



THE NEWSLETTER

Golf Course Superintendents Association OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

Sponsors and administrators of the Troll-Dickinson Scholarship Fund — Awarded yearly to deserving Turf Management Students.

November 1987

—NEXT MEETING—

Wednesday, December 2, 1987
Needham Golf Club

9:15 Directors Meeting
10:45 Regular Meeting
12:00 Lunch-Buffer
1:00 Educational

Nancy Wrenn
DEQE

Division of Hazardous Waste

Topic: Proper Disposal of hazardous waste products and containers.

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Host Superintendent - Ron Kirkman

Reservations Required -
(617) 444-5548

Shufflin' Staff

This article is to offer a few ideas and alternatives for consideration in your golf course maintenance operation. Read on and see if any of what's below can fit your operation...



Here at Spring Valley, the weekday and staff loads change throughout the year. During the active growing months when there is plenty of daylight to get an early start, our workday is 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. This starting time is altered in the spring and fall when daylight effects the early starts because of the darkness and frost. During the late fall prior to the

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Willowbend, St. Thomas— a Winning mix

Bob St. Thomas is at it again.

About every 10 years St. Thomas gets up in the morning, looks around for his talent, discovers it and boldly demands, "what have you done for me lately?"

Which is the signal for the energetic and (now) enterprising golf course superintendent to head himself in the direction of bigger and better things.

More challenging things is more like it.

This time St. Thomas has taken the plunge, so to speak. Already established as one of the section's leading superintendents, Bob is spreading his wings. He's into building, supervising and maybe a little selling in a spiraling, plus admitted exclusive venture called, the Willowbend Club.

St. Thomas left the Hyannisport Club last spring to be a visible part of a development-type golf project on 412 acres of Mashpee real estate.

"That's Willowbend," he pinpointed the location as a long look from Route 28 to Shoestring Bay. "The centerpiece is our golf course which will be surrounded by 340 housing units - 170 condos and 170 homes."

Probably the best way to describe Willowbend, to nutshell its impact on prospective buyers, is to put it simply, as in, "it ain't cheap."

St. Thomas reports that condos start at \$350,000. For many seekers of the good life, that price tag closes the conversation. Yet, the project's developers are certain Willowbend will succeed.

"The Cape is ready for something like this," St. Thomas remarked. "We're not trying to hide the fact that we're building something special and something special calls for potential buyers who can afford it. We're talking about a very small percentage of the population."

Obviously, Willowbend is beginning to reach that percentage of people. The first year's assignment of units, 60 in all, has been sold. From here on in, the operation will be phased over eight years with approximately 35 units built each year. Therefore, St. Thomas appears to be in there for the long haul.

"Oh, yeah," Bob beamed. "You have to understand just how exciting something like this can be. It's really great to be part of it. It's something that keeps me on the edge of my anxieties every day. I can't wait for the next day to come."

Willowbend's golf course is virtually ready for play, although St. Thomas was putting the final constructive touches on it last month.

"We are just about ready to put a wrap on the course for winter," Bob said at the time. "We're hoping for a natural kind of winter so that we won't have to delay the course-opening. Right now, we're shooting for late May or early June."

If the Willowbend real estate aspect is something special, its golf course attempts to enter the ultra-special class.

The architect is Michael Hurdzan who carries a lot of the Jack Nicklaus-Pete Dye philosophy into the design of the course.

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WILLOWBEND

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"I think Mike tried to 'out-Dye' Pete Dye," St. Thomas explained the methods Hurdzan used to create a golf course in keeping with its surroundings. "Golfers will see a lot of Pete Dye in the layout, as well as Jack Nicklaus. Mike has sort of put their ideas together—things like mounding, grass bunkers and other innovations that star their creations."

However, unlike some of the newer courses that have emerged monsters in television coverage of certain PGA Tour events, Willowbend is not intended as a test for the durability of three woods etc.

