



# WESTERN VIEWS

Official Publication of the West Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association

## WMGCSA 1996 Meeting Schedule

- Sept. 30 Golf Day,  
Gull Lake C.C.
- Oct. 8 Annual Meeting,  
Silver Lake C.C.
- Nov. 1 Fall Party,  
Walnut Hills C.C.

### MEMBER NOTICE...

**Meeting Payment Policy** - Beginning in 1996, all meeting expenses will be on a **CASH ONLY BASIS**. There will be **NO CHARGES ALLOWED**. This will give us more control of all transactions and will eliminate having the host club having to handle all the billings.

**Meeting Cancellation Policy** - This is a reminder of a current policy. If you make reservations for a meeting and are unable to attend, and you do not cancel, you will be billed and expected to make a payment.

You can listen to thunder after lightning and tell how close you came to getting hit. If you don't hear it, you got hit, so never mind. —*A fifth-grader's comment on lightning taken from a science essay*

**SERIALS**

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

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
*Western Views*

3725 Cascade Rd., S.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

## President's Message

It is hard to believe what a difference a year can make. We had no 90 degree days in July in 1996. Last year it seemed like the whole summer was 90 degrees plus. For those of you that were able to attend our joint meeting at the Polo Fields,

congratulations. We were able to retain the trophy, and it is at the engravers as I write this letter. Our host Mark McKinley and his staff were very gracious and made us all feel welcome. The WMGCSA Board

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## Annual Meeting and Chapter Championship

The Annual Meeting and Chapter Championship will be held on October 8th at Silver Lake Country Club in Rockford. The annual elections will take place along with the Chapter Championship.

The Board of Directors for the Western would like to remind you

that an official verifiable handicap be made available at sign-in to enter the championship.

If you wish to play golf but not enter the Championship you are welcome to do so. I'm sure it will be a warm sunny fall day, so come out and enjoy the company of your fellow superintendents.

## Joint Meeting

The joint meeting with the Detroit Area Superintendents went great, as the Western Supers were able to retain the trophy for another year. Maybe the Detroit area group have been working harder than the Western folks and not getting their rounds in. Or I'm sure they could point out some serious sand bagging that may be taking place. Whatever the case, this is two years in a row that the Western group has brought the trophy home.

Talking with Mark McKinley a few weeks after the tournament, he

could kid about the deep well pump that went out during the dry month. I'm sure at the time he was a bit more concerned. This points to the professionals we have in this field that are able to cope with hardships and dilemmas that they may not have any control over, but are later able to laugh about. That's what I call spirit!! I was not in attendance, but I understand that Mark's course was in great shape and that his crew went out of their way to provide a great day! We all hope this friendly competition will continue.

## President's Message, continued

has been working very hard on the affiliation agreement with GCSAA. This material will be presented to the voting membership prior to the October 8th annual meeting at Silver Lake Country Club.

Our Golf Day fund raiser is in the works for September 30th at Gull Lake Country Club. We feel the timing is better and are hoping

for 100 players for both the morning and afternoon rounds.

I hope August treats us well, as I think I endured enough grief from 1995. August will also bring us the Michigan Turfgrass field day on August 15th. This event has really blossomed in the past few years so don't miss it. The WMGCA annual meeting on October 8th will

also include our golf championship. The golf committee has been working hard on this event, so sharpen up your game!

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at golf day, so don't miss out.

Paul Schippers  
President

## Paralysis by Analysis

After playing and thinking about golf for more than thirty years, I have gradually come to this conclusion: if you want to have a chance at being a decent golfer... stop trying to be a great golfer. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

Recently, a friend of mine asked me if I'd go to the range with him and watch him hit some balls. That meant he was having a problem so I asked him what it was. He said he was suddenly unable to hit the ball more than thirty yards in the air. I said I'd go.

At the range, my friend's first five shots were low skanks to the right. His routine for each of those shots went something like this: stand behind the ball, walk up next to the ball, put the club behind the ball, take my grip, put my feet into position, look at my feet, check my shoulders, look at my target, raise my head up and down once, squeeze the club, grit my teeth, think about what I'm forgetting, decide to go, yank the club back, yank it even faster forward, pray. Skank.

He looked at me as if to ask, so what's the problem. I asked him if he read a lot of instruction articles and books. "Yes," he replied. "And videos, too." I told him to stop doing that and to forget everything he'd learned. "All you've done," I

told him, "by trying to learn and remember all of those so-called "swing thoughts" is confuse the hell out of yourself. And all that does is create tension in your body and your brain. And tension," I said, "kills. You're so tight standing over the ball, convinced that you're going to hit it bad, there's no way you're going to do anything *but* hit it bad. You've grooved, perfectly, a tension-filled, herky-jerky, no-chance swing. And it's all because you're dying to impress your friends with your game."

After a moment, he said, "You're right."

