

Winter 2013

Green is Beautiful

The Official Publication of Ontario Golf Superintendents' Association

JB

There and Back Again An Educational Journey to the Home of Golf

ALSO INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

How to Hire 'Powered On' People

How Can I Possibly Have Take-All Patch?

Fine Fescues on Golf Greens in Ontario

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



by Rob Gatto
OGSA President

It is a great honour and privilege for me to assume the role of President of the OGSA for 2013.

The OGSA plays a critical role in helping to address ongoing challenges facing the superintendent and the industry.

I commit to providing the leadership the association requires in order to implement strategies and achieve targeted objectives. The OGSA Board has a strong strategic focus, and that is to listen and respond to your needs as members.

For those of you who attended the Canadian International Conference and Trade Show presented in conjunction with the OGSA, its success was evident. The conference was well attended with over 500 delegates and 90 plus exhibitors. The speakers for the educational seminars were well received and the social events were awesome, with no lack of 'refreshments'.

The OGSA is very excited about its 90th anniversary in 2014. We are celebrating this milestone at the OGCM Conference and Trade Show, which will be held in Toronto at the Westin Harbour Castle. Conference Chair, Phil Scully, and the committee, have been working diligently to organize an excellent conference, as well as a special 90th anniversary celebration.

We encourage our members to look at our website and login to view ongoing activities. The website has been created to better serve our members and contribute to their future growth, as well as to increase efficiency in the office, and manage the membership.

The new associates committee has been formed, and at their first meeting, elected Marie Thorne, from Syngenta, as chair. Marie brings a strong work ethic and is well respected in the turf business. We are looking forward to building a stronger network with our associate members through this committee.

Winter 2012 was cancelled, but we have had somewhat of a rebound in 2013, with bone-chilling conditions at times. Of course, Mother Nature throws in a day of spring here and there as a reminder of what is to come.

I hope everyone enjoyed quality time with their families over the winter and are now well rested and ready to take on another golf season.

Good luck in your golf course openings this season! ■



Divot, from Tyandaga, sent in by Gavin Kellogg

SEND US YOUR PHOTOS!

Check out more OGSA members' photos on our updated website: www.ogsa.ca

Green is Beautiful

The Official Publication of Ontario Golf Superintendents' Association

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The Official Publication of Ontario Golf Superintendents' Association

ON THE COVER

Trump International Links
Photo courtesy:
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OGSA is committed to serving its members, advancing their profession, and enriching the quality of golf and its environment.

GREEN IS BEAUTIFUL 2013

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by Justin Parsons,
Engage Agro Corp.

I often find myself drawing comparisons between our industry and the sporting world. Recently, I engaged in a conversation with a colleague regarding what exactly it takes to make a sports franchise successful. When having these discussions, I think we often fall into the trap of thinking short term. Indeed, we say things like, 'they need to trade this player' or 'they should fire the coach' or better yet, we

try and tweak the lines and suggest that this will yield the desired results. In reality, what makes a team successful in the short term, in my opinion, is long term thinking.

Rarely do we talk about a team's philosophy. You know, the doctrine which guides their actions and forms their beliefs, the set of principles that fundamentally shape who they are and how they do things. Quite honestly, I think the reason this is often overlooked is because few teams have one. Or, at least, few teams stick to one for any length of time.

But the teams that do establish a definitive way of doing things, and refuse to abandon their philosophy no matter what external pressures exist, are always the ones that enjoy the most success in the long run. Think about it, the

Pittsburgh Steelers have always believed in playing solid defense and running the football. They now have won more championships than any other team in the NFL. The Detroit Red Wings draft well, develop players and play a sound two-way game. Has any franchise been more consistent than the Red Wings over the last 25 years? In baseball, the Atlanta Braves won 14 straight division titles from 1991 to 2005. This is an unprecedented run of success and it was achieved by adopting a simple philosophy of valuing the scouting process and developing pitchers.

Once you have your philosophy, it makes it so much easier to conduct business. You know what your needs are, you know how you want to coach, and players know exactly what is expected of them. I think the same can be said of successful business units and turf maintenance crews. All of us tend to thrive when we know exactly what the expectations are and how we intend to achieve them.

As you assemble your squads for 2013, please take time to read James Cronk's article on hiring. It just may help you as you feel your way through this process. Successful hiring begins and ends with the person asking the questions, not the other way around. It might be best to consider the long term strategy when making this short term decision. After all, when you win and when you lose with the same approach every day, you tend to win...more often than not. ■

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WHAT'S NEW

by Sally Ross, OGSA Executive Manager

2013/2014

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

We will soon be working on the new membership directory. Please ensure that you update your information on your website member profile, as the directory will be created from this data.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR UPCOMING 2013 OGSA Tournament & Events

Pro/Super Challenge

Oviinbyrd Golf Club
Foots Bay, Ontario
Wednesday, June 5, 2013

Presidents' Day

Weston Golf & Country Club
Toronto, Ontario
Monday, July 15, 2013

OGSA ASSOCIATES COMMITTEE

This committee has been formed and is already hard at work. The committee appointed Marie Thorne from Syngenta as chair. For updates please go to our website and click on the "associate liaison" tab.

CONFERENCE 2014 AND 90TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

We are starting to work on Conference 2014. Our keynote speaker will be James Duthie, host of the award-winning NHL on TSN. The Conference will include a special 90th Anniversary event, celebrating the formation of the first superintendent run association in North America. We

will be going back to the "roaring 20's". We would like to ask all courses with old pictures from the early 1900's onwards, to please send a digital copy into the office (manager@ogsa.ca). We would like to include your pictures in our commemorative slideshow and will give your club credit for submitting the picture.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

OGSA held their annual general meeting recently at the CITCTS in Toronto. The Board says farewell to Chris Andrejicka after 12 years of dedicated service and welcomes Jason Boyce from Smuggler's Glen G.C. Welcome Jason! ■

FREE Golf Greens Keeper Program

GTTI is offering a free program to individuals seeking skills and certifications necessary to pursue opportunities as a golf course greens keeper.

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GTTI is a not-for-profit organization and programs are coordinated through their training facility in Sutton.

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Tel: 905-722-6300

Email: inquiry@gtti.ca

www.gtti.ca

Training begins March 25, 2013.
Space is limited.

Welcome to Our New Members

Andre Aymar..... Class C
Islington Golf Club
Ross Baron..... Class S
University of Guelph
Robert Bruce..... Class F
Rosedale Golf Club
Jason Bush..... Class F
Brampton Golf Club
Jeremy Davison..... Class S
University of Guelph
Steve Dermott..... Class F
The Rock Golf Club
Jonathan Fleming..... Class C
Golf Club at Lora Bay
Zarko Frkovic..... Class D
London Golfland
Vince Gagnier..... Class D
Rochester Place Golf Club
Jayson Griffiths..... Class Supt
London Hunt & Country Club

Adam Haines..... Class S
University of Guelph
Tom Jenkins..... Class Supt
Western Trent Golf Club
Douglas Kennedy..... Class C
Seven Lakes Champ. Golf
Philippe Losier..... Class S
University of Guelph
Ryan McCartney..... Class F
Mad River Golf Club
Mike McKenna..... Class C
Oviinbyrd Golf Club
Doug Moir..... Class F
Glen Abbey Golf Club
Reed Norman..... Class C
Elmira Golf Club
Dan North..... Class C
Angus Glen Golf Club
Chad Oberle..... Class S
University of Guelph

Mike Ovell..... Class C
Rocky Crest Golf Club
Matthew Read..... Class C
Silver Lakes Golf & Country Club
Morgan Robins..... Class S
University of Guelph
Craig Senior..... Class C
Lakeview Golf Course
Scott Sibbilen..... Class S
University of Guelph
Steve Spiers..... Class C
Glen Abbey Golf Club
Alexander Vasiloff..... Class F
Eagles Nest Golf Club
Joshua Vlasic..... Class S
University of Guelph
Ben Zambiasi..... Class F
King's Forest Golf Club
Ron LaPointe..... Class E
Ron's Lawns



How to Hire 'Powered On' People!

by James Cronk, Cronk Group

I used to have this employee who worked for me and his name was 'Rocket'. That wasn't his real name of course, what parent would be that cruel? Rocket was his nickname. The reason he was called Rocket was clearly evident to anyone who met him. If you said, "Rocket, could you please go to the cart storage area and..." He would, you guessed it, take off like a rocket. In fact, the main challenge with Rocket is that you often didn't get to finish your sentence. He would instead get to cart storage, have no idea why he was there, and then come back 15 minutes later asking, "what did you want again?"

Rocket's inability to slow down his processing was a minor flaw in a guy that was exceptionally memorable. If you visited our golf course and you were lucky enough to have Rocket as your starter or your marshal, you were in for a great experience.

