS

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED.