

CHIPS & PUTTS

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Berwick Golf Club

Berwick, PA

Superintendent Jason Brown

Originally founded in 1920 as a nine-hole property to be built on the Kocher farm, the club was moved to the larger Evans farm on Martzville Road. Additional land was purchased until the current 18-hole layout was completed in 1959.

The club rests in the hands of Jason Brown, a Rutgers graduate who has been at Berwick for 6 years. Prior to Berwick, Jason worked at Fox Hill, Shawnee and Stone Hedge. Pat Moran is the assistant at Berwick. He is also a Rutgers grad who previously worked at Fox Hill and Irem Temple.

The current club sits on 125 acres in the Berwick Valley. There are 2 ½ acres of greens, 2 acres of tees and 21 acres of fairways for the fulltime crew of 5 to care for. Jason has the help of three seasonal workers to help polish the course for play.

Berwick is a par 71 layout with a slope rating of 124 and course rating of 69.6. The course plays 6,539 yards from the tips.

J Franklin Meehan the architect of record for Berwick Golf Club also had his hand in other clubs in PA. J Franklin Meehan was the designer at such well-known clubs as Springford, Sandy Run, and Ashbourne. He was also involved in North Hills where he was instrumental in the choosing of the land, routing of the course, and gathering the members of the club all while running the club during its formative years. Although mentioned in the book by Geoffrey Cornish and Ron Whitten, "The Architects of Golf," there is no great biography for this man who had quite a hand in Pennsylvania golf architecture. Brookside in Allentown was also a club that J. Franklin Meehan had a hand in as well. While playing Berwick, take a look around and see if you notice any similarities.

This month Dave Doherty of I.S.T.R.C. will be our speaker. Mr. Doherty, president of the International Sports Turf Research Center has set out to develop a better understanding of the physical properties of sand-based greens, push-up greens, and athletic fields. I.S.T.R.C. was started in the spring of 1991. Working with hundreds of courses throughout the U.S., including 6 of the top 10, I.S.T.R.C. has built a strong database of information and knowledge.



President's Message.....

Just a few points this month.....

First of all, I would like to thank Andrew Dumas, CGCS, for hosting the April meeting at Silver Creek Country Club. Sorry I couldn't make it.

Secondly, we are in the process of getting the member directories printed and distributed. They should be out soon.

And finally, up north at least, it seemed like it was still March all the way through April and the first part of May was early April. Although we are still getting some cold mornings, we are warming up nicely by the afternoon. That's not only helping grow out of winter damage, but we are starting to get some better play, also. I don't know how much the economy will hurt us this year, but we don't need weather chasing away golfers too.

Darrin Larkin

Editor's Notes.....

Another spring is here and summer has shown what could be ahead already. Those early 90 degree temps have awakened irrigation systems in the Poconos.

The golf season is also in swing, and we had a pretty good turn out in April. Let's see that the attendance remains good as we have some excellent courses on the schedule this year. Please take note that you must have a handicap card to be considered for the MET Team Championship this year. Also, meeting attendance will play into the team makeup, so try to make as many meetings as possible.

I hope that everyone is enjoying the more normal weather and getting ready to celebrate the first holiday of the season.

Have a safe and healthy Memorial Day, and I hope to see many of you at Berwick.

Jim Gurzler



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April Showers

By David A. Oatis, Director
May 1, 2009

Up until a week ago, it was shaping up to be a cold spring, and cool weather diseases still were prevalent. Cool season brown patch was visible on greens at a number of courses in the southern portion of the region, and, based on weather data, much of the region was a week or so behind normal. However, the recent heat spell stopped the progression of that disease and we now are back on track in terms of the norm for growing degree days. That will probably change this week as the start of May is bringing cooler temperatures and rain. Cool season brown patch might become active again. We also are getting into the window where winter patch may become active, and the two diseases can be confused.

Many courses in the southern part of the region have already applied preemergent herbicides, and those that have not should do so very soon. Annual bluegrass weevil (ABW) populations appear to be moderate, although populations are very high in selected areas. Treatment for adults in the central and southern portion of the region should be made very quickly if they have not yet been done. Scouting is a key to controlling this pest, and it is easy to do if you just take the time. Installing pitfall traps in the early spring in areas near traditional ABW activity is a good idea. However, a simple soap drench can identify populations in just a few minutes. Drench before you apply to determine whether an application is necessary; drench afterwards to determine the level of control. With concerns over resistance to the pyrethroid class of insecticides, using a soap drench is cheap insurance.

