



WESTERN VIEWS

Official Publication of the West Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association

President's Message

The term "worlds apart" is a term I'm sure you are all familiar with. A good example might be when you discuss summer jobs to help defray college expenses with your teenager. He's thinking the ideal hours would be ten to twenty hours with no weekends and you're thinking forty to fifty hours with weekends included. The P.D.I. program that the G.C.S.A.A. is developing is very similar. There are many in our profession that are "worlds apart" from the belief that a national organization should be involved with setting standards that may discriminate against their own members. I am referring to the section that includes the use of a classification system to lump

superintendents into groups that have similar educational backgrounds. The G.C.S.A.A. branded superintendent may be a non-issue to some, but to many there are concerns that it may alienate groups of superintendents from each other in our own organization. This is, I believe, in direct contract to our own national organization's new program regarding the "Limited Budget Outreach Program" that will help bring in limited budget golf courses and their superintendents to the National.

There are some very good improvements that will come out of the P.D.I. program, I believe. The educational section is a great improvement over the present setup. It looks like it will make education much more available and affordable to all members. The self

evaluation summary to help you select the classes you may need to take to help you improve your skills as a superintendent is another bright spot. These will happen without a vote from the membership, and I believe are overdue. The classification of Superintendents and the requirement that they take classes to maintain their classification will have to go to a vote for a Bylaws change. This will take place this next year and you can be assured that we will look to you for your opinion. I'm sure everyone will not agree with one view point, but to express your view is the key to a solid, unified organization. Please feel free to talk to me personally, or a board member, about your ideas concerning the P.D.I. program this season.

Sincerely,
Al Bathum, President

2000 Tentative Monthly Meetings and Locations

- March 13 Watermark Country Club Roundtable Meeting
- April 18 Heritage Glen Golf Club
- May 3 Pholcat GAM Meeting
- May 16 St. Ives Golf Club
- June 13 Pilgrims Run Golf Club
- July 18 Quail Ridge Golf Club Chapter Championship
- Sept. 18 Egypt Valley Country Club Golf Day
- October 9 Muskegon Country Club Annual Meeting and Elections

Round Table Meeting Coming Up!!!

Plan to attend the upcoming Round Table meeting at Water Mark County Club on March 13th. If you don't attend any other meeting this year, I believe this is one you won't want to miss. John Fulling and Dan Litogot have put together a program that will keep you entertained and enlightened. In the morning we will hear from our peers, superintendents will present innovative ideas they have developed and used at their facilities to do everything from improving golf course

conditions to speeding up play. It will resemble the innovative superintendent sessions at the national conference.

Superintendents will have 10 to 15 minutes to present their ideas to the group and answer any questions. In the afternoon we will have some national representatives presenting new products and product lines and answering questions regarding their use.

Again, please plan to attend. I think you won't be disappointed.

Congratulations Roger Barton!

We would like to congratulate Roger Barton on receiving the Meritorious Service Award from the WMGCSA at the National Conference in New Orleans. Roger was presented with the award in the Michigan Hospitality Room with many friends and family around to help him celebrate this achievement.

Each year the Board of Directors from the WMGCSA picks an individual who has contributed large amounts of personal time and effort working for our local association. Roger, as Past President and Director, has served the association for many years, and for that we are truly thankful.

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

Western Views
8121 Cowan Lake Drive
Rockford, Michigan 49341

Highlands Meeting Update

January 11th was the day that the winter meeting was held at the Highlands in Grand Rapids. The host was Gary Peters, Superintendent, and as always, we were treated to a great lunch and fine appetizers. We would like to thank Gary, the staff at the Highlands, and the membership at the Highlands for hosting the meeting.

Ray Davies, a Superintendent from California and a member of the GCSAA's P.D.I. development group, presented the program to the membership. After the presentation, a question and answer session followed. Many interesting questions came from the floor, and at times the conversation was a bit heated. If you didn't attend the meeting, you may want to get some more information about the P.D.I. program, because it will definitely affect you in the future.

Fall Seminar Coming!

A joint seminar will be held this fall. The WMGCSA and GCSAA will co-host the "Bentgrass Management and Rootzone Maintenance" seminar on October 17th in Grand Rapids. The instructor will be Milton Engelke. Lunch will be provided at the one-day seminar. We will send out registration forms as the date gets closer. Please plan to attend the seminar, it will be worth Continued Educational credits.

Quick Facts...

- Injuries cost businesses \$25,000 each and every day in lost time, health claims and productivity.
- 95% of all injuries are avoidable through an active employee safety management, prevention and training program.

