

June 2019

ON COURSE

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ONTARIO GOLF SUPERINTENDENTS' ASSOCIATION



Hosting the RBC Canadian Open


ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Queen's Park – A Discussion to Amend Bill 63/09

Technology Takeover

Battling Brain Cancer, Gord Somerville's Story

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By Jason Boyce
OGSA President

QUEEN'S PARK – A DISCUSSION TO AMEND REGULATION 63/09

As President of the OGSA, I was given the opportunity to represent the golf industry and the association at Queen's Park on May 1st for "We Are Golf". The "We Are Golf" group is made up of members from the OGSA, Golf Ontario, CSCM – Ontario, PGA of Ontario and the NCGOA – Ontario and had a total of nine representatives. The purpose of the day was to promote the game of golf, its economic and charitable impact and its environmental benefits. In addition, it was an opportunity for us to discuss regulation 63/09 and in particular, its requirement to hold an annual public meeting.

Our specific ask was to have the "outdated and costly regulation 63/09 be amended to only require annual reports to be made publicly available online".

After weeks of phone calls and planning the lobbying strategy with the aid of Impact Public Affairs, the MPP's received an invite to our morning breakfast during the evening sitting of the legislature the day prior to our event. We received a good turnout from a number of MPP's and they were very open to listening to our concerns and our request to amend regulation 63/09.

After breakfast, we had the opportunity to attend the Question Period during the meetings of the Legislature while we waited to attend our private meetings with MPP's. This is an experience that I would recommend, especially when the party leaders are in attendance. It will give you a different perspective on provincial politics and the passion that our political representatives have for their party's issues.

We then broke into three groups of three. Each group had someone who was able to speak on behalf of our concerns regarding the 63/09 public meeting. Each group had a minimum of three private meetings with MPP's. The feedback from the MPP's was very positive and generally supportive.

There is still a lot of work to do, but this was a really good start. It was not possible to get in the door with the Liberal government over the past eight years, we tried, however the PC's are very willing to listen.

This event was something new to me and to be honest, I was nervous as this day approached. I didn't know what to expect, how the conversations would go, or how the MPP's would respond. However, I did do my homework, and I am very proud of what we started.

The MPP's were approachable, understanding and were there to listen and learn. As in many circumstances, my anxieties were unwarranted. It was a very positive experience, and now I would not have any hesitation in meeting my local MPP to discuss any matter.

The OGSA does need your assistance in educating our MPP's on our issues and we encourage all of you to connect with your MPP to discuss the elimination of the public meeting from the regulation. We intend to work on some tools and information that could assist in approaching your MPP and ensure a common message.

A special thank you to current and past NAGA – Ontario representatives as the work of this group has spanned a great many years and while it remains to be seen, what the level of support on this issue is, we remain optimistic. ■

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ONCourse is published four times a year
(November / March / June / August)
by Blenheim INK for:



Ontario Golf Superintendents' Association

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Published by Blenheim INK

Administration Office:
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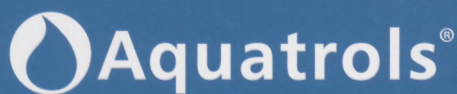


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Hamilton Golf & Country Club, courtesy of Brent Long.

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OGSA is committed to serving its members, advancing their profession, and enriching the quality of golf and its environment.



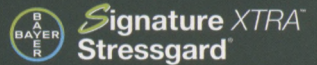
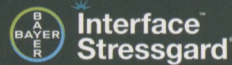
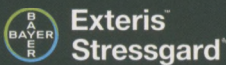
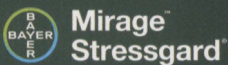
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EDITORIAL MESSAGE

Rain, rain go away...come again another day; anxious golfers want to play...



By Courtney White, OGSA.

April showers bring May... showers? When it comes to weather, Canada is a wearisome country to live in. We wait a long time for our golf season. March calendars announce the first day of

spring, while we stare at snow covered grounds. In April, we flip the page to find images of perennials blooming in the warm sun, while we bundle up for yet another frosty day wondering how to deal with the sheets of ice that are still frozen to the greens. I'm not sure who chooses the photos for these calendars, but they don't live here. By May, we truly begin to hold hope that the sun will begin to warm the ground and welcome a new golf season; after all, we are (according to our trusty calendars) halfway through spring. It's grossly disappointing when the snow turns to cold rain, the rain won't stop, and the ducks are using flooded bunkers

as their newly discovered ponds.