Most of the courses I visit have already made at least two growth regulator applications for suppression of seed heads. Thus far, control looks to be much better this year than it was a year ago. However, both annual bluegrass and creeping bentgrass populations are off color in many areas. This may be partially due to the growth regulator applications, but the cool weather and recent frosts also are major factors. Now is the time of year when bentgrass is affected by cooler temperatures, and mechanical injury often is confused with leaf spot infections. Most of the time, the damage dissipates and the color improves with a few days of consistently good growing weather. Minimizing mechanical wear in the short term is a good idea.

Soil temperatures are not yet warm enough to justify preventive summer patch applications in most areas of the region, but monitor soil temperatures carefully because proper timing is very important for effective control. The window of application is right around the corner.



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Congratulations!

John Downer of Elkview C.C. and **Tom Height** of Frosty Valley C.C. have both achieved the rating of certified Arborist.



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April Results from Silver Creek:

The April meeting was an overwhelming success as Andy Dumas opened his course to us again for our first meeting of the season. The course was in fine shape and 46 souls ventured out to enjoy the weather, camaraderie, and fun that Silver Creek Country Club had to offer.

Thanks also to Rudi Huber of Aquamaster for his talk on water quality. Thanks also to Atlantic Irrigation and Lawn and Golf for sponsoring our meeting this month.

As reported by the Golf Chairman, the following results took place at our tournament:

Winners:


- 1st Place - Jerry Decker & Russell Hauenstein
- 2nd Place - John Downer & Matt Fronzak

Skins:

- Andy Dumas & Brian Bachman #17
- Paul Brandon & Corey Pries #4
- Jerry Decker & Russell Hauenstein #18
- Marty Andrews & Marty Lawler #16
- Dr. Joe Barrett & Dale Maleckie #2
- Tom and Tom #12 (Sorry we don't have your last names. Please send them along, and I will see that you get your proper credit in a future issue of "Chips and Putts").



Closest to the Pin: Chris Tarletski 7' 6"
Longest Drive: Tom Height



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Is Molasses the Recipe for Reduced Thatch?

Molasses. It's the perfect ingredient for tasty cookies but the jury is still out on its ability to reduce thatch. So says Wendy Gelernter, Ph.D. and Larry Stowell, Ph.D. of PACE Turf, the member organization known for translating research into practical turf management recommendations.

Molasses has actually been used for decades in agriculture for a variety of purposes, including as a nutrient (it contains sulfur, potash and trace minerals) and as a "sticker" that helps pesticides adhere to leaf surfaces. But molasses is also frequently touted as having the ability to control thatch on golf course turf. Gelernter says, "The theory is that when applied to the soil on a seven- to 10-day schedule, the sugars in molasses promote the growth of microorganisms. These microbes then supposedly feed on the organic matter in the thatch, breaking it down so that thatch depth is decreased. As a result, the claim is that one or more aerifications can be deleted from your turf management program."

Stowell says there is some logic to the use of molasses—the application of high concentrations of sugars can stimulate microbial growth. But Stowell says a few questions should pop into your mind when you hear claims that molasses reduces thatch. These include:

Are all microbes equally good? Do the sugars from molasses have the ability to selectively promote the growth only of microbes that are good for turf growth? Or are all microbes—including fungi that cause diseases—equally stimulated?

Is high microbial activity necessarily a good thing? Since anaerobic soils (soils that have low levels of oxygen) are a problem, especially on golf course greens, is it wise to encourage the growth of more microbes that will suck even more oxygen out of the root zone?

Where is the data? Though there have been a few articles published on the use of molasses as a thatch reduction tool, results have been inconclusive and/or disappointing. Bert McCarty and his research team at Clemson University showed in 2006 that weekly applications of molasses, made over a period of two years, had no effect on thatch depth for Crenshaw bentgrass, but that it was beneficial when used on A-1 bentgrass. More recently, a study conducted at Pennsylvania State University by David Moody, Max Schlossberg and Mike Fidanza concluded that there were no differences in organic matter decomposition between untreated turf and turf treated with molasses (the product I-MOL). The authors did note that treated turf showed a decrease in lignin and cellulose (both constituents of plant cells), but found that these results were "inconclusive, warranting additional investigations."

Finally, and most importantly, does molasses allow you to delete aerification procedures? Stowell says, "We hate to say this, and we long to be proven wrong someday, but you should always be wary of products that claim they are good substitutes for aerification and topdressing. It is hard to imagine how the many benefits of aerification and sand topdressing — from oxygen movement, to water movement, to production of even and firm surfaces, to disease reduction, to salinity management, etc. etc. — could be replaced by the application of any single product."

