



# WESTERN VIEWS

January - February, 1999

Official Publication of the West Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association

## 1999 Meeting Schedule Western Michigan GCSA

<b>March 9</b>	WaterMark Country Club, Round Table
<b>March 16</b>	Kent Country Club, G.A.M.
<b>April 27</b>	Heritage Glen Golf Club
<b>May 11</b>	St. Ives Golf Club
<b>June 14</b>	Country Club of Jackson
<b>July 20</b>	Boulder Creek Golf Club
<b>September 13</b>	Kent C.C. Golf Day
<b>October 5</b>	Walnut Hills C.C. (Annual Meeting)
<b>November 6</b>	*(Fall Party)

\* Location and/or dates to be determined.

## SERIALS

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

Western Views  
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8121 Cowan Lake Drive  
Rockford, Michigan 49341

## President's Message

Well, I guess this is my first message as President of the Western Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Organization. It's always a challenge to pick a topic that you want to expand on and put in the newsletter. If you write a monthly article for your club newsletter or other organization, I'm sure you can relate. It's very easy to be repetitive or not get to issues that interest the reader. Well, here goes, and if you ever have a comment or topic you would like discussed, please feel free to give me a call.

I've been involved in the Western since moving to the area six years ago. This is a relatively short period of time, comparatively. I'm sure there are many of you that have double or triple that tenure with the Western group.

The Western's been a great group to be affiliated with — many very friendly and helpful individuals you can go to when you have questions, and many great personalities you can have a good time with. I feel the true merit of an organization like ours is, after all, information, friendship and support. A look

at these points will reveal they are all tied together, or should be. A simple example would be the friendly game of golf I played with Steve Tedhams, a fellow Western member, at the National a few weeks ago.

The information I got from Steve was that I was lunging at the ball in my golf swing, causing a menagerie of errors. After about three holes or so, he did lend some support though, as a fellow member should. He bought me a cold refreshment and reminded me he was enjoying his golf game as much as I was mine. All kidding aside, though, I believe we owe it to each other to help our fellow superintendents in any way possible, be it through information, friendship or just plain support.

Have a great spring, and I hope to see you at our many educational meetings where you will find information, friendship and support.

Sincerely,  
Al Bathum  
President

## Update on Highland Meeting

The Highlands meeting was well attended. There were 69 people in attendance.

We would like to thank Gary Peters and all the staff at The Highlands for their hospitality. We had a great steak lunch and the bowling was fun afterwards.

Announced at the meeting was the Western Scholarship winner for turfgrass students. Our recipient was Andrew McCain, who had work experience at the Grand Traverse Resort. Congratulations, Andrew!

The Hospitality Room at the National Conference was discussed and our recipient for this year's Service and Achievement

Award was not announced at the meeting, but at the National, Kurt Thummel was chosen by the Western Board to receive this award for his years of service. Congratulations, Kurt! You may remember last year's award was given to Keith Paterson.

Other topics discussed at the meeting were The Michigan Environmental Stewardship Program, and the prepay policy for this year's meetings. We then had a short presentation by Tim Brown of Great Lakes Management Solutions, Inc., and his topic was "Avoiding the Wintery Safety Management Blues."

## Spring Round Table Coming! \_\_\_\_\_

The Spring Round Table will be held at WaterMark Country Club on March 9, 1999. It should be a great meeting, and I'm sure one you won't want to miss.

Paul Richter and his committee have worked hard to organize a meeting that should be very interesting and informative. One topic of discussion will be "Employees Hiring and Interviewing Techniques," presented by a Human Resources person. This will be followed by an open discussion on benefits — once you have them, how do you keep them. Next, there will be presentations given by two superintendents who have recently built new maintenance facilities and eliminated their old ones. Another presentation will be given by two superintendents that renovated existing facilities. In the afternoon, we will break out into groups with moderators for each — Private, Public and Assistants discussing topics ranging from green speed to snake oils.

Don't miss it! I'm sure it will be one of the best of the year.

*The right choice  
is the  
decisive choice.*

# Don't Neglect Your Golf Course Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_

by Bradley S. Klein

Ask any golf course superintendent and they'll tell you, the hardest part of their job is dealing with in-house politics. Growing grass, dealing with drainage, making sure there's enough air and sunlight to keep their course in shape: these are the things they've trained years for. The best university program in turf management can't prepare them for all the nonsense entailed in responding to 400 bosses — all of them self-styled experts, and most of them accustomed to having their way.

Besides reading about *Poa annua* grass and the percolation rates of various soils, it might be helpful to spend a semester in turf school studying Machiavelli and Carl von Clausewitz. Not that dealing with the vagaries of weather is easy. But at least in responding to Mother Nature you don't have to negotiate along the

way with someone else — or worse yet, a committee.