"Okay," I said, "here's what I want you to do. First, I want you to change your routine. Especially... the length of your routine. I don't want you to give yourself time to think about all those tips you've been trying to memorize. All that does is build tension. So," I said, "just do this: look down the line, get into position, check your target, and go." He did what I asked, and he went. The ball went up and toward his target.

He looked at me. "Trust me," I said. "In our ability bracket – and sometimes for the pros, too – the harder we try, the worse we get. If we truly love golf, we should do our best to enjoy it no matter what may happen." My friend nodded, think-

ing about my comments, and then hit several more good shots with his new routine.

"I want you to do one more thing," I said to him. "I want you to make Fuzzy Zoeller your favorite player on the Tour. No matter what happens, Fuzzy never gets upset. He tries to play well, of course, but he also laughs a lot, and jokes, and shrugs off whatever may happen to his shots or his putts. He also whistles on the golf course, too," I said. "And I'd like you to try that."

My friend said he would.

I talked to him a couple of days later and he told me that he had a nice time on the golf course that morning. "I had a couple of eights," he said, "but I had some very good holes, as well. And I hit a lot of good shots."

One week later I talked to him again after he'd played another round. "As you know," he said, "my wife is a better player than I am. When we were done, she told me it was the best golf she'd seen me play in a long time."

I told him I was glad. "You know what I did almost the entire round?" he asked. I said no.

"I whistled."

*By Danny Freels, Michigan Editor*

*Source: Great Lakes Golf,  
July 1996*

# Grass On Other Side? Not Greener, But Gone, As Sod-growers Lament Bad Weather

Dismal grass-growing weather that began last summer has created a statewide shortage of sod.

Many would-be customers have gone to seed.

Growers have so little sod available that smaller customers are being passed over in favor of those who buy truck-loads of sod by the day.

Amanda and Todd Bleak of De-Witt decided to sod the yard at their home this summer. They bought a few hundred yards from McLeod Sod Farms in Grand Ledge.

"We didn't buy enough. So a third of our yard wasn't finished," Amanda Bleak said. "We called to find out what it would cost for more and they said, 'Actually, we don't have any for you!'

"I thought, 'Wow. Is everybody in the state sodding their yards?'"

The Bleaks seeded the rest of their yard Friday.

Jim McLeod of McLeod Sod Farms said he's turning away 10 homeowners a

day because he doesn't have enough grass to sell.

"We're getting calls from all over the state," McLeod, president of the Michigan Sod Growers Association, told the Lansing State Journal in a story published Saturday.

Sod is in great demand now because of last year's weather.

"Because last summer was the worst summer for growing grass in 35 years," said Trey Rogers, associate professor of Michigan State University's crop and soil sciences department. "Golf courses got pummeled. Athletic fields got pummeled."

"Now they need to replenish the fields. And when you've got to have instant green, where do you get it? Sod farmers," Rogers said.

Last summer's searing heat and humidity was followed by a hot and dry October. That caused sod farmers to miss out on their peak growing season.

To top it off, spring came late this year, said Dave Charney of the Michi-

gan Department of Agriculture.

"And once it came, it came with a vengeance," he said. "It just rained and rained and rained."

Crops across the state took a hit from all the rain.

"It's the (same) case with carrots and cucumbers, corn and hay," Charney said. "Now it's sod."

"Overall, there are major losses at sod farms," said Darrin Witt of Witt Sod Farm in Grand Ledge. "We lost 40 acres."

Witt said his farm needed to harvest their fall grass this summer to keep up with demand and replace summer grass wiped out by weather.

"Now most of our grass is gone," he said. "We'll run out this fall."

McLeod's fields, already weakened by last year's heat, didn't get enough protection from layers of snow this winter.

*Source: The Grand Rapids Press,  
Sunday, July 14, 1996*

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# Mulching Benefits

During the 1993 season I began to notice severe mower and trimmer string damage to the young and transplanted trees at North Kent Golf Course. This was due to a turnover in my crew, the addition of new and transplanted trees and, I will admit, a lack of communication of the importance of not mowing over the trees – although I thought that I did not need to explain that more than once. Mulching the tree bases was the approach I took to combat this situation. I was very pleased with the landscape look the mulch provided and the decrease in mechanical damage.

The 1995 November issue of *Grounds Maintenance* also cited increased benefits gained from mulching tree bases. A research

update from Cornell University looked at the effects of various thicknesses of mulch around tree bases. The 2 year study tested mulch depths from 2 to 10 inches.

The results affirmed many of the beneficial effects of mulching. The mulch improved soil-moisture retention, moderated soil temperature swings and suppressed weed growth. Moreover, the mulch did not significantly reduce oxygen levels, even where the mulch was as deep as 6 inches.

The mulch did not alter pH or nitrate levels nor did any trunk infection take place.

A potential problem with using thicker mulch layers (7 to 10 inches) may delay the warming of soil in the spring which could slow root growth. However, this study affirms that the depths of 3 to 6 inches of mulch provides many benefits with few, if any, negative effects.

Mike Herbst,  
Superintendent  
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