But you persevere because this too shall pass, the sun will shine, and golf will be played. Inside this issue, we acknowledge the efforts of two superintendents who have readied their courses during this inclement weather for the early May tournaments, recapped the OGSA MiGSA CAN/AM Challenge, and included a great article about what's involved in prepping the Hamilton Golf & Country Club for the earlier dates of the RBC Canadian Open. While tournament prep was underway, OGSA president, Jason Boyce and Golf North's Doug Breen, were among the many who travelled to Queen's Park to represent Superintendents at the 'We are Golf' day on May 1, 2019. This issue of ONCourse begins and ends with their respective experiences and highlights what we're asking the government for.

Kendra Kiss, one of our newest committee members, shares her perspective about technology on the golf course, Chris Cummings shares a few tips on ways to handle conversations about planting native gardens, and Cam Shaw provides us with

an update on research projects that will take place at the GTI this year.

We've also included a special Member Moments by past OGSA member, Gord Somerville, who has shared his experience with battling Stage 4 brain cancer and reminds us to take time to care for ourselves, and to be grateful for our silver linings – even on rainy days.

We hope you enjoy the issue. Have a wonderful season everyone! ■

MARK YOUR CALENDARS UPCOMING OGSA EVENTS

Assistants' Tournament

Kings Forest GC
September 12, 2019

Ontario Golf Course Management Conference

Niagara Falls
January 14-16, 2020

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WHAT'S NEW

By Sally Ross, OGSA Executive Director.

Recognition Presentations

Once again, we will make presentations to the host superintendents of significant tournaments held throughout the province this summer.

Membership Directory

Our membership directory accompanies this issue of ONCourse. We have tried to make it as accurate as possible, if your information is incorrect, please contact the office. As per usual the online search function will always be the most reliable source of information as it contains updates made since the directory went to print.

Spring Directors Meeting

The OGSA Board of Directors met in early March over a two-day period to discuss plans and initiatives for the coming year. One item that was once again discussed was the challenges our members are having in finding staff. This discussion resulted in us modifying our job board to include a listing that enables the user to go directly to the job posting they are interested in. It was also suggested to us by some members, that the more information contained in a job posting about the compensation and benefits, would encourage more interest, should the package be competitive.

Committee representation for the upcoming year was approved, conference surveys and conference financial results were reviewed and discussed and the decision to return to Niagara Falls with a change of venue for OGCM Conference 2020 was discussed and subsequently approved. Conference 2020 will be held at The Sheraton on the Falls, January 14th to 16th, 2020. OGSA vice president Tim Muys, and secretary/treasurer Al Schwemler will be the co-chairs for Conference 2020.

Today In Ontario

The OGSA Board of Directors discussed keeping our #todayinontario submissions alive by offering some social media awards to those members who take wildlife and course pictures and tag us and use the hashtag to enter their photos into the competition.

University Of Guelph, Turf Managers Short Course

Our congratulations go out to Rachel DeRuyte who is this year's recipient of the TMSC award. Rachel received \$1,300.00 and membership in the association and is working at The National.

WELCOME to Our New Members

Steve Sibbald Glencairn Golf Club	Class C
Stephen Murray The Georgian Bay Club	Class C
Mark Patterson The Briars Golf Club	Class C
Brandon Allan Devil's Pulpit Golf Association	Class C
Rachel DeRuyte The National Golf Club of Canada	Class F
GT Irrigation Services	Class E
Lisa Marie Pearce Burlington Golf & Country Club	Class F
Jonathan Fletcher Foxbridge Golf Club	Class B
Tyler Patroch Point Grey Golf & Country Club	Class A



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Superintendent Recognition Program



(R-L) OGSA secretary/treasurer, Al Schwemler (The Toronto Golf Club) presents Dave Hunter from TPC Toronto at Osprey Valley with the OGSA Superintendent Recognition Award for his contribution, and the contribution of the entire grounds and maintenance crew to the success of the U.S. Open Local Qualifier.



OGSA director, Owen Russell (Markland Wood GC) centre, presents superintendent Michael Dermott (R) and assistant superintendent Dennis Bult (L) with the OGSA Superintendent Recognition Award for their contribution to the success of the Ontario Men's Better-Ball Championship.