Far too often we overlook the value of an employee like Rocket. One year I was on the other side of the country at a consumer golf show promoting our facility. Our booth had this large photo of our signature hole spanning the entire booth space. We believed, like 100 per cent of the other courses who were there trying to attract golfers, that once people saw our 'award-winning' and 'championship' golf course they would choose us. So, as I was standing in front of our awesome (and very expensive) photo, two business guys walked by. One guy said to the other, 'Hey, I played there,

I love that place.' The guy then walked up to me and said, "do you work there?" To which I replied, "yes" and he said, "do you know Rocket? That guy is awesome. When I played there a couple of years ago he was our starter." Then he turns to his buddy and says, "this Rocket guy is hilarious. I got to tell you he was the best starter I have ever seen in my life. Give my regards to Rocket for me."

You know what struck me most about that incident (besides the fact that I should have used a larger-than-life picture of Rocket instead of Hole #2), was the fact the guy used the words 'couple of years ago'. This told me that he was reflecting on a five minute moment with one of our employees, at a golf course 2,000 miles away from his home course, that had happened at least 16 months before.

Now that is memorable!

Rocket was what I call a 'powered on' employee! He is what I wanted all other employees to aspire to be (except for the forgetful part).

So how do we find the Rockets of the world?

If you are like most facilities, each spring you need to hire seasonal staff to fill all types of positions, from dishwashers to maintenance crew members to assistant professionals.

If you are like most managers, then the thought of going through the hiring process is about as enjoyable as attending an education seminar on HR best practices (get it?). But as difficult as human resources can be, and no matter what position you are hiring for, the hard

lessons we learn from trial and error tells us that if we hire better people, then our daily lives, the satisfaction of our customers and our bottom line will be better off.

In my experience with talking to owners and managers all over North America, the hiring process can fail due to any, or all, of the following three factors:

1. Lack of good people to choose from
2. Lack of interview preparation
3. Lack of skill in identifying good people

So, in an effort to simplify this dastardly and constantly challenging process, here are some suggestions that may help you find more 'powered on' employees instead of fizzled out duds.

Be a Preferred Employer

If your current staff aren't bringing in their friends, then that has to tell you something. A great work environment, fair compensation, positive leaders and extras such as a structured rewards and recognition program or golf benefits and staff meals will set you apart from working at the local plant. We need to have a staff attraction plan, just like we have a marketing plan for our customers. Every one of your current employees should be able to answer the question, "what do you like about working at ABC golf club?" If your current staff don't love working at your facility, how can you expect to attract quality people? Unfortunately, I often hear managers complain about the quality of their staff, but the fact is that

the quality of their staff often reflects the quality of their facility as a place to work. The reason businesses are often recognized as best employers is because they attract the best employees.

Be Prepared

How often do we leave the hiring process to a department head or a supervisor that is not skilled in hiring? How often do we walk into an interview with just our cell phone? How often are we hiring people for a job that doesn't have a written job description or clear job standards? Our interview process should be organized, structured and professional. A private meeting room, their resume, a list of questions written on a piece of paper, a glass of water and most importantly, us presenting a positive experience for the interviewee. We are trying to attract the best, so we need to present ourselves like we are meeting our in-laws for the first time. Here are some sample questions that will give you valuable information about a candidate; (1) Why do you want to work here? (2) Tell me about a time when you have successfully worked with a team? (3) If you don't get this job, what other jobs will you pursue? (4) If I asked your former boss(es) what areas you could improve on, what would they say? (5) What can you add to what we have already asked you that should make us want to hire you?

Be Picky

One of my favorite responses to the question, "why do you want to work here" is the answer, "because I live close" (or worse, "because I want to play free golf"). The reason some stay in bad relationships is because they don't have options, and it's no different when it comes to finding staff. Facilities that have great staff often implement a few key strategies. First, they are always hiring. They tell everyone that every second Monday they are doing interviews between 3 pm and 5 pm. Second, the only people that do the hiring are managers that have successfully hired in the past. For example, golf professionals join the superintendent to interview potential course crew employees. Most certainly the superintendent gets the final say, but there is nothing wrong with, and, in fact, it's a greater benefit, in having managers of other departments involved in the process. Finally, courses that hire

Marcus Buckingham, in his excellent book, *First Break All the Rules*, identifies the 12 most important questions that will attract, focus, and keep talented employees. If your employees answer 'YES' to each of these questions, then congratulations, you are a 'powered on' manager!

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the equipment and materials I need to do my job?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday?
4. In the last seven days, have I received praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who cares about my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission of my company make me feel that my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing good work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone talked to me about my progress?
12. This past year, have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

good staff are usually clear about what their facility 'brand' is and mostly, what type of people they need to enhance that 'brand'.

For many clubs, the hiring process goes like this: Susie quits. We ask around for names or post a job. Some strangers show up. If we like them, we hire them. If we don't like them, we still hire them because we don't have an option. It's not too often that we have three great candidates for one position, and there is no doubt that your location, your marketplace and economical factors will play a significant role in hiring seasonal staff. If the Tim Horton's in your neighborhood is paying \$25 an hour, you better throw one heck of a great staff party. But even if that's the case, make it a priority to constantly assess your current staff, improve your working environment and improve the team. Your customers, your bank and your therapist will thank you for it! ■

Planning for spring?



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Canadian International Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show Conference 2013 Wrap Up

by Sally Ross, OGSA Executive Manager

This past January, the OGSA and CGSA jointly hosted the Canadian International Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show 2013 at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel. The



Performing for the Monday night party were The Strumbellas, left to right: Isabel Ritchie (violin), Darryl James (bass), Jeremy Drury (drums), Simon Ward (vocals), Jon Hembrey (guitar), David Ritter (keyboard).

conference was well attended and Ontario was extremely well represented.

The Monday Night Party was a great hit with delegates, featuring some of the most talented members and industry representatives jamming and performing on stage at the Steam

Whistle Brewery.

Keynote speaker Sean Foley provided insight into the world of coaching PGA Tour professionals, and also had a few interesting stories.

Education sessions were well received as was the trade show.

The closing banquet introduced those in attendance to the 2013, CGSA and OGSA Boards and new executives, and the evening wrapped up with the sidesplitting humour of Dave Hemstad.



Choya Fraser, Superintendent, Midland G&CC, jammed on the drums during the Monday night party at Steam Whistle Brewery.

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Awards Luncheon

OGSA Awards were presented at a luncheon in conjunction with the CGSA Awards; an event highlight was the induction of Gord Witteveen into the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame.

Past OGSA (1978) and CGSA President, Pelino Scenna, was awarded the CGSA's John B. Steele Award. The Scenna family, including Pelino's wife Diane, sons Paul (OGSA Past President 2005) from Beacon Hall Golf Club and his wife Kelly, and Mark from Direct Solutions (a division of Agrium) and his wife Jennifer were also in attendance. Pelino's grandchildren, daughters of Paul and Kelly, Martina and Julia were also present to see him receive his award.

CGSA's "Future Superintendent of the Year" is Cam Shaw. Cam is the Second Assistant at Burlington Golf & Country Club. He is also an OGSA member, *Green is Beautiful* editorial committee member, past OGSA Turfgrass Award Winner and past University of Guelph Turf Club President.

OGSA acknowledged two 50 year members this past year, Bernard MacDonald and Douglas Suter, who were unable to attend, but will be presented with a gold watch at a later date.

25 year members, Marc Brooks AGS, MS, CGCS from Stone Tree G&FC and Legacy Ridge GC and Al Schwemler from Toronto Golf Club were in attendance to accept their plaques, while David Cours (Ambassador GC), Alex Dolensky (Huntsville Downs G&CC), Marlon Gieseler AGS (Brooklea G&CC), Colin Nisbet AGS (Westview GC), and Tim Webb AGS (Sunningdale G&CC) were also acknowledged as 25 year members.

Scholarships for 2012 were presented, with Kyle Piccolo, son of Mark Piccolo from Galt Country Club (Past President of OGSA in 1983), receiving the Heritage Award. Kyle is studying biochemistry in the Honours Science program at University of Waterloo.

The Turfgrass Education award recognizes both scholastic achievement, as well as potential leadership in the field of turfgrass management and students who have career goals that display dedication to our industry can apply. Applicants must meet the high academic standards set by the judges. This year's award was presented to Joshua Vasic from the University of Guelph.



Marc Brooks, Superintendent at Stone Tree G&FC and Legacy Ridge GC receives his award from Doug Breen



Al Schwemler, Superintendent at Toronto GC receives his award from Doug Breen



Kyle Piccolo, son of Mark Piccolo, Superintendent at Galt CC, receives his award from Doug Breen



Joshua Vasic, University of Guelph receives his award from Doug Breen

...continued on page 12

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Matt Legg, Assistant Superintendent at Weston G&CC receives his award from Doug Breen



Dan McAllister, Second Assistant Superintendent at Donalda Club receives his award from Doug Breen

The Hugh Kirkpatrick Bursary (for assistant superintendent members of OGSA) was split into two awards, with first place going to Matt Legg, from Weston G&CC, and second place going to Dan McAllister from Donalda Club. Presenter Doug Breen acknowledged the support of Bill Searle from NGF Golf (a division of Northgate Farms) for holding his fundraising tournament and adding to our OGSA contribution in order to present a total of over \$6,000.00 to be used for educational purposes by these two exceptional assistants.