"The course is not long by modern standards," St. Thomas informed. "It measures 6,800 yards from the back tees and 6,400 from the regulars. What the real intention is here is to give members a memorable experience every time they tee it up. That's where the architect comes in. That's where my, uh, expertise is supposed to come through."

Willowbend will be offered to residents. At construction's end, there will be 340 families with a view of Shoestring Bay and an opportunity to join the golf course. St. Thomas thinks 60 to 70% of them will take advantage of that opportunity.

"We're trying to emphasize the exclusivity of Willowbend," Bob added, "that it's a development with top security, paving brick streets and lighting imported from Holland—attractions like that. "We think we have a winner. We're headed that way, anyway."

Which is normal for Bob St. Thomas. When he comes on the scene, it's not to lose. At Willowbend, he's a good bet to keep that streak going.

GERRY FINN

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SHUFFLIN

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time change, we work from 7:00 a.m. morning starts and after the time change, the day goes back to 6:00 a.m. The days end during these times at 2:30 or 3:30. The 6:00 to 2:30 schedule goes to the first snowfall and the closing of the golf course. At this point our winter schedule is in effect.

This is the point where we break from the "normal weekday" routine for the winter equipment service. By this time all seasonal employees have been laid off and the full time personnel are all that remain till spring. This group includes the Assistant Superintendent, mechanic and four full time general maintenance employees. The staff works a four day workweek, from Monday to Thursday, 6:00 a.m. to 4:30 in the afternoon. There is a 15 minute break in the morning and 45 minutes for lunch from 12:00 - 12:45. As other duties fall within the department such as snow plowing, sanding, shoveling, etc., we split the crew in half, each group alternating weekends on and off. There are at least two staff members "on call" throughout the winter months to cover these duties on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The 10 hour day was tiring at first, but after 2 weeks, everyone was thinking positive and looking forward to 3

day weekends throughout the winter. My main concern was completing the service and repair of equipment using this staff scheduling. For 2 winters now all work has been completed on time and I see no reason to change a situation that everyone is happy with.

During the growing season I try to break the boredom of the 8 hour day by altering the daily schedule as follows:

Monday 6:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	10
Tuesday 6:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.	8
Wednesday 6:00 a.m. - 12 noon	6
Thursday 6:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	10
Friday 6:00 a.m. - 12 noon	6
	<hr/> 40

This fits our needs well in that Wednesdays are men's day with much play after noon and Friday is usually heavy with play. All required maintenance tasks are completed before anyone leaves on Friday.

On golf outing days and special tournament days we also schedule staff so that we are done early and out of the golfers way without interfering with each other.

For weekend staffing, I split the crew in two groups and each group alternates weekends on and off. This allows employees to plan a weekend away or any other special happening. Any staff member can switch with one another with my approval provided the task assigned to the original scheduled employee can be done by the fill-in employee that has been asked to work. Even after these switches, they are expected to get back in the original weekend schedule so all the assigned jobs are completed each weekend.

I have met many innovative and free thinking superintendents in my career. Maybe some of you are already doing some or all of what's been suggested. Please feel free to give them a try.

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Pros & Cons of Winter golf: Playing on Regular or Temporary Greens

The agronomy experts at the USGA have studied this subject for many years and have developed some very definite conclusions.

The answer to the question of whether or not to allow play on regular greens through the winter is very difficult to answer precisely because so many variables are involved. These variables include the soil—its physical make-up, its physical properties and its moisture retention qualities; the grass plant—whether it is *Poa annua*, bentgrass or a combination of the two; play—the amount and duration; and finally the weather—its extremes and fluctuations.

The difficulty of answering this question is that any one of these variables can change. In the case of the weather, this change could easily be daily or even hourly. Play at one time may cause no problems, but play even an hour or so later when conditions become unfavorable could cause serious problems to the soil and grass.