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Member since 2004

Matt Booth

Superintendent

*By Andrew Hardy, Regional Account Manager,
BrettYoung Seeds.*

Photos courtesy of Matt Booth.

There is a large pool of high-quality assistant superintendents' across the golf industry. It has certainly become a game of attrition for assistants to move up to superintendent roles. Occasionally, the Paul Halks, Mike Jennings and Matthew Booths of the world are given the opportunity to move up at the club where they are currently employed.

Matt Booth is entering his second year as the superintendent at Oshawa Golf and Curling Club. His persistence and patience helped him achieve this role at the storied golf club in Durham region. After plying his trade as an assistant superintendent for close to 15 years, the members at Oshawa entrusted him to succeed one of Matt's mentor's, Steve Hallard, in the winter of 2018. Steve's exit was part and parcel to some lingering health issues and was not exactly how Matt envisioned his "big step", but the recent trend of assistant supers making the jump to superintendent allowed Matt to achieve the goal he had hoped to achieve.



*Matt Booth, Superintendent,
Oshawa Golf and Curling Club.*

About the Course

The Oshawa Golf Club started in or about 1895. However, the original charter for the club was granted, at its present site, on Nov. 21, 1906. Since 1911, when the first bunkers were built, the course has continued to be groomed, modified and refined to sustain its challenge.

Private, semi-private, public, municipal, resort: Private

Architect: Stanley Thompson

Number of holes: 18 Holes

Number rounds annually: 30,000

Practice Facility: Yes, with short-game area

Oshawa was established in 1906 and built by Stanley Thompson. Located in the heart of Oshawa it is well hidden from the busy streets that circle the property. And the club boasts being the "Hidden Gem of Durham region".

Matt's introduction to golf started a young age. He was an active junior golfer and that joy led to his first career choice as a... veterinarian intern. It was a short-lived career path and with some direction from his father

In the Hot Seat

Q: Favourite Major?

A: The Masters

Q: Best Piece of Turf Equipment?

A: Toro ProCore 648

Q: Lowest Round Ever and Where?

A: 76 at Cherry Downs

Q: Ultimate Foursome?

A: Myself, Lee Trevino, Peter Jacobson and his dad

Q: Favourite Movie?

A: Monty Python and the Holy Grail

Q: Favourite Meal?

A: Pasta

Q: Favourite Golf Course?

A: Pinehurst No 2

Q: Favourite Golf Course Designer?

A: Stanley Thompson

Q: Favourite Band?

A: Foo Fighters

Matt took a position working on the grow-in and construction crew at Granite Golf Club in Stouffville. After a couple of years at Granite, Matt moved on to Whitevale Golf Club, then on to Cherry Downs Golf and Country Club as the Assistant Superintendent. It was the fall of 2007 when Matt was hired as Steve Hallard's assistant at Oshawa. He absorbed himself into that role and became someone Steve could lean on while taking the opportunity to learn from a veteran superintendent like Steve.

Now those 10+ seasons as the assistant at Oshawa did not come without some wavering in his thoughts about sticking it out in the golf industry. While interviews and opportunities came and went over the years, it was his love for the outdoors and the golf course that kept him there. "Patience is key. Learn as much as you can, volunteer for professional events, play golf, be humble and stay true to your values." Matt really feels that these core values are what it takes to succeed in the current job landscape in the turf industry.

As for what is in store for Oshawa Golf and



Matt Booth and the turf team after hosting the U17 Boys and Girls Championships, 2018.

Curling Club under Matt Booth's direction? Well the club is currently vetting architects for the proposal of a long-range plan. Some of the projects being looked at include; activation of the irrigation pond to reduce the use of the stream where water is currently being drawn from, a tree management plan, irrigation upgrades, the potential renovation of greens and some erosion control work

along the Oshawa Creek. Much of the club's current spending has been focused on the clubhouse, and hopefully once an architect is retained, a plan for the grounds and execution of it can move forward. This long-range plan should move Oshawa smoothly into the future and make what is a very busy golf course, into a better golf course, all the while preserving Stanley Thompson's vision.

What You Need to Know

Predominant grass type: Bent/poa

Types of greens: Native soil pushup

Course length: 6600yds

Size of greens: 3.2acres

Size of tees: 2.7 acres

Size of fairways: 30 acres

Major Challenges

Irrigation system replacement, long range plan.