Copied from material presented at last year's Round Table meeting.

Huh?!

The Importance of Good Communication

Allan Pulaski, Director of Golf and Grounds Maintenance, The Landings Club

Do you consider yourself a communicator? Every day our job as golf course superintendents seems to become more challenging in this area. We are constantly asked questions such as: What are your goals today? What is your staff doing on the hole #7 and why? Did you see the golf tournament on television Sunday? How do they achieve such spectacular conditions? When bermudagrass is brown is it dead or dormant? Is aerification necessary? Why can't you mow the rough with the fairway mower? Surely it is not that difficult to change the heights frequently!

You have most certainly heard a few of these questions before, and probably even been quite irritated by them. But your goal as superintendent should be to effectively respond to such inquiries and measure how it affects your attitude toward the person or people asking the questions. Hopefully you still have a positive attitude and want to improve your communication skills.

We are constantly asked to be more productive managers of our staff and department's daily activities. Our staff can only be productive and efficient if we are effective communicators. We must provide our assistant superintendents and staff members with a "sense of vision and direction". Your team should always be asking themselves what their role is as a team member, what the time table is for a particular project and what is the ultimate objective the team is trying to achieve. All superintendents are dependent on the success of their employees. By talking with our employees often and openly, we will begin to understand our employees and what is important to them as individuals. This in turn will allow our employees to understand each other as a group, creating loyalty and trust.

When we decide to review our abilities as an effective com-

municator, we must take into consideration how well we communicate internally with other departments like the golf professional staff or finance department. It is imperative that we communicate with each other throughout each work week. If we are expecting to be absent for a period of time our assistants must accept the role. A good practice that I have personally found to be effective is to invite the golf professional staff to my office and maintenance area for meetings. The atmosphere generally creates an opportunity for the professional staff to ask questions about golf course maintenance practices or agronomics because it is the proper time and place for such questions. Together we are responsible for providing a service and product that meets the expectations of our clientele. Good communication will allow both departments to operate efficiently and achieve their goals while providing an experience at the golf course that is enjoyed by all.

Another important area in which the superintendent should review his communication skills is between himself and his board members or general manager. Because such dialog usually focuses on long range goals or operating issues and budgets, it is imperative the superintendent understand and be knowledgeable of the club's business plan. It is important that there is open and effective communication between the superintendent, general manager and board of directors so that a sense of trust and loyalty toward attaining goals and objectives is created and maintained.

One area that may require the greatest volume of communication is between the superintendent and the golf membership or "the general golfing public". This is a challenge because more

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golfers today have a greater interest in golf agronomics and maintenance than before. There are many effective ways to communicate with golfers. You may choose to meet with golfers one-on-one, in group discussions or in large meetings. You can also use monthly newsletters, postings in locker rooms or bulletin boards if you are more comfortable with the written word. Using other tools such as comment cards located in the pro shops, grill rooms or locker rooms is also helpful. Never be afraid to ask if your golfers have any complaints about the course, and be sure to follow up on any negative feedback, complaints, problems or concerns you may receive. Being a good listener and one who does not shy away from golfer inquiry shows confidence in one's abilities and operation.

The most important thing to remember when communicating in any type arena is to always present a positive attitude

with sincerity. Whether you are on the golf course, putting green, pro shop or in a meeting, good body posture with a friendly facial expression shows integrity, professionalism and a sense of caring. These characteristics create respect for the superintendent and build support for the operations on the golf course.

"Communication is the essence of social interaction. It influences what others think about and how well they understand you. It also determines to a large degree your self-esteem, assertiveness and social adjustment. Poor communication skills are the cause of many frustrating relationships." Upon reading this on the Internet I could only think that our own successes are truly dependent upon our abilities to communicate. Let's strive to become good communicators not only for ourselves but for our clubs and our industry.

* * * *

The Rules of Golf and Your Golf Maintenance Staff

David Finnerly, CGCS • Head Golf Course Superintendent, Lakeview Resort, Morgantown, WV

Are you ever concerned that the daily maintenance activities of your staff and crew might alter the outcome of a friendly match, or perhaps even affect the outcome of a tournament? What happens if one of your crew rakes a bunker that has a ball lying in it? What is the ruling if your fairway mower runs over and embeds a ball in play? How do you respond to the golfer, and how do the golfers decide the outcome of a hole or the match, if one of your crew has inadvertently interfered? Armed with the correct information on the Rules of Golf, and how they are applied to everyday situations involving your maintenance crews and their equipment, is something you need to know.