The following reasons simply and basically outline the agronomics of it:

(1) If the grass plant is hurt or even worn from wear and tear, at these times there is little or no regenerative growth to replace the injured tissue that has been insulating the plant's critical growing point or crown. The crown is then much more susceptible to desiccation, diseases and direct low temperature kill.

(2) In late fall or early winter when the frost first enters the ground, the grass blades become frozen and brittle. Traffic at these times will

break and crack the stiff and frozen blades, causing a rupturing of the cell walls and a disruption of the protoplasm in the cell. This type of injury is sometimes referred to as "winter burn."

(3) Soil, the medium that determines the performance, success and failure of the green can be severely, perhaps irreversibly, harmed. Traffic on moist soil during these times of the year will result in detrimental soil compaction. Compacted soil brings on many problems.

(4) Play on greens when there is standing water or slush can cause severe problems. Traffic forces this water or slush into more intimate contact with the crown of the grass that is already waterlogged or hydrated. This then makes the grass plant much more susceptible to ice damage (from freezing) and low temperature kill.

(5) Some of the most serious types of injury occur to the grass plant and soil when the frost is just going into the ground (in the fall) and when it is just coming out of the ground (in the spring). When this is occurring, traffic on greens will tend to shear off the grass roots underfoot between the soft upper inch or two that thaws out first and the continued frozen soil further down. Besides shearing off the grass roots near the surface, soil compaction can also be accelerated.

(6) With any type of winter injury, whether from snow mold, ball marks, soil compaction, desiccation or foot traffic, there is a strong possibility that *Poa annua* will fill in the damaged areas. With more *Poa annua* in greens there is more potential for summer turf problems.

(7) When you have extensive winter play on greens there is usually more spring and fall maintenance work that must be performed to bring greens up to their highest playing potential. Winter play is certainly reflected in the increased maintenance work involved in aerations, top-dressings, spikings and overseedings.

—NEW APPLICANTS—

John O'Donnell
Cedar Glenn G.C.

Richard Giverson
Westover G.C.

Vincent Parentela
Holyoke C.C.

James Leighton
Wayland C.C.

We realize that golf more than ever is a year-round recreational activity. When putting greens are properly constructed and maintained, and when weather conditions are right, winter play on greens can cause few problems other than a browning of the turf (winter burn). However, when conditions are not favorable, especially when the frost is just going into the ground in the fall and just coming out of the ground in the spring, major problems occur. If play is allowed on regular greens, the days must be carefully chosen. Someone must make these day-to-day decisions with the future condition of the course in mind. It should not be kept open or closed simply because a nearby course is open or closed. Each course is an individual problem.

One way to insure against possible problems is to have and to use winter, or alternate greens. These greens should be used the entire winter season or when the conditions for playing the regular greens are unfavorable and injury to them could occur.

Credit: Mass. Golf Association

Many clubs planning to cover some greens this winter

Most New England golf courses have several greens which, because of location, contour, etc., have difficulty recovering each spring from harsh winter weather. To help provide some relief to this problem many clubs in Massachusetts are testing the use of

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WINTER GREENS

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covers to protect greens during the winter months. Apparently the results of these tests have been positive and these clubs are planning to continue with these programs this winter. In most cases, the number of greens to be covered at each course will primarily depend on budget restrictions.

We have discussed this subject with Chairmen of the Greens Committees of a few MGA member clubs to learn what their plans are for the coming winter. While no final decisions have yet been made due to the lack of budget approvals, they have reported the tentative plans of their clubs are as follows:

Brae Burn—Covered 3 greens last winter; tested different cover material in the process. Will cover at least 6 greens this winter if more funds are available. No vandalism reported.

Charles River C.C.—Covered putting green last winter. Will cover putting green and 3 greens this winter.

Wellesley C.C.—Tried to test one green last winter. Unfortunately, vandals ripped it up the first night it was down. Do not know how many greens will be covered this winter, but would like to cover them all if budget would allow it.