"Matthew Booth was an outstanding professional during our association together, and, not surprisingly, continues to be an outstanding professional in his current capacity. There was never a question whether Matt could handle GTA calibre clubs. The only issue was opportunity."

**– Steve Hallard, Retired Superintendent,
Oshawa Golf and Curling Club**



The Booth family and course dog, Bunker.



Matt's pastime is photography; The Great Horned Owl.



Oshawa G&S CC, recently completed renovation of 18th tee.

Matt's transition to superintendent was relatively smooth in that he had been at the club for an extended tenure as the assistant. Much of the crew from Matt's assistant days remain and that allowed for a seamless transition. This has kept the active

membership very happy and emboldened them to trust Matt's decision making. The biggest change for Matt has been the time spent in his office, paperwork and meetings. Matt is aided on and off the course by assistant superintendent Bill Walker. Matt

"Matt has a great vision of the overall landscape. If you've seen his photography, you know he has a great eye for details. Throw in a rich passion for the game of golf and sound maintenance practices and you get the finished product at OGCC. It must be a pleasure to be a member at his club because he is constantly thinking about the golfer. He is also a great guy, with full respect of his staff, and they produce a great product."

- Darryl Lewis, Superintendent, Kedron Dells Golf Club

is married to Alexis and although they have no children, they do have past ONCourse magazine darling, Bunker as their family pet. Matt's hobbies include mountain biking, playing golf and in case you haven't read this publication before...photography. Matt has won the OGSA's Photo of the Year on two occasions and he also served as the conference photographer. ■

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CAN/AM Challenge Recap



(L-R) Andrew Crow and Mike Giblin (centre) accept first place for the Americans; presented by Jason Boyce.



Jason Boyce (centre) acknowledges host superintendent Chris Andrejicka (R) and assistant superintendent, Greg Brown.



(L-R) Mark Durand (OSC) and Doug Wilson (Blackhorse GC), accept the CAN/AM Cup on behalf of the winning Canadian teams, presented by Jason Boyce.

By Sally Ross, OGSA Executive Director.

The 43rd annual CAN/AM Challenge took place on May 6th, at the beautiful Essex Golf & Country Club, in LaSalle Ontario with host superintendent Chris Andrejicka.

While the few days previous to the tournament flooded the course, like many others in Ontario, the rain subsided and Chris, his assistant Greg Brown, and the whole crew put in a tremendous effort to get the course ready for the 80 golfers who were happily anticipating this much-loved event.

The day dawned sunny, a little windy but warm, and the friendly competition, gentle ribbing and strong camaraderie between the Canadians and the Americans was the order of the day.

The CAN/AM Cup, arrived courtesy of Michigan past president Dan Dingman, and at the end of the day in a lopsided victory of 37.5 to 22.5, the Canadians brought the cup back to Ontario.

OGSA president Jason Boyce (Smuggler's Glen GC) acted as MC for the dinner and opened his welcome by asking everyone to stand and observe a moment of silence for long time OGSA member, friend of many, and fellow superintendent, Mike

Burton, who had passed away from cancer the day before the tournament. Jason then introduced board members in attendance from both associations, as well as MiGCSA and GCSAA staff who were in attendance.

Chris Andrejicka spoke during dinner, thanking all his staff, and club personnel who helped make the day exceptional. Chris' pride in his club and course was very evident and he went on to thank the OGSA staff for the job they do for the association and its members.

Following dinner, the awards and prizes were presented.

The cup was accepted by the first low gross team of Canadians, Mark Durand (OSC) and Doug Wilson (Blackhorse GC) with a score of 73.

American low gross team winners were Canadians substituting for the American team, Andrew Crow (GC Duke Equip.) and Mike Giblin (Willow Valley GC) with a score of 76.

Second place low gross winners were Jason Crawford (Eagles Nest GC) and Jeremy Phillips (Turf Care) for the Canadians with a score of 74 and the team from Franklin Hills CC, Brian Schweihofer and Nate Hohenback for the Americans with a score of 77.

The Canadian low net winning team

was Kelly Barnet (BrettYoung) and Paul Lemieux (Kingsville G & CC) with the team of Greg Brown (Essex G & CC) and Matt Legg (Weston G & CC) coming in a close second.