I have been a golf course superintendent for over 10 years and a student of the Rules of Golf since 1992 when I began studying in preparation for the GCSAA certification exam. Since that time I have had the opportunity to attend several PGA/USGA four-day Rules Workshops and was successful in passing the PGA USGA rules exam this past spring at the Bethesda Workshop. Although I am not on a par with rules authorities such as Clyde Luther or Tom Meeks of the USGA, I have gathered some pertinent information on the rules of golf and how they affect us as golf course superintendents, our staffs and our daily maintenance operations.

The best piece of information I have ever found is in the *Decisions on the Rules of Golf* book. It is Decision 1-4/1 which basically states that "distractions are a common occurrence which players must accept." This is sort of a carte blanche for our maintenance operations. What it means is that the noise from a maintenance vehicle passing by a group of golfers, the engine noise from a mower or even the noises associated with construction (e.g. chain saws) are no excuse for a bad shot. Of course Decision 1-4/1 doesn't give us the right to throw the courtesy normally shown to golfers out the window, but it does say that the noise we make while working on the golf course cannot be used as an excuse for poor play, missed shots or lost matches.

For the most part our maintenance crews and equipment are considered to be "Outside Agencies". An outside agency is anything that is not part of the match, or in stroke play, not part of

the competitor's side. Whenever our crew members or equipment interfere with play of the ball, rules 18-1 (Ball at Rest Moved by Outside Agency) and 19-1 (Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped by Outside Agency) will come into play.

Rule 18-1 simply says if a ball that is in play and at rest is moved by a mower, utility vehicle, or crew member (any outside agency), the ball is to be replaced before the player plays another stroke with no penalty to the player.

Rule 19-1 gets a little trickier for the golfer and actually introduces an element of luck into the game. Rule 19-1 says there is no penalty if a ball in motion is accidentally deflected or stopped by any outside agency: the ball shall be played as it lies. This is referred to as "rub of the green". For instance, if a ball in motion hits the mower while your operator is mowing fairways (in bounds) and is deflected out of bounds, then the ball is out of bounds. The golfer must proceed under rule 27-1, take the stroke and distance penalty associated with the ball going out of bounds and replay the shot from where the original ball was last played. On the other hand, if while mowing fairways your operator pulls over and is sitting out of bounds waiting for the players to go through, and a shot played from in bounds goes out of bounds, hits the mower and is deflected back in bounds, the ball is in bounds and playable.

There are two unique exceptions to rule 19-1 that concern a ball in motion landing in or on an outside agency. Rule 19-1 (a) states that if a ball in motion after a stroke other than on the putting green comes to rest in or on a piece of maintenance equipment, the ball shall be dropped through the green (or placed on the putting green) as near as possible to the spot where the ball landed on the piece of equipment. Rule 19-1 (b) states that if a ball in motion after a stroke on a putting green is deflected or stopped by, or comes to rest in or on a piece of maintenance equipment, the stroke shall be canceled, the ball replaced and the stroke replayed. In either case, if the ball lands in or on a piece of maintenance equipment and the equipment drives away

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Acid Injection System *By John Mastenbrook, reprint, N.M.T.M.A.*

Greetings from Petoskey, my name is John Mastenbrook and I am taking a break from preparing for my seventh season at Petoskey-Bay View Country Club to write an article for this newsletter. My purpose for this is twofold: One is so that Pete doesn't have to write about his pet goldfish (and scrounge for other articles); the other is to attempt to explain my reasons for purchasing, results of using, and other thoughts of the pHairway acid injection system. This is based on research and two and a half years use experience.

The system is simply a pump, pH monitoring and metering device attached to the pressurized line at or near the irrigation pumping plant. It uses a solution (pHairway) that is a compound formed from the reaction of urea and sulfuric acid - Monocarbamide dihydrogensulfate.

After working on courses in Grand Haven, Lansing, and Grosse Ile, I was thrilled to get a job in Northern Michigan, where growing grass is a "piece of cake". It didn't take long to realize it wasn't that easy. While fungus and insect problems are less, I had turf that was off color, thin and weak. Soil tests were performed and a wide variety of fertilizers were used with poor results. My greens are less than ten years old and have two different types of a sand/peat mixture (2NS, 2MS). About halfway through the summer, the soils would seal off and puddling would occur with as little as ten minutes of irrigation, especially on the greens. The greens were crusty and very firm, it was difficult to cut the hole for the cup. A physical soil analysis was performed with everything being at or near the acceptable ranges. Compaction was not a problem. The deep drill, hydroject, soil cultivator and conventional types of aerators were used frequently with short term results. Large quantities of various wetting agents were used and helped very little with water infiltration.