Weston G.C.—Covered 6 greens last year. Very pleased with results. Intend to cover several more this winter. Eventually will cover all greens. In the spring covered greens look much better and putting quality is much better. Secret of success of program is timing for applying cover and taking it off. No vandalism problems.

Salem C.C.—Last winter was 4th year in their program and five greens, plus putting green, were covered. Quite satisfied with results. Tested different cover brands and are getting 2 to 3 years usage out of each cover. No vandalism problems.

Longmeadow C.C.—Started program some years back with a single green and each successive year has increased the number. Last winter covered 13 greens. Greens Superintendent reports green covers do not protect against ice damage,

but rather against wind desiccation.

Tedesco C.C.—Covered 3 greens last year for first time. Results were good. Planning to cover 6 greens this year.

Worcester C.C.—Started program last year by covering 3 greens. Very satisfied with results. Especially pleased with early growth of grass. Plan to cover 6 greens this winter.

Vesper C.C.—Do not cover any greens. Have attained satisfactory results with a program of plowing greens covered with ice and snow in late winter.

There is a side effect from the "cover" program. For those hearty souls who enjoy winter golf it would appear you had better get accustomed to playing on temporary greens. Winter golf, as many of us have known it for generations, may eventually become a sport of the past.

Credit: Mass. Golf Association

The Super Speaks Out

Welcome to The Super Speaks Out—a monthly feature which offers the golf course superintendent a forum to express his or her views on topics and issues relating to their profession.

This month's question: *In light of rising costs, associated with such things as lightweight equipment mowing and a shrinking labor market, how do you cope with the problem of selling your budget to your club?*

Gary Mondor, Crestview Country Club: "Maybe I have an upbeat membership. Anyway, we passed through the equipment phase of the battle, if there's supposed to be one, last year when the club spent \$50,000 for three mowers.

"My selling points at budget time were kind of built-in. My members could look around and see what some of the other clubs were doing, getting into more sophisticated and effective maintenance methods and they didn't want to be left behind.

"Actually, it was more like something

—POSITION OPENINGS—

Hopedale C.C.

9 Hole - Assistant Superintendent

Contact: Robert Dill
(617) 473-7444

Marshfield C.C.

18 Hole

Contact: Steve Atwater
P.O. Box 788
Marshfield, MA 02050
(617) 434-4092

happening before their eyes, like the improved conditions because of lightweight mowing and the first traces of our long range goal of reducing poa annua.

"We are heavy in poa, the percentage about 80 percent poa to 20 percent bent. Somewhere down the line, we would like to turn those percentages around. I think lightweight mowing is a positive move toward realizing that goal.

"This means I'll need more money for overseeding and other complementing materials. But I honestly have to say I haven't met any resistance from my members. They know they need certain costly things to run their businesses and apparently they transfer that feeling to the business I'm in here.

"My attending concern of labor needs have been circumvented for the moment. I've eliminated certain jobs but not the people who did them. Therefore, I haven't had to ask for any increase in help. How long that lasts no one knows. For now, though, my budget needs have been met by the membership."

Don Marrone, Jr., Wachusett Country Club: "My dad's been good to me. Hey, what can I say?

"After all, we're a public golf course, privately-owned and family-operated. My dad calls the shots and his did it before him. This is a three-generation situation. Regardless, we know what's going on in the golf business. That knowledge and experience are just passed down to the next in line and right now I'm it.

"I don't want to give the impression that we have no consideration for the golfers who play Wachusett. Most

Continued on next page

THE SUPER *continued*

certainly we do. But our route to giving them good playing conditions is different from most courses.

"Generally speaking, my budget is tied into our profit and loss statement. When we have a good year, there's no second thought to financial outlay for equipment. In fact, when my dad agrees there's a need for something, it's always the best selection.

"On the other hand, a not-so-profitable year might mean we have to tighten things which include my budget.