Rod Speake, OGSA Director and a member of the *Green is Beautiful* editorial committee, presented the Barry Endicott Article of the Year Award to Kevin Kobzan from Granite Golf Club for his feature article from the Fall 2012 issue titled, "The Balancing Act of Tournament Play – Turf Management vs. Player Expectations".



Kevin Kobzan, Granite GC receives his award from Rod Speake

Kevin was in attendance to accept his award and was also thanked for his ongoing contributions to the magazine.

Photo of the Year was awarded to Tracy Fowler, from Hamilton G&CC, for her picture depicting the 17th fairway being mowed at Hamilton G&CC during preparation for the RBC Canadian Open. The photo can be found on page 9 of the Summer 2012 issue. Tracy could not attend, but will be presented with her award at a later date.



2013 Board of Directors, left to right: Rob Gatto, Mark Prieur, Rod Speake, John McLinden, David Kuypers, Phil Scully, Cory Janzen, Doug Breen, Chad Vibert, Jason Boyce, Scott White.

OGSA Annual General Meeting

The OGSA Annual General Meeting was held during the conference, and special guests, Rhett Evans (CEO) and Pat Finlen (incoming President) from the GCSAA were in attendance. The meeting included the election of the OGSA 2013 Board of Directors. Rob Gatto takes over the reins as President, with Phil Scully as Vice President and John McLinden as Secretary/Treasurer. Doug Breen remains on the Board as Immediate Past President, and a fond farewell took place for Chris Andrejicka, who has served the association as a Board Member for 12 years. Thank you Chris! The Board welcomes Jason Boyce from Smugglers Glen G & CC in Gananoque, ON, along with Directors Mark Prieur, Chad Vibert, Scott White, Rob Speake, David Kuypers and Cory Janzen, who were elected for another one year term. We encourage those of you who were unable to attend the AGM to review the many activities of the association in the annual report and the financial results for 2012 in the audited financial statement which can be found at www.ogsa.ca, under the "association reports" tab. ■

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 Certified Golf Irrigation Auditor
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Phil Brown

Summit Golf and Country Club

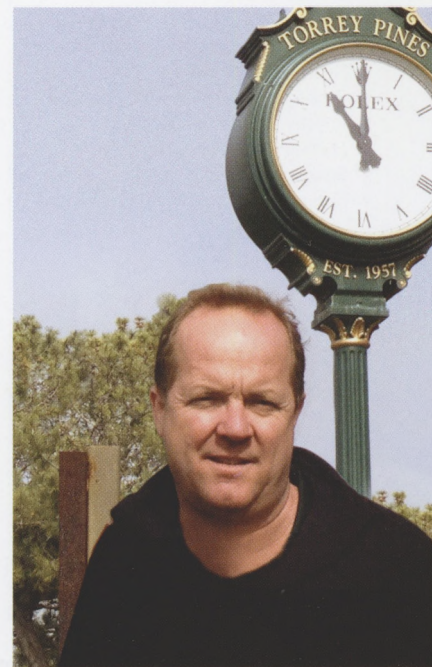
by Paul Grotier, Direct Solutions
– A Division of AAT

Having just celebrated its 100th anniversary, Summit Golf and Country Club, located in Richmond Hill, Ontario, is well positioned for continued future success. “The Club has been very proactive in ensuring the continued influx of members,” says golf course superintendent Phil Brown. Despite the recent economic slowdown, Summit has been able to attract approximately 250 new members in the last few years. No small feat considering the market correction the golf industry is now experiencing.

Brown credits recent renovations as a contributing factor for drawing new members. Renovations include the complete rebuild of all course tee decks, as well as the 1st and 9th holes, which includes the relocation

of tee decks, leveling of the fairway and moving the Pro Shop closer to the Club House. Added to the list, was the reopening of the 7th hole. Running parallel to Bayview Avenue, the hole was decommissioned by the membership to avoid possible liability issues caused by errant golf shots. “One of Summit’s assets is having 19 holes,” says Brown. “This not only provides the flexibility to open or close newly constructed holes (greens) depending upon stress levels, but it also bought us time to work on realigning the 7th hole and will allow us to renovate other holes while keeping 18 playable. That being said, managing membership expectation throughout the process has been the most important aspect of all of the changes.”

Brown’s career in the golf industry started in Etobicoke as a junior member at Markland Woods and caddying on occasion. “I was an old



high school friend of Ken Siems, who happened to be Bob Heron’s assistant at Mississauga Golf and Country Club and was encouraged to take a position on their greens crew.” It was a natural fit for Brown, who was used to the rigors of physical labour having worked summers on his uncle’s dairy farm as a young teen. With the guidance of Siems and Heron, he graduated from Penn State University in 1988.

Upon graduation, Brown accepted the assistant superintendent’s position at St. George’s Golf and Country Club under the leadership of Superintendent John Gall. After four years of plying his trade as an assistant, an opportunity presented itself in London, Ontario. “Much of my wife’s family is from the London area, so it was an easy decision to relocate to take on a superintendent’s position and gain incredibly valuable grow-in experience at Forest City National, all the while being close to family.”

...continued on page 14

IN THE HOT SEAT

Q – Favourite major
A – The Masters

Q – Favourite piece of
turf equipment

A – Modern electronic irrigation

Q – Favourite golf course designer?
A – Pete Dye... and Doug Carrick of course!

Q – Ultimate foursome
A – Rory, Tiger and Freddy

Q – Lowest round and where
A – 75 at Summit Golf & Country Club

Q – Favourite movie
A – *Dumb and Dumber!*

Q – Favourite meal
A – Beef tenderloin on the BBQ

Q – Favourite course played
outside of Canada?
A – Pine Valley Golf Club

Q – Rate your home lawn on a scale
of one to ten (1 worst, 10 best)
A – Six, but my wife says three

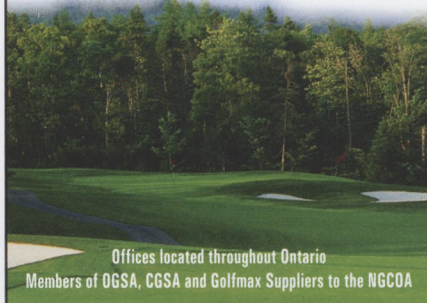
Q – What would you envision
yourself doing if you weren’t
working in the turf business
A – Bush Pilot or rally car driver

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...continued from page 13

The golf club hosted the Ontario Open in both 1994 and 1995, just one year after grow-in was complete! It wasn't much later that Summit was on the lookout for an experienced superintendent. That was 17 years ago now, as Phil accepted the job in 1996.

"The superintendent's job description has changed so much over the years," says Brown. "Agronomic knowledge is no longer the most important skill set required to do the job... but you had better have it! It is now easily an equal balance between people skills, administrative duties including health and safety requirements, water taking permits, Audubon philosophy, and, most recently, IPM scouting and reporting. All of which, demand added countless hours of managerial consideration and have obvious implications for superintendents' budgets. Add to that the extreme nature of recent weather conditions...things have definitely

changed! We're certainly thankful for modern equipment and improved turf products over the years!"

Moving forward at Summit, the focus of the agronomic plan is twofold: firstly, Brown would like to see a reduction in the number of outside events and the establishment of a weekly maintenance day. This would provide both downtime for the golf course and allow his crew to perform the needed cultural programs to ensure the desired level of conditioning expected by the membership. Secondly, the focus will be on enjoying the recent course enhancements. "There is construction fatigue," says Brown. It has been a busy few years and it's time the membership enjoys the fruits of the labour. This isn't to say that making improvements will come to a halt." Brown says enthusiastically, "there's never an end to making great courses even better both for existing and future members!" ■



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Tel: 705-646-1060

nbell@muskokahighlands.com

www.muskokahighlands.com

Golf Course Superintendent:
Nic Bell

Assistant Superintendent:
Phil Crighton

Equipment Manager:
Jamie Coutts

Hole #18

Photo courtesy: Nic Bell

COURSE PROFILE

About the Course

Muskoka Highlands Golf Links is Muskoka's only "Links Style" golf course owned and operated by the MacKay family since 1993. One of Ontario's few Dog Friendly golf courses.

Established: 1993 (9 Holes), 2000 (18 Holes)

Original Architect: Ted George

Type of Club: Semi-Private

Number of Holes: 18

Number of Rounds Annually: 18,000

Practice Facility: Full driving range, along with an indoor simulator, chipping bays and putting green.

Biggest Maintenance Challenge

Limited access to water allows us to only irrigate the greens and tees. Bluegrass fairways and rough only receive water from Mother Nature and typically go dormant in the summer.