Continued on page 6

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"The bottom line," says Gelernter, "The data is currently inconclusive on the use of molasses or molasses based products for reduction of thatch. While some other products, such as CPR and Thatch-X, have shown promising results, they should not be used as substitutes for management techniques like aerification and sand topdressing."

Additional turf management topics are available to members of PACE Turf on the organization's website at: www.paceturf.org.



PACE Turf is a membership organization that provides research, education and information services to the turf management community. Founded in 1993 by Wendy Gelernter, Ph.D. and Larry Stowell, Ph.D., the PACE Turf mission is to generate and share independent and objective agronomic information among turf professionals so they may develop management programs that are effective, practical and scientifically sound.

Fine-Tune Your Irrigation System To Save Money and See Better Results

Golf Course irrigation systems offer convenience in protecting your landscape investment. The proper irrigation system allows you to enjoy your plants and turf, keep it healthy and beautiful while you water efficiently, and save time and money.

With some simple practices and new technology, existing irrigation systems can be made more efficient, lowering your water bill, reducing run-off and eliminating waste. Water-wise habits will result in a *healthier* landscape, in addition to conserving water.

The Irrigation Association offers these water-saving tips to maintain and update automatic irrigation systems:

- 1) **Adapt your watering schedule to the weather and the season.** Familiarize yourself with the settings on your irrigation controller. Adjust the watering schedule regularly to conform with current weather conditions.
- 2) **Schedule each individual zone in your irrigation system.** "Scheduling" accounts for the type of sprinkler, sun or shade exposure, and the soil type for the specific area. The same watering schedule should almost never apply to all zones in the system.
- 3) **Inspect your system monthly.** Check for leaks, broken or clogged heads, and other problems, or engage a certified irrigation professional to regularly check your system. Clean micro-irrigation filters as needed.

Continued on page 7

Did you know...

COOLING

Front lawns of just eight average houses have the cooling effect of about 70 tons of air conditioning.

The average home size central air unit has only a 3 to 4 ton capacity



Continued from Page 6

4) **Adjust sprinkler heads.** Correct obstructions that prevent sprinklers from distributing water evenly. Keep water off pavement and structures.

5) **Get a professional system audit.** Hire a professional to conduct an irrigation audit and uniformity test to make sure areas are being watered evenly. This can be especially helpful if you have areas being under-watered or brown spots. The Irrigation Association maintains an online list of IA Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditors.

6) **Consider "smart" technology.** Climate or soil moisture sensor-based controllers evaluate weather or soil moisture conditions and then automatically adjust the irrigation schedule to meet the specific needs of your landscape. Learn more at <http://www.irrigation.org/swat/homeowners/>.

7) **Install a rain shutoff switch...inexpensive and effective.** Required by law in many states, these money-saving sensors turn off your system in rainy weather and help to compensate for natural rainfall. The device can be retrofitted to almost any system.

8) **Consider low volume drip irrigation for plant beds.** Install micro irrigation for gardens, trees and shrubs. Micro irrigation includes drip (also known as trickle), micro spray jets, micro-sprinklers, or bubbler irrigation to irrigate slowly and minimize evaporation, runoff and overspray.

9) **Water at the optimum time.** Water when the sun is low or down, winds are calm and temperatures are cool - between the evening and early morning - to reduce evaporation. You can lose as much as 30 percent of water to evaporation by watering mid-day.

10) **Water only when needed.** Saturate root zones and let the soil dry. Watering too much and too frequently results in shallow roots, weed growth, disease and fungus.

Best advice for a healthy, drought- and stress-tolerant landscape: use less water. These tips will help keep more money in your wallet instead of sending it down the drain.

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The Longest Delayed Result in any national open championship occurred in the 1931 US Open at Toledo, Ohio. George von Elme and Billy Burke tied at 292, then tied the first replay at 149. Burke won the second replay by a single stroke after 72 extra holes.

The Longest Hole in the World is the 7th hole (par 7) of the Sano Course at the Satsuki Golf Club in Japan. It measures a long 909 yards!

PTGA MEETING SCHEDULE

2009 Golf Schedule

June 24	Eagle Rock John Kaminski, Penn State
July 21	Jack Frost National Mark Fine, Fine Golf Design
Aug 17	Elmhurst Clambake
Sept 15	Huntsville Golf Club
Oct 15	Glen Maura National Championship



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