In the fall of 1994, tech rep Sam Stimmel recommended a product called pHairway that was being used in the Chicago area. With the help of Tom Brogger (Grounds Superintendent at Birchwood Farms CC), who was experiencing similar problems, we spoke with company reps and other superintendents who were using this system. Irrigation water suitability tests were performed which showed a very high level of bicarbonates and an elevated pH. The bicarbonates tend to bond the soil particles together and ruin soil structure. The elevated pH limited the plant uptake of many nutrients. My irrigation water comes from two wells that pump from a limestone aquifer.

In late May 1995, both Tom and I were able to purchase these systems and were the first in the state to do so. I waited until late June when my turf was declining and my soils were becoming sealed off again before I began using my system. The results were amazing. Within two days my water infiltration rate improved and within a week the turf improved and continued to do so throughout the season. If I wanted to, or needed to, I could irrigate the greens for thirty minutes without any puddling. The cup cutting became much easier and the surface held a golf shot better.

The pHairway product is injected into the irrigation water and reacts with the minerals, primarily the bicarbonates and lowers the pH to the desired level. When the treated irrigation water comes into contact with the soil, it breaks the bicarbonate bond between the soil particles which improves soil structure and infiltration. It also helps avoid or reduce alkalinity and im-

proves fertility.

There are many people who think this is just a fancy "Snake Oil" injection device. (I disagree.) The following are some of the statements I have heard, followed by my thoughts.

"The acid will damage the pumping plant, metal pipes and fittings."

• In its undiluted form it will and it will also damage the rubber gaskets in fittings and PVC pipes. There is no reason that the undiluted solution should be in the irrigation system. In its diluted form I don't believe any significant damage will occur. If perhaps it does shorten the life of metal pipes or fittings by a year or two, I would consider it worth it for all the good it does. The system is set up to run only when the main pump is operating, when the main pump cycles off and the jockey pump takes over, the area around the injection point is flushed with clean water.

"It will do nothing to change soil pH."

• Soil tests showed a .1-.3 (different greens) drop in pH in the 0-2 inch depth in one season without using any acidifying fertilizers. The use of this system along with acidifying fertilizers will bring the pH down much faster. I prefer to reduce the pH slowly to help avoid a severe black layer problem. The use of this system has actually reduced the amount of black layer in my greens due to better water infiltration and soil structure.

• My turf is healthier, greener and I use less fertilizer.

• I think this system also lowers the pH of thatch, but I haven't had that tested yet.

"It's too expensive."

• The cost of the system has dropped to approximately \$6,500 and the solution has dropped to \$7.50 per gallon. I use approximately one gallon of solution to every 30,000-35,000 gallons of irrigation water to change the pH from 8.1 to 7.0.

• I rarely use wetting agents anymore and I don't need as much fertilizer. (pHairway has .44 lbs. N per gal.) These savings are used to purchase the pHairway product.

• My spray rigs are filled from the irrigation system and I think having water with a pH of 7 helps with the efficacy of the chemicals.

• With pHairway's water infiltration capabilities I can also over water from time to time to make up for sprinkler coverage deficiencies when labor isn't available (affordable) to hand water.

• I only have to aerate spring and fall now, which is much less disruptive to golf play.

This system isn't for everybody. But more courses are seeing the benefits of using it. If you are experiencing any of the problems that I was, and you think your irrigation water may be the problem, then it may work for you. It should not be thought of as a "cure all", but as another (valuable) tool in the quest of healthy turf.

If you have any questions, or would like more information, feel free to call Tom Reed, Sr. at Tri-Turf (Distributor of the pHairway system) or myself. If you would like to see how my system is set up, I would be glad to show you.

Thanks for taking the time to read this, and good luck this 1998 season.

Thank you,
John

Rules of Golf, *Continued from page 3*

with the ball, another ball may be substituted with no penalty.

At any time the golfer is permitted to lift, clean and place the ball without penalty if the ball in play is embedded by a piece of maintenance equipment [Rule 20-3 (b): Lie of Ball Altered]. If the ball is deemed to be damaged by a mower or any other piece of maintenance equipment, another ball may be substituted (Rule 5-3: Ball Unfit for Play).