A CLOSER LOOK

What You Need to Know

Predominant Grass Type:

70/30 Bentgrass – Poa mixture

Predominant Soil Type: Heavy Clay

Type of Greens: California

Course Length: Gold to Purple: 6,024 – 3,745 yards

Size of Property: 155 Acres

Size of Greens: 3 acres

Size of Tees: 2 acres

Size of Fairways: 38 acres

There and Back Again

An Educational Journey to the Home of Golf

*Written by Cam Shaw, Second Assistant,
Burlington Golf & Country Club*

It has been four months now since I returned from my trip to the UK, and the taste of freshly steamed haggis is still fresh on my breath (you think I'm kidding). Even more potent are the memories of the people, places and experiences that made up this once in a life time opportunity. I set sail for Scotland in October of last year after being awarded the Toro Future Superintendent of the Year Award from the CGSA. I remember thinking that six weeks would leave me plenty of time to experience all the great things that Scotland and Ireland have to offer. However, one soon discovers that narrow roads, chatty people, enchanting pubs and an outdated map from 1985 make for sluggish wanderlusting. For me, slow travel has never been a curse, just a blessing which allows a traveller to savour each moment a little longer.

My first week was spent working at the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship at Kingsbarns, just outside of the St. Andrews. I arrived two days before the other volunteers and was afforded my first few afternoons off to get acquainted, rent a car, and settle in. But settle in I did not, for on the very first evening of my arrival was none other than the final day of the Ryder Cup. Without hesitation I found my way to town, shacked up in the famous Dunvegan pub, and watched one of the most infamous comebacks in all of sport. Next to being in the crowds swarming the 18th green at Medinah, I can't think of a more awesome and authentic place to be during that moment. We were all crammed in that little pub like sardines. Shoulder to shoulder, screaming, chanting, spilling, heckling and dancing. I had only been in this country a day and I was already arm in arm with 30 strangers whom I felt I had known for years.

From the moment I arrived in Edinburgh, the weather was outstanding. The Dunhill had the best playing conditions since anyone could remember. The tournament made a perfect venue for me to begin my journey because turfies from all over Europe had come to volunteer. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet people, chat about new ideas, and dodge about each other's outrageous native accents. Innes Knight, the Head Greenkeeper, had arranged for me and four other volunteers to stay in a stone cottage on the edge of St. Andrews. During the tournament, mornings were filled with hard work, bacon rolls and stories of the previous night. Midday breaks were used to catch up on sleep and visit nearby golf courses such as Carnoustie, Fairmont St. Andrews Bay or Craill Golfing Society. In the afternoons, focus was put on filling divots and brushing sand off the revetted bunker faces. When work was done, we used our remaining time and energy to muster up some food, and taxi into town to repeat the shenanigans of the previous evening. It was bittersweet when the tournament came to a close, but I was looking forward to my first day off and my next stop on this dreamlike trip.

Left: Teeing off at St Andrews Castle Course. Top insets: Rain shelter at Royal Portrush; Lighthouse at Turnberry, Ailsa Course. Opposite page, left to right: Renovating revetted bunkers on the Old Course; Royal Portrush sign; Swilcan Bridge on the 18th hole at St Andrews Links Old Course.



My second week was to be spent exploring the turf program at Elmwood College in the small town of Cupar. I was looking forward to sitting in on several classes as well as getting the chance to meet with all the turfies-to-be. However, due to a slight error in my itinerary, the school was on a break during my scheduled stop. Oddly enough, in some serendipitous moment that trips such as these often present, I bumped into Gordon Nimmo, a turfgrass teacher on his way to check up on a student involved in a work placement program. He asked if I wanted to tag along, and of course I agreed. I never inquired where we were going, but after an hour of driving and a few good stories, we pulled up to Muirfield and I almost fell out of my seat. As we rolled through the gates I realized that in some strange and fortuitously undesigned effort, I had just gained access to the most private and exclusive club in all of Scotland. As Gordon met with the student, I toured the shop, met with a few employees and walked 4 or 5 holes. A small tournament was taking place that afternoon so we left in a hurry, but not before I got a few pictures and created a lasting memory. On our way home, Gordon offered to take me to several other courses in the area. Over the rest of the week, we visited Gullane, Luffness, and Musselborough Golf Club (the oldest golf course in the world). We also stopped into a unique club called Kingarock which is a not-for-profit club run by the Scottish National Trust. Here you can play a 9-hole course which is maintained exactly as it would have been in the early 1900's. You are also required to play with traditional hickory shaft clubs and a gutty golf ball. What's more, it only costs 30 pounds and you get a shot of port and some corn bread to munch on after the round. As the week closed out, I took Gordon out for a beer to thank him for all his time and generous hospitality. Could you believe it, after all he had done for me, he still insisted on paying because I was a guest in his country! That evening I returned back to my flat in St Andrews. Elmwood College had arranged for me to stay in their guest suite which rests on the 18th hole of the Old Course. Over a warm cup of tea and a packed bag I stared out the window and wondered how my next stop in Ireland could possibly be as good as my last two weeks.

The original plan for Ireland was to fly from Edinburgh to Dublin. However, I figured if I extended my car rental and took a ferry I would be able to see and do a little more. So instead, my Irish adventure started in Belfast, on the north east coast

of Northern Ireland where the ferry dumped me off. It was a short drive south to Newcastle where I had booked a bed and breakfast for the night. I chose Newcastle for one reason and one reason only; Royal County Down. I arrived just before sunset and finished my day with a dreamlike walk through all 18 holes. The bunkers there look as though they have never been touched by man. Deep as craters and lined with heather and thick fescues they truly create an obstacle that is rustic in beauty, yet brutally penal. Unfortunately, a great walk was all I had time for, because the next morning I was on my way south to Port Marnock to meet with Fintan Brennan. Fintan, the head greenkeeper of Port Marnock Links Resort, was awarded the British Future Superintendent of the Year back in the day and had invited me to his course to learn the ways of the Irish turfies. On my first day, Fintan took me on a walk through his course chatting about all the agronomic practices they employ, as well as all the quirks that he deals with on a regular basis. Later, he stuck a shovel in my hand and alongside his team, taught me how to build my first revetted bunker – an experience I will never forget.. With two days left in Ireland I had only one place left to see. In record time, I flew north to see the legendary Dunluce links of Royal Portrush. 18 holes of golf, the howling wind in my face, a few glasses of Irish whiskey and quiet evening on the Atlantic Ocean was a most excellent way to finish off my third week.

Just passed the halfway point, my next stop had me back in Scotland and headed north through the highlands. Chris Haspell and his crew would be my next hosts at Castle Stuart. Built in early 2000, this Gil Hanse design was intended to host the Scottish Open only five years after its construction was complete. The goal was to create a new course which invoked an almost ancient feel, true to the traditional links courses of the UK. Castle Stuart was Chris' 14th grow-in/construction, and I was surprised to discover that he was also his own mechanic. We talked about some of the difficulties and obstacles they encountered during the first two years of establishment, as well as some of the experiences he had working alongside Hanse in the construction and shaping phases. My first two days of work were spent mowing fairways and cutting greens. It proved quite difficult because a thick fog rolled in each morning and did not lift until the late afternoon.

...continued on page 18





Above, left to right: Using the Graden at Turnberry, Ailsa Course; Trump International Links

...continued from page 17

At Chris' suggestion, I took the next few days off to see some other courses in the area. The most memorable of which was Tom Morris' Royal Dornoch. As my stay in Inverness came to an end, I decided I would drive east and head down through the Scotch Distillery Trail and stay a night in Aberdeen. The last two remaining days of my fourth week were spent visiting Royal Aberdeen as well as the brand new Trump International Links.

Week five was back to St Andrews for a stint at the Old Course. I had been patiently waiting for this moment, and believe me, it did not disappoint! The maintenance facility at St. Andrews is something to behold. The compound itself is massive and houses at least four of every piece of equipment known to the turf industry. I was awestruck. Head Greenkeeper, Gordon McKie, wasted no time in immersing me in the ongoing bunker renovation project. Believe me when I say, I was the only guy in the shop that was excited to hear I was spending the next four days peeling off and stacking up sod. The novelty never wore off, and I think my positive attitude had rubbed off on the guys because it didn't take them long to start laughing and joking around. Each day after work I made an effort to get out and walk one of the seven courses that make up the St Andrews Links Trust—including a jaunt up the newest Castle Course located five minutes out of town. It goes without saying that most walks seemed to end at a pub where you were sure to meet one or two turfies for a pint and a few laughs. On my last day, Gordon Moir, the Director of Golf for the entire St Andrews Trust Operation, had organized a round of golf for me and two other guests of his. As with many of the experiences on this journey, I could never hope to fully describe this experience. There wasn't a single moment where I didn't remind myself, "yes, this *is* actually happening!" Highlights of the round included a piped drive on the first tee (applauded by about 80 spectators), a quadruple bogey on the Road Hole, and a drained 15 foot birdie putt on the 18th hole (better known as Tom Morris). And just as quick as my fifth week had come, it ended, but not without with a pleasant and lasting memory.