The American low net winning team was Gary Thommes (Red Run GC) & Thomas Gill (Spartan Distributors) followed by the team of John Grey (Stonycroft Hills Club) and Chris Wilczynski (C.W. Golf Architecture) who placed second.

The two closest to the pin winners were Tim Hornick and Doug Wilson, and the two longest drive winners were Jason Crawford and Dan Freisen.

Two team skins were awarded to the team of Mark Durand & Doug Wilson, and the other teams who each had one skin were Chris Andrejicka and Kevin Collier, Mike Giblin and Andrew Crow, and Tim Hornick and Greg Anderson.

Special thanks go to Allturf who sponsored the on-course prizes as well as the dinner, it was much appreciated by the OGSA and all the players.

Jason thanked the host superintendent Chris, his assistant Greg as well as the outstanding staff at Essex and the amazing culinary skills of the chef, for the great time that was had by all! ■



History in the Making at Hamilton Golf and Country Club

"If you have the money to spend there is no reason why you should not have one of the finest golf courses in America"

- Harry Shapland Colt wrote to Hamilton Golf & Country Club prior to his visit in May 1914.

By David McPherson.

Reprinted with permission from GCM.

Photos courtesy of Hamilton Golf and Country Club and Brent Long.

Famed British golf course architect Harry Colt (Royal Portrush, Muirfield) predicted more than a century ago that Hamilton Golf & Country Club would become a special place and "one of the finest courses in America." One hundred and five years on, as some of the best golfers in the world will see come June—when the course hosts the RBC Canadian Open for the fifth time—this vision is a reality. Hamilton G&CC is not only one of the oldest clubs in the Americas, but also perennially ranks as one of the top five courses in Canada.

Hamilton opened in 1894. Since then, the club has hosted the Canadian Open five times. The first, in 1919, featured two of the most legendary names in golf: Bobby Jones and Francis Ouimet. J. Douglas Edgar won that event by 16-strokes – a PGA TOUR record that still stands as the largest margin of victory. The other players to win the Canadian Open at Hamilton Golf and Country Club are: Tommy Armour (1930), Bob Tway (2003), Jim Furyk (2006) and Scott Piercy (2012).

For the past three decades, Rhod Trainor,

CGCS, has been lucky to call this course home. Trainor arrived at the club in 1990. This year is his last. Is there a better way to wrap up a successful 30-year tenure than hosting his fourth PGA TOUR event on the centennial of the year when the club first hosted Canada's national open?

"The first week of June is usually when the course begins to wake up, so there will be little time to recover from any extra activities or winter damage,"

THE DATE

When the PGA TOUR announced last July a shift in its scheduling, a smile crept onto the faces of most Canadian golf fans—especially Laurence Applebaum, chief executive officer, Golf Canada, who following the announcement said: "Together

with the PGA TOUR, the new 2019 date change is a clear demonstration of our combined commitment to the game and Canada's National Open Championship. This exciting change will inject tremendous energy into the RBC Canadian Open and make Canadian golf better."

The June date for Canada's National Open, sandwiched between The Memorial and the U.S. Open, is not only better for attracting more top players, but is also more ideal to achieve prime playing conditions. When the new date was announced, another person whose smile widened a wee bit was Trainor.

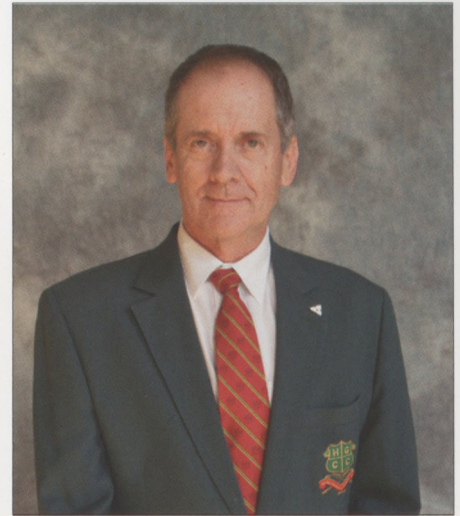
"I love the date!" says the Golf Course Superintendent at Hamilton G&CC. "Early June is when we have some of our best conditions. I remember reading an article years ago about why the U.S. Open is always held in the first two weeks of June and it said because it was often hosted at the top private courses in the Northeast and that is when their course conditions and weather are the best. Going forward, this is a much better date for the Canadian Open."