Rule 25 concerns Abnormal Ground Conditions (casual water, ground under repair, certain damage to course) which pertain directly to golf course maintenance practices. For example, Decision 25/14 defines a "hole made by a greenkeeper" as ground temporarily disturbed in connection with course maintenance, including holes made in removing turf or a tree stump or laying pipelines. However, Decision 25/15 states that an aeration hole is *not* a hole made by a greenkeeper; therefore relief is not granted. This Decision may be overruled by a local rule (33-8/32) that your club may adopt that allows a player to take relief from aeration holes. A ruling pertaining to aeration plugs can be found in Decision 23/14, which states that although loose soil is not a loose impediment through the green, aeration plugs are considered to be "compacted soil" and thus loose impediments that may be moved away from the ball before making a shot. If you move the ball while moving the plugs, however, you will be issued a one stroke penalty under Rule 18-2 (c) (Ball Moved After Touching Loose Impediment).

How should ruts made by tractors be treated under the rules? Decision 25/16 explains that a rut made by a tractor is not a hole made by a greenkeeper. Deep ruts should be declared as ground under repair by the committee, but shallow indentations made by greenkeeping equipment is not considered ground under repair. A ball in a shallow indentation would have to be played as it lies.

Is there relief from a tree stump under the rules? Decision 25/8 says that unless the stump is marked as is, or is in the pro-

cess of being removed, there is no relief. According to the USGA, a tree stump is nothing more than a short tree.

Decision 25/11 explains the many ramifications of grass clippings. Grass clippings are only ground under repair if they have been piled for removal. A player is entitled to relief if clippings piled for removal interfere with his stance or swing. Grass clippings are, by definition, loose impediments and may be removed by the player, but the penalty stroke mentioned above under Rule 18-2 (c) still applies if you move your ball in the process.

Have your members ever had to invoke the "leaf rule" during the fall and winter months? No such USGA rule actually exists, but the Decisions Book does allow the committee to adopt a local rule to deal with the seasonal problem of leaves. Decision 33-8/31 suggests adoption of a local rule declaring accumulations of leaves through the green to be Ground Under Repair, allowing Rule 25-1 (Abnormal Ground Conditions) to apply.

Finally, what is the ruling if a member of your staff rakes a bunker when the player's ball lies in it, and the raking improves the lie of the ball or the line of play? Decision 13-2/4 states that if the staff member raked the bunker on the instructions or with the sanction of the player, the player would incur a two-stroke or loss-of-hole penalty. If, however, in raking the bunker your staff member accidentally rakes over the ball and partially buries it, Rule 20-3 (b) states the original lie of the ball shall be recreated as nearly as possible and the ball placed in that lie.

The rules of golf and their applications to golf maintenance practices can be a bit complicated - but always interesting. If questions ever arise at your club regarding your operation and the rules of the game, the best and closest source of information on the rules is your local golf association. You can also refer your rules questions directly to the USGA, but keep in mind that the USGA will render a decision only to clubs that conduct their competitions in accordance with the Rules of Golf.

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Continuing Efforts for Continued Success

By Tom Smith, MTF Treasurer, reprinted from MTF Newsnotes

Your Board of Directors has consistently voted to spend Foundation money in a conservative and fiscally responsible way. Those of us currently on the board have a great deal of respect and admiration for all those who have worked to raise money over the years, at golf days and other fund raising events. This heritage is important to recognize and honor so the MTF continues to grow.

The past several years have seen excellent growth in our investments due to the strong performance of the stock market, and this solid interest levels have continued to expand our treasury. While we can be thankful for this, it is important to realize that the need for research dollars continues to expand rapidly. Without a strong investment performance, it would be difficult to fund the current research at the levels requested.

Many of us can look at our current assets and question why our fund raising efforts need to continue at our traditional pace. As your treasurer, I can tell you our efforts must keep this pace and even surpass it. We are at a critical juncture in research funding as a result of new turf faculty positions at MSU. No longer is your Foundation supporting a handful of professors doing applied research. Our team has grown to include eight dedicated turf people and up to three additional faculty spend-

ing part of their time in turf research. No longer are we funding just individual projects, but more and more collaborative efforts involving multiple faculty and resources.

As a Foundation we are now involved in turfgrass breeding and genetics, biotechnology, environmental fate, and innovative construction practices. Our original ten acres of research plots at the Hancock Turfgrass Research Center have expanded, and in 2000 will be over 40 acres. Along with this expansion comes the increase in technical staff and support services required to run a research complex of this magnitude.

So now is not the time to sit back and relax. Now is the time to thank those who came before us; those who worked so hard to get this Foundation where it is today. We can honor those people by working even harder to ensure the continued success of the Foundation. We also owe this to our ourselves as we recognize the positive impact turfgrass research has had on our careers and livelihood. Finally, we owe this effort to those yet to come. Just as our road has been made easier by past actions, we too can help smooth the road to the future. Your commitment to continued fund raising for turfgrass research is more important than ever.



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