The trip was to culminate at Turnberry on the West coast of Scotland. Euan Grant, the course and property manager, was also a previous winner of the British Future Superintendent of the Year Award. His team was wonderfully hospitable and I spent the first few days touring the two courses (The Ailsa, and the Kintyre) with his Assistants, chatting about the maintenance practices and the experience of hosting the British Open in 2009. As soon as I

arrived, we began using a Graden on the greens, filling the slits with dry sand to promote better surface drainage and overall firmness. Euan called it "an aggressive, yet necessary measure" to battle the rate at which organic matter builds up on bentgrass greens in coastal climates. On my last day in Turnberry, Euan offered to take me north to walk the fairways of Royal Troon together. It was a great chance for us to chat about the differences in our industries, our career paths, and some of the struggles he faces balancing his professional and personal life (ie. his family). Lucky me, when we returned to Turnberry, Euan had arranged a round of golf. The coastal winds, long carries, well placed bunkers and dramatically undulating fairways make the Ailsa course an absolute beast! I didn't want the round to end. I knew that once my ball made that ubiquitous sound as it fell in the cup at the 18th that my trip was officially over. But all good things must come to an end and believe it or not, I was starting to feel a little homesick. So after a firm hand shake and a million thank yous to Euan, I tipped my cap to the infamous Turnberry lighthouse and retired to my room where I guzzled down my last Guinness and shut 'er down for the night. It was a long drive back to Edinburgh, and an even longer flight back home. Flipping through my phone's photo album and reminiscing about all the great moments I had lived during my trip, you can be sure I had an intense grin on my face for the entire ride back to Toronto.

Where does one begin in order to give thanks for an adventure such as this? Of course, to all my hosts, I extend the most sincere and warm gratitude for all the wonderfully hospitable gestures I received during my stay. I would also like to thank all the Greenkeepers who took time out of their busy fall schedules to accommodate me and my inquisitive nature for a week. It was such an incredible honour to have been chosen by Toro and the CGSA amongst the handful of Canadian turf students who I am sure are just as worthy as I am for an award such as this. I am still beside myself at the thought that an award of this nature is available to young aspiring turf managers who have not made their mark on the world yet. I am truly fortunate to have chosen to build a career within an industry in which our business partners, regional, provincial as well as national associations stand by the next generation of individuals who will one day take the industry to the next level. I walk from this experience with new knowledge, a much stronger international network, and an enlightened outlook on the true roots of the sport that drives our industry.

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Greater Than Or Equal To.

Is There a Role for Fine Fescues on Golf Greens in Ontario?

In Scandinavia there is even more pressure to have low input golf courses than there is here in Ontario. When I say "low input" I mean low water input, low nutrient input, low pesticide input and maintenance practices that have low energy consumption. Due to this pressure, the Scandinavian Turfgrass and Environmental Research Foundation (STERF) have a research project lead by Trygve S. Aamlid, Bioforsk Turfgrass Research Group, Norway and co-investigators Anne Mette Dahl Jensen, University of Copenhagen; Per Rasmussen, Smørem Golf Centre; Agnar Kvalbein, Bioforsk Turfgrass Research Group investigating the use of red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) for golf course putting greens. This is not such a far stretch for them as it may be for us in Ontario. Currently, their golf greens are comprised of a mixture of red fescue and creeping bentgrass with the obligatory annual bluegrass as an invasive species.

What is of particular interest with this research project is the methodology. Before they outlined what the research project would focus on, they held a greenkeeper workshop. In October 2012, more than twenty greenkeepers from eight countries along with researchers and consultants from Norway, Denmark, Sweden and the UK, gathered together for a workshop in Copenhagen, Denmark. The aim was to collect and share experiences and challenges concerning red fescue management as part of the research project on red fescue

greens. With this information and recent turf grass research results in the Nordic countries, they outlined a research proposal that would address the needs of greenkeepers and provide practical solutions to the challenges of managing red fescue on golf course greens. They used the information that was gathered at the workshop and the survey to come up with recommendations for red fescue management that was put into a guidance document that is currently available for Scandinavian greenkeepers.

The research project is a four year endeavour which aims to provide information that is of practical benefit and ready for use. The research will be conducted at the Bioforsk Turfgrass Research Centre in Norway and also at Smørem Golf Centre in Copenhagen, Denmark. Their study will focus on getting empirical data on irrigation and fertility management of red fescue, a study of mowing height, frequency and rolling, and evaluation of organic amendments as topdressing.

Why is this research relevant to us? We in Canada are dominated by research that is conducted in the United States and products and species that are developed and thrive there. Of course, we do have our own turf research community in Ontario, but it is small compared to the U.S. In many ways, our climate and legislative restrictions may have more in common with Nordic countries than with the U.S. and we could certainly gain from their experience and research.

Some of the questions that they hope to answer with this research project are:

- Why grow red fescue?
- What are the best management practices for establishing red fescue?
- What are the best management practices for maintenance of red fescue?
- What are the major challenges when maintaining red fescue?

Below is a summary of some of the information that came out of the workshop and a greenkeeper survey on red fescue management guidelines that can be found on the STERF web site.

Why Red Fescue?

Red fescue requires very little water, very little fertilizer and few pesticides. It has good resistance to both diseases and winter injury. It ranks higher than creeping bentgrass for its ability to withstand winters in Nordic turf variety test plots. If it is attacked by snow mould, it only attacks the leaves and rarely causes damage to the crowns.

It has a slow growth rate so it requires less frequent mowing (less than daily) and its fine leaf texture forms an excellent putting surface. If red fescue is grown with low inputs, it does not form excessive thatch, which means there is very little need for mechanical thatch control, such as aeration and verticutting. Even though it is reputed to be shade tolerant, Nordic greenkeepers feel that it needs open, windy conditions to form a sward that will outcompete annual bluegrass.

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Establishing Red Fescue Greens

The experience in Nordic countries is that red fescue greens require good internal drainage. The addition of compost to the rootzone is beneficial. Even though established red fescue requires very little fertility, it will require high fertility during establishment (double the rates used once established). This will greatly help the grass outcompete weeds and will shorten the time to establishment. A high seeding rate is necessary (250 kg/ha) because it does not have the ability to spread laterally.

Irrigation

The idea is to keep red fescue greens on the dry side. This grass species has deep roots and can survive on very little water. Keeping the greens dry also helps control any annual bluegrass that may be present. One downside of keeping the greens dry is localized dry spots and some greenkeepers resort to using wetting agents to control them.

Fertility

Red fescue needs very little in the way of fertilizers after establishment. From the greenkeeper survey, the average nitrogen (N) rate was 60 kg/ha of N per season. This low rate of N is very important to keep the thatch to a minimum and to keep out the high N loving species such as annual bluegrass and creeping bentgrass.

Mowing and Rolling

Greenkeepers were able to maintain the desired green speeds with a mowing height of 5mm on average. As I mentioned earlier in the article, they did not mow daily. The mowing schedule was to cut two days in a row and roll the third day. On the days where the greens were not mowed, it was important to either roll the greens or practice some other form of dew removal for disease control.

Pest Control

Red fescue is rarely killed by diseases, especially when compared to creeping bentgrass or annual bluegrass. For that reason, very little fungicide is used on red fescue greens. On average, of the greenkeepers surveyed, they used

0.7 applications of fungicides per year. Weed invasion can be a problem on red fescue fairways however, especially if a low amount of nitrogen is used. If the N rates are increased slightly, this helps with weed invasion. The only insect pests that are a problem in the Nordic countries are leatherjackets. There was never any reported damage from the insects themselves, just pecking damage from birds seeking out the leatherjackets. There was no insecticide treatment made to control this.

Challenges of Red Fescue Golf Greens

Red fescue greens must have good drainage or they will not produce a good putting surface or a good quality fairway. Golfers find red fescue greens harder to play because they are firmer than golf greens comprised of other species. Another difference with red fescue is that is slow to green up in the spring. The temptation is to apply more fertilizer to push the spring green up, but it will add to the thatch management issues. Even though the colour is poor, the putting quality is deemed excellent in the spring. Greenkeepers must adjust their maintenance practices to be successful with this grass species. The overused saying of "less is more" is paramount when managing red fescue. The only exception to this is in overseeding. To keep the putting surfaces dense, overseeding is recommended with topdressing at a minimum of once a year in the late summer.

More information on the STERF research project proposal and the red fescue management handbook and research results from this project in the future can be found on the STERF website at: http://sgfmail.golf.se/extra/quickmail/?action=show&module_instance=5&id=44 ■



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My Greens are 20 Years Old, How Can I Possibly Have Take-all Patch?