The image of the superintendent as country bumpkin greenkeeper — dressed in jeans and suspenders, with little more than a few years as a farmhand for training — are long gone. You might not know it from the way some members treat their hired help, but superintendents today are the most highly trained professionals in the golf business. Most of them are licensed by their states to deal with pesticides, and many of them continue their college education through ongoing seminars organized by the 18,000-member Golf Course Superintendents Association of America or its regional affiliates. With all the recent developments in golf equipment, swing technique and physical training, the single most dramatic changes in how golf looks

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## Michigan Environmental Stewardship Program Workshop!

The next Stewardship Program Workshop will be held at the Slyvan Resort in Gaylord Michigan on March 18, 1999. If you want information or would like to register, please call Debra

Spakoff Swartz at 517-353-3208 or Greg Lyman at 517-353-0860. It's a great chance to get involved on the ground floor of an environmental program considered the first of its kind in the nation.

## M.T.F. Planning Committee To Meet

The Michigan Turfgrass Foundation Planning Committee will be meeting in March and will be looking at topics for this year's conference.

If you have particular likes or dislikes about the conference, or topics that you would like to see discussed, call Kathy Antaya at 616-895-1005.

# 1999 W. Bruce Matthews Legacy Award

## ~ PURPOSE ~

To offer educational aid to the children of WMGCSA members as an additional membership benefit. We are looking to reward the well-rounded, thoughtful and charitable student.

## ~ DESCRIPTION ~

Upon confirmation of eligibility, an independent committee of college-level educators will review and judge the candidates' applications. If the WMGCSA Board determines that no student meets the minimum criteria standards, no award will be given that year.

## ~ ELIGIBILITY ~

1. One of the applicant's parents/stepparents/grandparents must be a currently active A, B, C or Affiliate class member, and has maintained this membership for three consecutive years.
2. Applicants must be studying or planning to study in a field unrelated to golf course management. (Outside the scope of the Turf Student Award.)
3. Students must be enrolled full-time in an accredited institution of higher education, or accepted at such an institution for the next academic year.
4. An applicant may reapply if they do not win, but there is a limit of one award per student.
5. All other siblings in the family of a winner remain eligible.

## ~ CRITERIA ~

1. 500- to 700-word essay on parents' involvement with the WMGCSA and/or the turf industry.
2. Community service activities, including school or religious volunteer work, neighborhood activities, etc.
3. Academic achievements and honors.
4. Extracurricular activities and leadership skills, including work, sports, hobbies, clubs, etc.

## ~ DEADLINE ~

For more information or applications, call Roger Barton at 517-773-4331. Completed application forms must be received by **April 1, 1999**.  
Send forms to:

W.M.G.C.S.A.  
8585 Winter Forest  
Rockford, MI 49341  
(616) 363-6728

## Are You Posting All Required Employee Notices?

If you're the person responsible to see that essential DOL notices are posted in your workplace, have you ever wondered if you are posting every one that is required? There are, of course, some federal statutes and regulations enforced by various agencies within the Department of Labor (DOL) requiring that employee rights and informational notices be posted in the workplace. Posting requirements vary by statute; that is, not every employer is covered by every DOL statute and may not be required to post a specific notice.

For example, some small businesses may not be covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act and would not be subject to the Act's posting requirements. To be covered, the FMLA requires that an employer have at least 50 employees within a 75-mile radius and employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer at least one year and 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months.

In addition to federal posting requirements, your state probably has some of its own employee notices that must be posted. For information on the requirements in your state, contact your state's labor/industry agency.

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## Don't Neglect Your Golf Course Superintendent, *continued*

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and plays have come by way of refinements in golf course maintenance.

Whenever I have questions about a golf course, I go to the superintendent. The only trouble is finding them, because the good ones spend a lot more time in the field than in their office taking calls. Good superintendents know their courses as well as — sometimes better than — they know their own kids. And why not, since they spend more time tending them?

That's why it's always awkward, if not downright rude, when some thunderous business tycoon of a member raises hell about, well, you name it... "There's not enough water in the ponds." "Why can't you get your mowers off the course earlier?" "The greens are too bumpy." "The ground is too wet." "The flowers need to be watered more." "Whaddya mean I can't take my golf cart on the fairway?" "The rakes should be inside the bunkers, not outside." "The fescue rough looks like hay." "What are the fairways stimping at?"

Many of these concerns come from excessive expectations. In the business, it's called "The Augusta National syndrome." An awful lot of people expect their golf courses to look like the annual site of the Masters. Of course, they wouldn't be willing to fund the necessary maintenance budget. And little do they realize that tournament venues are primed to look a certain way for one week a year and don't look that way every day.

The expectations are compounded by those Florida-bound snowbirds, the ones who winter down south between Thanksgiving and April 1st, and demand that their little havens look

lush and plush no matter what.