While the date is great for the turf, from a set up standpoint, it will be race against time and Mother Nature to get everything ready. "It will be a mad scramble for all the set up people," Trainor adds.



Early preparation for hosting Canada's sole PGA TOUR event started last fall. Trainor and his crew completed edging on all of their aging bunkers, a practice that is normally done in the spring.

"We did that now to allow for a little grow-back along our bunker edges to put our best face on for the tournament," he explains. "Edging was also a little more aggressive than normal as we, in many cases, went beyond



Rhod Trainor.

the designed edge to cut back to mature turf. This will allow the bunkers to have more visual appeal. Barring any major rainstorms the bunkers should look and play very good for the tournament."

Trainor admits nothing short of a complete renovation can remedy the long-term bunker playability. He is hopeful the membership will vote to go ahead with the master plan, or parts of it, prepared by Martin Ebert of Mackenzie and Ebert (see sidebar).

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Come spring, there will be little time to do any preparations, other than the normal spring clean up. "The first week of June is usually when the course begins to wake up, so there will be little time to recover from any extra activities or winter damage," he explains.

Preparing to put the course to bed last fall, knowing the reduced timeline to have the course ready for the PGA TOUR, Trainor and his turf and maintenance team also took extra precautions with expanded treatment into roughs of winter disease products. "Normally we just treat greens, tees and fairways," he says. "This winter we also added to our greens cover inventory to ensure all sensitive turf on greens is covered."

Since the last time HG&CC hosted the Canadian Open (2012) there have been few changes to the course, besides a massive tree removal program. The recommendation Trainor had been advising the club to do for 20 years finally came to fruition in the spring of 2014 after a winter of discontent that saw the greens at many private courses near Hamilton die. The course removed nearly 1,000 mature trees, including Silver Maple, Willows, and Ash.

"The tree removal has totally changed and

improved our turf conditions," he comments. "The views across the course are also different. You now see the true topography of the land the way Harry Colt saw it 100 years ago. Back in 1914 when Colt came here he didn't look for land that was forested, he looked for open land. He built this course on a big open area and it has since changed. I love what David Oatis from the USGA, who consults for us, says about this: 'We've taken an 18-hole landscape and made it 18 one-hole landscapes!'"

"The pros and the fans will notice this," Trainor adds. "The feedback every spring when members come back and see the course again with these extensive tree removals we've done has been more than positive ... it's always 'Wow!'"

Back to hosting a PGA TOUR event, since Trainor has been at the helm for three of these tournaments already he knows what to do. Many of the contractors from the security to the tent set up companies are the same, so they all know their role and the timelines involved in staging such a large-scale event. The TOUR is also familiar with the course. That said the superintendent does not plan to rest on his laurels.

"Preparation all comes down to agronomics

and timing," he explains. "We added a little extra fertilizer last fall. We have beautiful growing conditions in the spring. Since the tournament arrives in the middle to end of our spring flush of growth, we should have some substantial rough."

The key to Hamilton is that it must be dry. If there is any rain leading up to the tournament, Trainor says the course loses its defense and the PGA TOUR players will be firing darts at the pins. "When our greens and fairways get wet, they don't dry out ... they remain hard."

Come tournament time, Trainor will have a crew of about 25 full- and part-time staff. About 50 volunteers, mostly fellow greenkeepers from surrounding courses pitching in their time and expertise, will complement this core staff.

"Everything we do in the spring will be geared to that tournament and also managing the let down," he says. "I've already talked about that a bit with my staff. After the tournament because we still have a long golf season ahead of us, I'll need my team to get rallied up for that again and that will be a challenge." ■



DREAMING OF A RENOVATION

Trainor hopes that by the time his fellow industry colleagues are picking up this magazine, Hamilton G&CC's membership will have voted on going ahead with the comprehensive master plan prepared by Martin Ebert of Mackenzie and Ebert.

Beyond hosting the PGA TOUR event, the prospect of this renovation is what most excites Trainor. He said the plan would be presented to the membership in April or May. If approved, the work would begin as early as September 2019.

"At this point, it boils down to two options: a complete course renovation, including a new irrigation system, new greens, and renovated bunkers. The irrigation system is 30 years old and the greens are just soil based, so they have very little drainage.