In my years as a student helping out my advisors in diagnostic laboratories, I learned many things, but one of the most important lessons that I learned was that some of the most difficult diseases to diagnose on turfgrass (and probably other plants as well) are root diseases. I have a feeling that diagnosticians get a skewed impression of the proportion of turf areas plagued by root diseases because those are the majority of what we get in the lab. It makes sense if you think about it, how many people want to pay someone to tell them they have dollar spot, or brown patch, or any of the numerous foliar diseases that may be found on turfgrass? They are relatively simple to self-diagnose thanks to the predictable stand symptoms and formation of mycelia on the foliage.

Root diseases, on the other hand, can show up in various patterns and shapes. To make things more complicated, because some of them are host-specific, on a mixed stand (like most golf course greens) you don't see a characteristic patch, as would be expected (Fig. 1). That and the symptoms are relatively non-descript: thinning, chlorosis, drought intolerance, etc. Since I have been working in Canada, one of the most prevalent issues to come through our diagnostic clinic is take-all patch (TAP), caused by the fungus *Gaeumannomyces graminis*. Although there are numerous old golf courses throughout the country, a number of new properties have popped up over the past 10 years, so we tend to see a good bit of TAP as a result. This is expected as most people are well aware that this is a disease of bentgrass and it usually appears on relatively new greens. However, what I had not expected to find were incidents of this disease on greens that were 15 to 20 years old. When I first saw the characteristic runner hyphae (Fig. 2) on the root tissue that we associate with this disease, I started checking to make sure it really was bentgrass that was affected and looking for infection structures that would help me confirm my diagnosis. In just about every case, I saw the infection structures of the fungus (hyphopodia - Fig. 3) and noted that it was specifically the creeping bentgrass that was symptomatic, while the annual bluegrass was healthy and thriving. When I would respond to the superintendents with my diagnosis, many were a bit wary of the results, as most people know this disease to be one that affects newly built greens. The purpose of this article is to discuss why we tend to see less take-all patch in older greens (for the most part), as well as why that may not be the case in Ontario and provinces west of here.

Take-all patch is known to occur on primarily newly built or newly fumigated greens, often in areas that were previously forested. The disease usually takes anywhere from one to three years to appear and because most greens are still primarily bentgrass so soon after establishment, we start to see the classic patch symptoms associated with this disease (Fig. 4). The disease can be very devastating, and, over time, can kill large areas of turf (Fig. 5), affecting the more desirable of the two species commonly found on Ontario putting greens. In addition, although the pathogen grows better in the cool weather seen in spring and fall, the symptoms are often not visible until the heat of summer leads to excess stress on the plant that the affected roots cannot overcome.



Fig. 1. Symptoms of take-all patch on a mixed green, with only creeping bentgrass affected (Photo by K. Jordan)

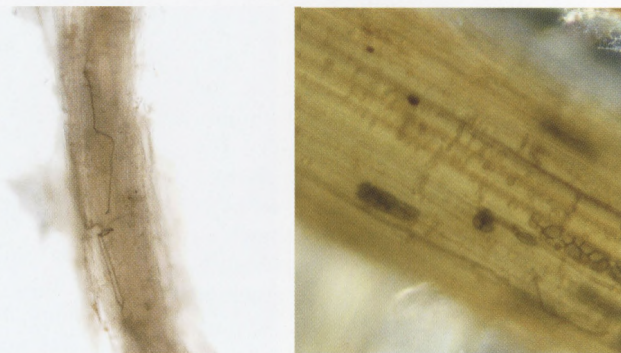


Fig. 2. Runner hyphae on turfgrass root tissue, characteristic of *Gaeumannomyces graminis* (Photo by M. Bassoriello). Fig. 3. Infection structures (hyphopodia) formed by *Gaeumannomyces graminis* (Photo by N. Mitkowski)

As mentioned above, this is not too surprising on a relatively new green as take-all patch seems to plague new bentgrass no matter where you are. What is really interesting about this disease is that after about five to seven years post-establishment, we usually see a decrease in the symptoms and eventually, no presence of the disease at all. This phenomenon is known as Take-all Decline and is very well documented in wheat (where take-all is a devastating disease as well). Research indicates that over time, there is a build-up of antagonistic bacteria in the soil that are natural enemies of the *G. graminis* pathogen. These bacteria appear to be attracted to infected roots, so populations will build up over time. They produce an antibiotic that is antagonistic to *G. graminis*, and, eventually, the take-all pathogen is reduced in population and the host plant (in the case of a golf course, creeping bentgrass) returns to its healthy state. So, although take-all patch can be extremely devastating for

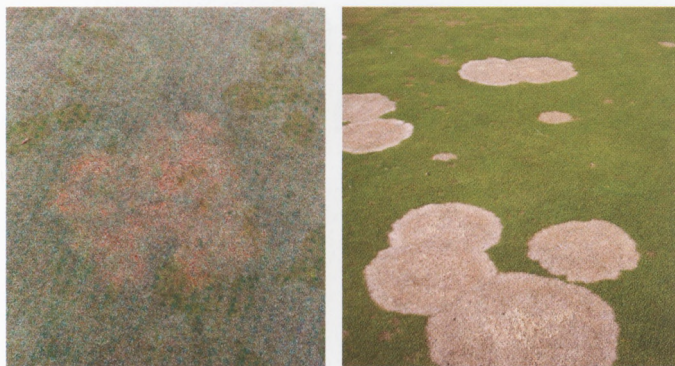


Fig. 4. Characteristic patch symptoms of take-all patch on a creeping bentgrass putting green (Photo by K. Jordan). Fig. 5. Severe take-all patch on creeping bentgrass putting green (Photo by G. Staath)

a few years, superintendents can usually rest assured that if they tough it out for a bit, the disease will subside and likely not return to those greens again.

That said, I cannot tell you how many samples of take-all patch I have received over the past seven years here in Ontario from golf courses that were much older than seven years. Many of them did not come from Ontario, rather from further west in Alberta. We have also received a number of samples with the disease from Saskatchewan and Manitoba. So, that begs the question, why are we seeing so many samples of this disease on older greens and especially in these specific provinces? There are a few potential reasons for this. The first one is that we may not be dealing with the take-all patch pathogen at all. It is possible that these samples contain a different, but closely related pathogen that has the infection structures of *G. graminis* and attacks bentgrass specifically. We are currently in the process in our lab of trying to confirm this one way or another with molecular techniques to be sure we are diagnosing the samples properly. However, if we assume that the cause of the symptoms is actually *G. graminis*, then there must be another explanation.

It is known that *G. graminis*, and subsequently take-all patch disease, tend to thrive in high pH (> 6.5) environments. The pathogen seems to grow best at pH levels around or just above 7.0, so this would explain why we see the disease more often from Ontario through Alberta. Soil pH levels in much of southwestern Ontario range anywhere from 7.5 to above 8, and, in Alberta, I have been told that levels as high as 8.5 to 9 are normal. These conditions appear to favor growth of the pathogen and would partly explain the prevalence of the disease in these regions. That said, it is possible that when combined with moist soil conditions and cool weather, the conditions present in Southwestern Ontario and the prairie provinces may be ideal for growth of *G. graminis*, and may allow the pathogen to thrive even in the presence of antagonistic organisms. Another possibility is that alkaline pH levels, although ideal for the growth of *G. graminis*, may not support growth of the suppressive bacteria that would antagonize the take-all pathogen. Although numerous research studies have been conducted on take-all decline in wheat, unfortunately very little research has been done on this phenomenon in turfgrass stands with the strain that causes take-all patch in creeping bentgrass. At this point, beyond theory, it is difficult to definitively state why we see symptoms of take-all patch on older, even soil-based greens in central and mid-western Canada. But it would appear that soil pH surely has something to do with it.

At this point, the first step in determining why this is happening is to ensure that we are, indeed, dealing with *Gaeumannomyces graminis*. Once we have determined that piece of information, our lab hopes to assess microbial communities on greens that have been diagnosed with the disease (both new and old) and not only determine why the disease lingers in high pH environments, but also use that information to develop recommendations for reducing the disease that attacks our most desirable species of turfgrass.



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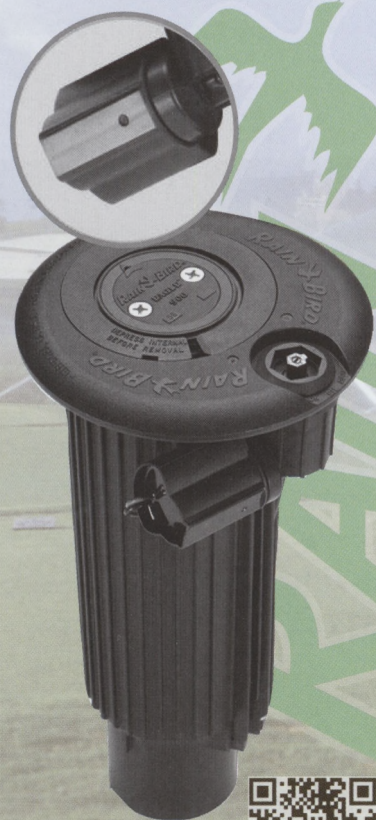
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I thought this would be a great time to provide a Ministry of Labour update. The following information has been taken from the Ontario Ministry of Labour website. To read the complete information bulletin please go to: www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/prevention/consultations/training.php

You might also like to bookmark this site and get on the mailing list to get timely updates for this new Ministry initiative. By January 1st 2014, every worker and supervisor will be required to have been trained in basic health and safety awareness in all Ontario workplaces.