"As for lite mowing, we're not into it. So far, we don't think we need it. Anyway, the best part of this arrangement is that we make our budget decisions without influence from our golfers. Yet, we notice what's going on around us and try to keep up with playing conditions at neighboring courses. It's working, too."

Bob Johnston, Wampanoag Country Club: "Selling my budget hasn't been a problem for me, mainly because of two factors.

"No. 1 - I have an enthusiastic membership that's interested in my maintenance program and the importance of updating equipment and work methods.

"No. 2 - I have a green chairman with the same approach and he makes no bones about it. He wants it done.

"Really, I have members who probably react to spending for course improvement according to the times. And, right now, times are good. Frankly, my members want better playing conditions and they're willing to pay for it.

"That's why I expect no hassles when I present my next budget. In it, there's a call for two new mowers. I expect to get them because of the positive attitude among the members.

"We're in the middle of a three-year improvement plan as it is, so my members know what spending for better conditions is all about. There's a plus going for me,

too. Most of the comments about the program have been favorable.

"I guess the problem all of us have to face is an increase in labor cost. we have to project for some numbers we once thought absurd, Again, I'll go into my budget meeting prepared to explain the labor situation. It shouldn't be tough because our labor problem is every employer's labor problem. I expect common sense to prevail."

GERRY FINN

Divot Drift

A record field of 72 teams teed it up in the annual Green Chairman, superintendent tournament held at The Country Club. Although crowded, it was a pleasure playing the course that will host the U.S. Open in just seven months. At the evening dinner, it was stated the greens had a Stimp speed of 9 1/2. What they didn't tell you was the reading was taken up-hill. Bill Spence had the course in excellent condition and he said the greens will be faster and the rough two inches higher for the Open. The winners at 73 gross were Doug Johnson and Lee Korofsky, Pine Brook C.C. The duo from Tedesco C.C., Paul Miller and Jim Ferrin tied the Thompson C.C. team of Al Singer and Dennis Bard with a gross 76. Tedesco C.C. captured second place by matching of cards. In the net division, Len Blodgett and Ron Donley from Kittansett C.C. squeaked out first place with a smooth 66. Three groups were tied at 67. By matching of cards, second place went to Mel O'Kelly and Ken Joy, Marshfield C.C. Third place went to Brian Cowan and Warren Sampson from Eastward Ho C.C. Fourth spot was awarded to Jim Fitzroy and Jim Foster from the Presidents G.C.

Closest to the pin on #2 - Phil Cahalin, Chairman, Hatherly C.C.

Closest to the pin on #7 - Mark Taylor, Supt. Haverhill C.C.

Closest to the pin on #16 - Bob Bullard, Chairman, Weston G.C.

Straightest drive #1 - Tom Sperito, Chairman Gannon G.C.

Four days later, 3 miles down the road, we were at Brae Burn C.C. for the Pro - Superintendent tournament. Our host, Jim O'Kelly, does not believe in the Stimpmeter - simply, a ball rolling off it rolls right off the greens at Brae Burn. As luck would have it, Jim and his pro six (6) putted the second green. Too bad! You realize that only three groups broke 80 and two of those were 79. Again, the southpaw from Pine Brook C.C. - Doug Johnson and his partner Bob Crowley won the tournament with a net 70. (In our association, low net is the winner.) Makes no difference though, their gross score was a sizzling 73. Second net at 71, was Don Levangie and Gerry Mackedon from Norfolk G.C. Third net at 73 was Ron Hansen and Steve Bagley from Spring Valley C.C. Mike Nagle and Ron Lajoie from Worcester C.C. tied for first gross at 79 with Paul Miller and Bob Green from Tedesco C.C. Jim Fitzroy and Art Cicconi from the Presidents G.C. captured second gross with an 81. In at third gross with an 82, was Dave Barber, Blue Hill C.C. and Jack Neville from Ponkapoag G.C. One has to admit, we played two great golf courses in a span of four days.

Don't forget to sign up for the Christmas Party, December 5 at Needham Golf Club.



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