"Our greens have always been the worst part of our course," Trainor says. "They are too steep and really nothing anymore that

is 'Harry Colt' about them. "If I only had one choice, I would do the greens."

The severity of the slope on the greens make for difficulties finding suitable pin positions that are not penal — especially when the PGA TOUR arrives and they require five different possible pin locations. Since the greens are Poa they are also more susceptible to disease, especially during the unpredictable southern Ontario winters. Trainor says they spend between \$20,000 and \$25,000 annually in greens cover management as a preventative maintenance strategy. With brand new bentgrass greens, covers would not be necessary.

"It will be interesting to see what the membership does," Trainor comments. "All the old crowd, don't want to do anything ... they want to just take the golf course as it is to the grave with them whereas the young guys want new greens now."

Martin Ebert has prepared a hole-by-hole master plan that includes the history of everything that has been done at the club over the last 100 years. "He has given us a complete storyboard of where we are currently and a compelling argument to redo the greens," Trainor says.

The fact the club is set to host the RBC Canadian Open again in 2023 is a definite selling point for the membership to approve the Ebert's master plan. While Trainor says goodbye at the end of the 2019 season to his home away from home for the past three decades, he plans to stay active in the turf and maintenance industry. And, hopes, if the renovation gets approved, he can offer his services to the club in some capacity. "I'm not retiring from the business," says the 64-year-old. "I'm just retiring from the Club. I just won't grow grass here anymore." ■



Technology Takeover

By Kendra Kiss, Lead Technician and Administrative Assistant, Magna Golf Club.

This past August I had the opportunity to attend an industry sponsored event for assistant superintendents. Thirty assistants from across North America gathered in Minneapolis, Minnesota for four days of tours, seminars and lots of networking. Over the course of those four days many discussions were had, and ideas, perspectives and opinion were shared. One evening a topic came up between myself, TJ Creamer of Victoria Golf Club (Victoria, BC) and Ashley Davidovich of Royal Mayfair Golf Club (Edmonton, AB). We began to discuss all the technology in the industry and how beneficial it can be, but overwhelming at the same time.

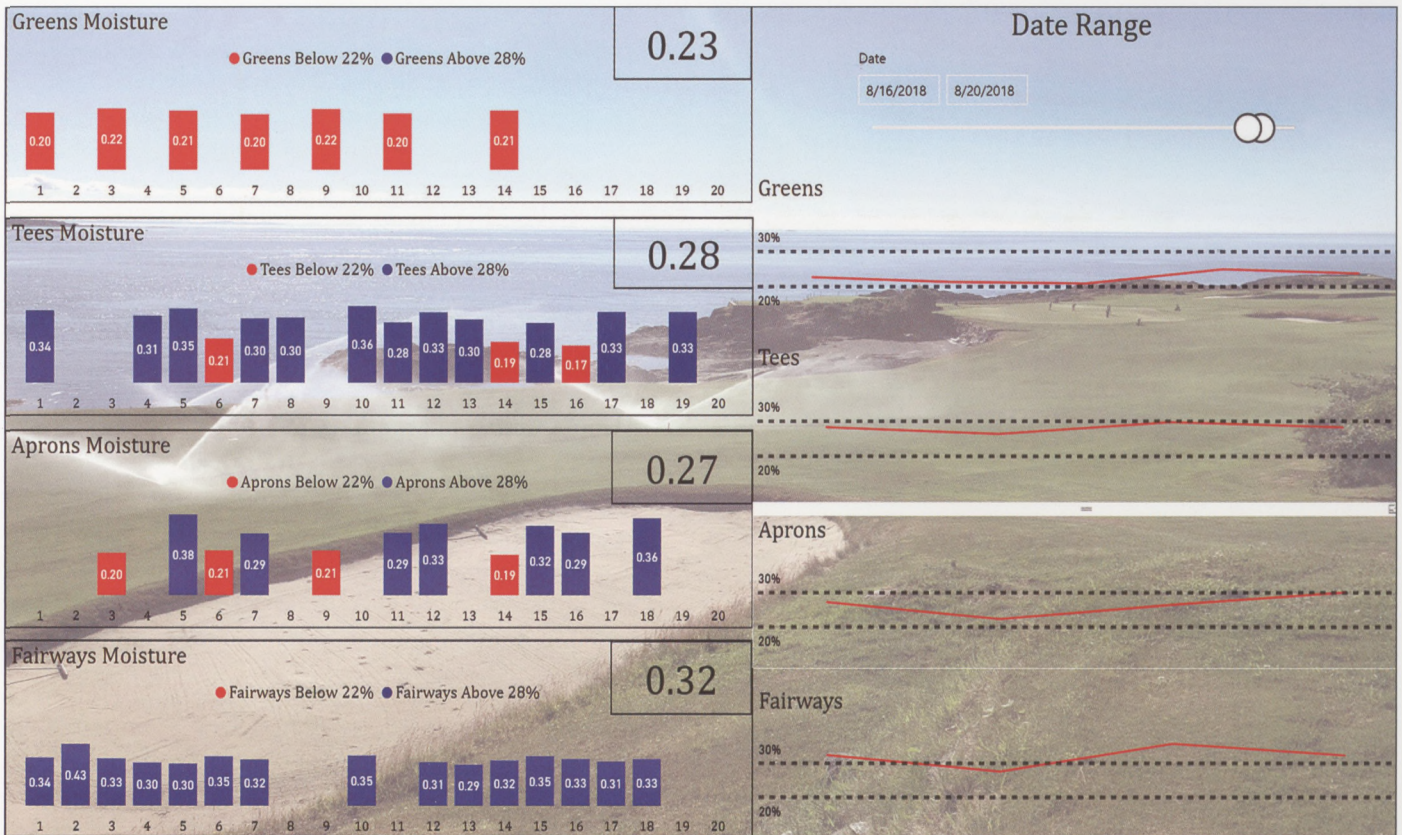
I remember back to when I started in the industry in 2001 - when the most important tool to a superintendent was the soil probe. We pulled a few plugs and with the touch of our hand we determined the irrigation cycle that evening. Many practices were done mostly on a rudimentary and reactionary process. Biweekly topdressing, lowering mowing heights to achieve green speeds as rollers were not used much at the time, and applications of registered heavy metal fungicides to control disease, moss and algae. Nightly irrigation cycles were measured in terms of minutes and not based on inches or mm applied. Systems like the Vari Time II and Rain Bird Maxi 5 had many moving parts increasing the probability of breakage. Clipping volume at the time was measured by the number of buckets dumped vs. the exact volume. Spraying was basic; no computer, no individually controlled nozzles and certainly no GPS.