Superintendents under such scrutiny have virtually no job security. I know many superintendents who have been on the job a decade and still fear the wrath of a disgruntled member or clique. If the course gets highly ranked, they are told "It's about time." Should the golf course fall off in comparison to some neighboring layout, the superintendent's head is first on the chopping block.

The problem is compounded by the proliferation of management companies, most of them eager to cut costs. Too many of them suffer the mistaken belief that they can slash without sacrificing. Many of these firms, interested only in short-term profits, try to force out a veteran superintendent and replace him or her with a low-paid newcomer just to save \$20,000-30,000 a year — while putting a multimillion dollar asset at risk.

To be fair, there are clubs that value who and what they have. It's crucial to extend long-term contracts so that a superintendent doesn't feel constantly under the gun. The main reason that golf courses are overwatered, for instance, is that greenkeepers are afraid to make a mistake and "lose" an area of the course to brown-out or disease. They end up saturating the place just to cater to certain expectations about "green is better," even if this invites other kinds of turf trouble.

Beside long-term contracts, clubs can encourage — and pay for — their superintendents to attend annual training workshops and national meetings. It would also help if superintendents were made to feel

welcome teeing it up occasionally with members, or representing the club in area events. Clubs can also establish regular procedures so that complaints can be directed through a committee rather than having the superintendent respond to every complaint.

A long-term master plan to guide maintenance and any renovation project is the only way to avoid the nastier forms of in-house politicking. Perhaps most important of all is establishing an adequate budget so that the superintendent doesn't have to cut corners.

For their own part, superintendents need to maintain regular communications. Proper signage at the first and tenth tees about pesticide application or cart traffic can forestall misunderstandings out on the course. A column in the club's monthly newsletter, or a note directly to the members, also helps. So does simply showing up at club meetings and the occasional social function.

What a pleasure it is to see a club that values its superintendent — and to see golfers acknowledging it, as well. The media, in general — and televised golf, in particular — do a lousy job of crediting the hard work most superintendents do. Among the many gracious touches in Justin Leonard's British Open championship speech in 1997 were his words praising Royal Troon's superintendent, William McLachlan.

When was the last time the winner of a major publicly thanked the greenkeeper? Come to think of it, when's the last time your members thanked you?

*Reprinted from Golfweek,  
August 2, 1997*

## Welcome New Members

We would like to welcome the following people to our organization!

### Loren Cunnington

Territory Manager,  
United Horticultural Supply

### Travis Debrot

Assistant Golf Course  
Superintendent,  
Wuskowhan Players Club

### Kevin Dushane

Golf Course Superintendent,  
Wuskowhan Players Club

### Ron Fox

Golf Course Superintendent,  
Point O' Woods Golf and  
Country Club

### Ken Hunt

Golf Course Superintendent,  
Pilgrims Run Golf Club

### Mark Wallace

Golf Course Superintendent,  
Minebrook Golf Club

## Are You Posting All Required Employee Notices? ...continued

### Federal posters of general applicability:

- Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) (minimum wage)
- Job Safety & Health Protection - Federal OSHA Form 2203 (occupational safety and health)
- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- Equal Employment Opportunity Act (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: EEOC) (Explains prohibited employment discriminatory practices.)
- Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA) in English/Spanish

- Notice to Workers with Disabilities (FLSA, SCA and Walsh-Healy Act)
- Employee Polygraph Protection Act (EPPA)

### For federal contractors:

- The Davis-Bacon Act (government construction)
- Equal Employment Opportunity Act (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: EEOC) (Explains prohibited employment discriminatory practices.)
- The Service Contract Act (SCA)

*Reprinted from Keller's Industrial Safety Report: September 1998*

## G.A.M. Meeting To Be Held

The spring G.A.M. meeting will be held at Kent Country Club on March 16, 1999. There should be a good lineup of speakers discussing a variety of topics. This is always a good meeting to bring a board or committee member to for private clubs or an owner or manager from public courses. See you there!

## Advertisers

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Lesco Bunker Rakes, good shape, accuform style, some new, others three seasons. 150 rakes, \$900. Call Al Bathum 616-493-6410.

Roseman 5-gang verticutter with hydraulic power pack, \$250. Call Al Bathum 616-493-6410.

Toro Reelmaster 223-D, bad motor but reels like new, ground once, new bearings, hoses, good for parts and second set of reels. \$2,300 or best offer or trade. Call Dan Litogot 616-657-2553

Turfco Metermatic Topdresser, Model F15a, self-propelled 5.5hp 1993, 100 hours, \$2,000. Turfco Metermatic 3 pull-behind, 1994, Chevron belt electric actuator, \$2,000 or best offer on both machines. Call Kathy Antaya 616-895-1005.

*The difference between a drama and a fantasy is commitment.*



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