The Ministry of Labour is introducing new regulatory measures that will require employers to ensure that all workers and supervisors complete mandatory occupational health and safety awareness training programs. The proposed requirements will apply to every workplace participant who meets the current definitions of "worker" and "supervisor" under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA).

The Ministry has developed awareness training products for workers and supervisors. The workbooks and employer guide are available through the Ministry of Labour's website at: www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/worker_awareness.php. I strongly suggest that you take the time to access this site and order the publications. They are free and it only takes a few minutes to register and order the documents!

Once the proposed regulation is in force, employers will be required to ensure that workers and supervisors have completed the training developed by the Ministry or be trained in a similar training program that would meet the minimum proposed content requirements set out in the regulation. This training will be required to be completed before or shortly after commencing work duties.

Golf courses are covered by this regulation. This means that by 2014 you must have a training program in place for all your seasonal workers as well as your full time workers. There are no exceptions.

The regulation will allow for a transition period to give employers time to ensure

that existing workers and supervisors have completed awareness training programs before the proposed regulation comes into effect. It is anticipated that the proposed new regulation will come into effect on January 1, 2014. Regulations generally allow a grace period for compliance with existing workplace participants.

This is introductory awareness training. The intent of the training is to ensure that workplace participants are provided with health and safety awareness training as soon as possible after commencing work duties. Similarly, any new supervisors who have not already completed an awareness training program would need to do so within the first week of commencing supervisory duties.

To ensure employers comply with this regulation, there is a requirement that mandates employers keep records of training completion for all workplace participants.

If you are a workplace that presently completes health and safety awareness training for all workplace participants and you have maintained the necessary records of training, then you will not be required to retrain your workforce.

There is a list of compliance requirements in the regulation and this list is available on the website. If your golf course is presently meeting the requirements of O. Reg. 780/94 (Training Programs) the new regulation will be in addition to these requirements.

I sure hope that this helps you in your health and safety awareness planning for the next year. This is a big step in the evolution of safety in the province of Ontario.

If you require assistance, give me a call.
Enjoy the spring! ■



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We Are All in This Together

The title of this column is a statement made by a former colleague as we discussed all things related to the golf industry. I have never forgotten about the significance of this statement and I was reminded of it when I met Alan White, President of Project EverGreen Canada. White, who is also the owner of the lawn care company Turf Systems Inc., spoke of turfgrass and green spaces with a passion I thought only reserved for golf course superintendents.

Headquartered in Milton, Ontario, Project EverGreen Canada is a national non-profit organization representing green industry service providers. In essence, Project EverGreens' mission is to preserve and enhance green space in our communities where we live, work and play. Project EverGreen is committed to informing the public about the positive effects of well-maintained green spaces, including lawns and landscapes, sports turf, golf courses and parks. Although initially a U.S. based initiative, White has taken it upon himself to spearhead the Canadian equivalent.

"We have to be proactive and get the public to turn the landscape on," says White, "because right now, they are turning it off." This comment is obviously a reference to the overall frustration regarding current green space management in Ontario. Clearly, the effects of the pesticide ban put in place in 2009 have only served to compound the already existing public misconceptions regarding green spaces, and, more specifically, turfgrass. "People are giving up and choosing alternatives which provide less environmental benefits than turfgrass," says White.

To help gain some positive momentum, one of the first initiatives undertaken by Project EverGreen Canada, with the help of Landscape Ontario and the Ontario Sod Growers Association, was the revitalization of Toronto's St. James Park. The park had been the camp site for the 'Occupy Toronto' movement for five weeks resulting in extensive damage. White seized the opportunity to make an impact on the local community and promote awareness by orchestrating a volunteer group to bring the park back to life. With the help of industry partners, the park was renovated in two days, much to the delight of locals as they personally thanked the volunteers for giving them back their park.

"Our long term goal is to be viewed in the same light as Ducks Unlimited," says White. "They have done an incredible job at

touching a chord with people who care about their wetlands."

What does this have to do with golf course management? Well, as my former colleague said to me, "we are all in this together." Taking a step back, I now see that it goes beyond our world of golf. A win for Project EverGreen is a win for golf courses, lawn care providers, municipalities and vice versa. Similarly, a lawn care provider connecting with just one customer on the benefits of turfgrass is a win for everyone involved. Let's hope that the members of the community that were touched by Project EverGreen's involvement at St. James Park might now walk by our golf courses and view them in a different light. I hope they now recognize that the connection they feel to their green space is of equal value to the connection a golfer feels for his golf course, a home owner has for his lawn or a young boy has for his soccer field. ■



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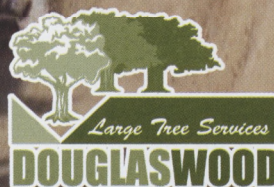
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OFF THE FAIRWAY



Some Winter Inspiration

By the time December rolls around, I think it's fair to say that, although we love our gardens, most of us are pretty tired and are quite happy to leave them be for a few months. That's why we have winter. To rest, take some time off, pour over plant catalogues, attend gardening seminars, and somewhere in all of this, find inspiration for another season of gardening. I love to travel. I used to do a lot more of it, and lately, I've been itching to get on a plane. Wherever I go, I love to visit gardens and observe the unique plant life that every place has to offer. Whether it's the crabgrass like turf species they use to make a lawn in the Peruvian desert, or finding a giant bunya pine cone (*Araucaria bidwillii*) fallen off a tree in New Zealand. So, with March upon us, for fun I want to share a few pictures of interesting things that have inspired me along the way.

1 I've always thought that black mondo grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'*) was cool, but never quite knew how to use it effectively. I was impressed when I saw it combined with snowdrops (*Galanthus*) at the VanDusen Botanical Garden in Vancouver, BC.

2 In a small medieval garden at the Winchester Cathedral in England, I found this gem, *Iris foetidissima*, along with quaint turf covered bench seating. A downside of travel is that you often encounter wonderful plants that don't grow in your hardiness zone. Although this one is supposedly hardy to zone 6, I have yet to find it available, so I improvise and use *Belamcanda chinensis* (Blackberry Lily) instead with its orange flowers and black berries.

3 Opinions on monochromatic colour schemes vary among horticulturists, but I was quite impressed with the red border at Hidcote Manor in England. Plants include *Lewisia*, *Fuchsia*, *Prunus*, *Cotinus*, *Phormium* and *Heuchera*.

4 I love our fall colours here in Ontario – maples, sumac, birches, etc. – but I have to admit that this *Liquidambar* 'Lane Roberts' at Sir Harold Hillier Gardens is pretty good too.

5 I love this combo of *Narcissus* 'Jetfire' and *Pulmonaria angustifolia* 'Lewis Palmer' at Sir Harold Hillier Gardens in England.

6 This is a gem of a backyard belonging to a colleague in England. You can't beat hazel coppice woodland covered in a carpet of native English bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*).

7 This is by far the coolest garden feature I've ever seen. And no, it's not a hot tub. It's called 'The Finger Bowl' and is located at Grey Towers in Pennsylvania. It was used as an outdoor dining table by the Pinchot family, leaders in US Forestry Conservation, to entertain guests in the late 1800's to mid-1900's. Food was passed across the 'table' in floating wooden bowls!

8 The Winter Garden at Sir Harold Hillier Gardens in England where I interned for nine months. It was designed using about 650 different plants over three acres by expertly playing with texture, bark and other features that shine at a time of year when we tend to think of the garden as 'asleep'. If you've ever doubted that gardens can be enjoyed all year round, this is the place to visit.

9 Spring is in the air! The Rock Wall in the Rose Garden at the Morris Arboretum. Basket of Gold (*Aurinia*), thyme, creeping phlox, euphorbia, species tulips and more planted in amongst the wall, complemented by flowering magnolia and cherry.

10 This is the entrance to the Rose Garden at the Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia where I spent 12 months as an intern. Roses intermixed with bananas, brugmansia, papyrus, goldenrod and more – not your average rose garden! ■



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Ignorance Is No Excuse

I hope you made the most of the conference and education opportunity this season. I consider these events worthwhile if I can learn just one thing, and any bit of knowledge I glean beyond that is a bonus. This year has not disappointed me. A great example is Granite Golf Club's fuel pass system that not only turns on the correct pump for the machine being fueled, but also sends that data directly to Equipment Technician Troy Fisher's computer for easy tracking and monitoring. Were you aware that if you fuel an on-road vehicle with fuel purchased for off-road use (both diesel and gasoline), and don't make reparations to the revenueurs, that you may find yourself in contravention of certain tax laws? A system like this should make keeping track of that relatively easy.

It also occurred to me that the Open Forum for Equipment Technicians at the CITCTS is a great opportunity for those of you superintendents or assistants that have to do some, or all, of your own wrenching to take advantage of the many years of experience gathered in one room. Put it on your list for next year and don't be afraid to come, ask a question, and participate in the discussion. Remember, these sessions are open to all. We won't bite. I promise.

I was somewhat surprised to hear in the year 2013 that some golf courses are still not keeping adequate service and maintenance records for their turf and rental cart fleets. Even after all the education and preaching that has been done within this industry over the last two decades especially, some are either not getting the message or are simply choosing to ignore it. Basically, the law states that if you don't keep adequate records of some kind, whatever you claim you did, simply did not happen. It is not enough to keep the receipts for a bunch of parts that you purchased from an equipment dealership. You must account for the who, what, when, where and why for every part, and everything that is done to each and every piece of equipment in your facility. There are no exceptions. This is especially important for any cart that is rented to a customer. Now, I understand that if you are currently among those who can count themselves in the 'ignoring it' category that this will seem like a monumental task, but it is really not that difficult to do. Don't try to do it all at once. Just pick one machine, open the owner's manual, and start copying the information onto a template that you can then use to start a record for the next piece and so on. If you really don't know what to do, ask someone for help. I have found that most people in this industry are more than willing to lend a hand. The important part is to start the process and to keep at it until you have a system in place. Once you have all the files ready, keeping the records is not that arduous a task, as long as you keep on top of it. I shouldn't have to say this, but no excuses, just do it.

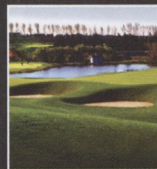
Ryan Horlings from Kooy Bros. was telling me recently about their new facility, the construction process, and some of the technology that they took into consideration. One of the neatest things that he mentioned was a rather simple concept, made possible by technology. Designed into an ultra modern surveillance system, is a relatively simple "snow cam". Its strategic placement allows for remote monitoring on smart phones by whoever is on duty that particular night. With the popularity of these devices and the widespread availability of the internet nowadays, this is a

reasonably easy and affordable upgrade to any turf maintenance facility. No more guessing or harassing someone who lives closer than you to know when it's time to salt or plow your facility. It is a great idea, effective and affordable.

Who knows how much cold weather we've got left this winter, but the batteries in the electric carts in your cold storage would benefit from a charging. As batteries lose their charge, they become closer to water in composition and are then more susceptible to freezing and cracking. So, if you know you've got a cart or two that hopefully were put away correctly, but no one is currently paying any attention to, now might be a good time to have a look to see that none of the batteries have ruptured. If they haven't, then you can reactivate the chargers. That should be sufficient to get them through till spring. ■



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ON THE MOVE: **Alex LaBelle** left Merryhill and moved to Cape Breton Highlands as General Manager and he was replaced by **George Glassen**. **Paul Dodson** left Lionhead and went out west to Silver Springs, Calgary. **Martin Kopp** left Kleinburg for Lionhead and his Assistant, **Daniel Mulroy** took over at Kleinburg. **Bill Fach** went to York Downs from Rosedale and **Rob Burrows** moved to Rosedale from Hillside in Montreal. **Jeff Macey** moved to Idylwyld as Superintendent.

ACHIEVEMENTS: **Mac Frost** received the RCGA Service Award for his 50 years in the golf business. During his career, **Mac** owned the following golf courses: Cedar Brae, Spring Lakes and Vespra Hills.

Jim Wyllie retired from many years as being superintendent at the Cutten Club, Huntington, Lambton, Bayview, York Downs

and the James A. Wyllie Associates Management Company. **Jim** is a past president of the OGSA, CGSA and GCSAA.

Blake McMaster, Royal Montreal and **Dean Baker**, Glen Abbey, were winners of the Environmental Steward Awards presented by the GCSAA.

Melissa White, the daughter of **Paul White**, Mississauga, won the first annual Heritage Scholarship Award presented by the OGSA.

The CGSA named **Bob Heron**, Beacon Hall, Superintendent of the Year. The CGSA also awarded **Gordon Witteveen**, Toronto Board of Trade, with the John B. Steel Distinguished Service Award. ■



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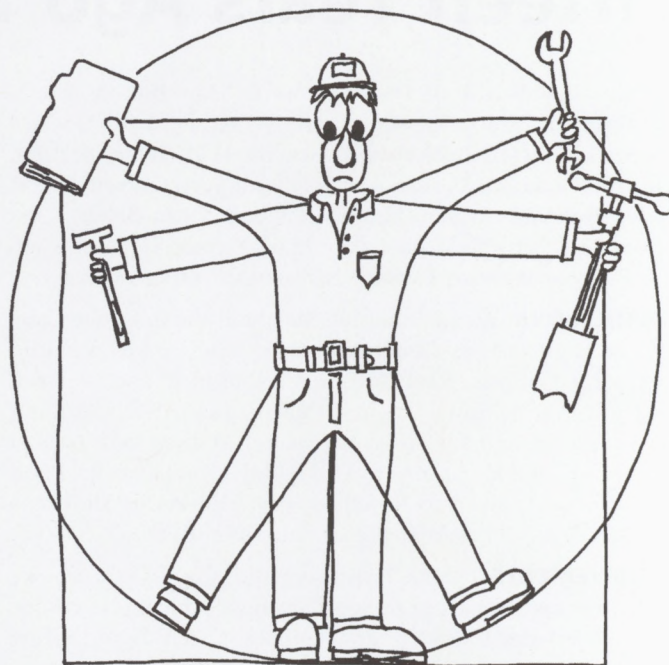
Renaissance Man

by Doug Breen, Superintendent
GolfNorth Properties

If Leonardo Da Vinci was around today, they'd say that he had ADHD. He'd have a "life coach" who'd be telling him to stop running madly off in all directions, and focus on one area of expertise. Someone would have told him to stop wasting time on painting, because there's no money in it (you can tinker with that when you retire), and to concentrate on his inventing of machines which could be sold for profit. And for the love of God, stop just sketching stuff and actually finish a design that we can sell. His work on human anatomy, hundreds of dissections and hundreds more drawings, was illegal and carried a sentence of death if he'd been caught. He also wrote all of his notes backwards, so that they could only be read with a mirror, just because it amused him to do it. Let me conclude; the most important artist, thinker, inventor, scientist, (and a half dozen other things) of his era – was unfocussed, a constant distraction to those around him, and had little respect for authority. That is exactly what it said on my Grade 8 report card.

No, I'm not comparing myself to Da Vinci – I'm just pointing out that your standard public school teacher would have definitely had some issues with him. I think we can safely assume that if he were around today, he'd have spent some time in the hallway (where he'd likely have sketched a more efficient heating and cooling system for the school on the desk, and gotten a detention for it). The reason that I bring it up, is that I'm always pleased by the hidden talents that our cohorts in the superintendent trade will let sneak out once in a while. Last January at the OGSA/CGSA joint show, there was an event at the Steam Whistle Brewery, where a group of supers put together a jam band that was a good stretch beyond proficient. You could tell that at some point in their past, those fellows had really played. Then they opened up the stage, and even more people jumped up. There was the standard open mike jitters and discomfort at first, but when each group hit their stride there was some real magic.

It was mentioned in passing that one of the prizes at the



Awards Luncheon was an "original soap stone carving" by one of our brethren – why wouldn't there be? I know that there are many who spend a lot of their winters working with wood. Very few golf writers have produced more pages than the late Gord Witteveen. Within our ranks, we have musicians, writers, painters, carvers, furniture builders, and a dozen other artistic pursuits that we keep on the down low, because our high school Guidance Councillors told us that we wouldn't seem as professional if people found out we were playing in a rock band at night. My question is; why do we take career advice from someone who only had enough moxie to rise to the position of high school Guidance Councillor anyway? I opened for Blue Rodeo once – his artistic expression was limited to growing fancy geraniums in his office.

To me, the greater question is this; what is it about the profession that attracts hard working people that have this second artistic side? Why are there so many Leonardo's? I have a theory – it's a razor's edge that we all run every day. Maintaining a golf course is a delicate balance between the utilitarian and the beautiful, between green speed and green death, between too hard and too easy. It's risk vs. reward. Is golf just a game, like football or chess, or is it something more than that? The canvas of nature, the rhythm of the swing, the natural sculpture of a river valley, the magic of a green site that looks like we found it that way. We live in a world of dichotomy every day. And while the pure accountant, the pure manager, the pure landscaper, the pure golfer, and the pure mechanic would all struggle as a superintendent, a Renaissance Man with a little bit of all those things blended together will excel. Old Tom Morris was a master club maker, Alister MacKenzie was a highly decorated soldier, and Ray Dlugokecki blows a vicious sax. It's the nature of the beast. Da Vinci would have made a great superintendent. ■

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