While all of this technology
can transform the way in
which we care for our golf
course, sometimes the
best thing you can do
is take a walk.

Times sure have changed but with all of this change, can we lose ourselves in all of the information available to us to make decisions for the golf course? Creamer out in Victoria BC is very fortunate to work with a club that is very keen to invest in new technology. They operate a fleet of RG3 robotic greens mowers, fly a drone, POGO, TDR, Truefirm and recently ordered a Parry Meter to start monitoring green smoothness/trueness. While the greens mowers may not influence decision on the course he says, all the other devices certainly do. "It is one thing to have the devices, but more importantly we need to ensure that they are used, and used for a purpose. Each of these pieces of technology has found a home inside our decision-making process."

I personally remember walking the trade show floor for the first time at the GCSAA conference in 2015. It literally took me close to two days to get around! I felt very overwhelmed with all of the information being thrown at me. How could I possibly take all of this technology and utilize it on the golf course? Creamer explains that at first, all of the technology was a bit daunting. With each piece of tech comes a web based platform, each with a login and password. But over time and working with platforms such as Google Forms and Microsoft Power BI, they have greatly improved their efficiency collecting and using data.

The piece of technology that has replaced my beloved soil probe has been the TDR meter. I am sure at this point we are all familiar with it, and majority of us use one on the golf course. Jessica Aytoun of Sutton Creek Golf Club (Essex, ON) credits this tool for helping her manage the three different types of greens structures they have.



Courtesy of T.J. Creamer, Victoria GC.

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Aytoun and her assistant have decided to play her course twice a month after work for 9 holes to get a different perspective. Getting back to Mother Nature and feeling what the course needs does play a part in the art of greens keeping. The great thing with all of these tools, it allows us to back up that “gut” feeling we all have as turf managers.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Ashley Davidovich says “So much of what I love about my job is that I don’t have to exclusively sit behind a desk. I get out there, touch the ground, pull samples, smell the soil and use my most important tool in my tool box.....my eyes. I do like the idea of introducing technology to help aid our senses, but would really hate to see this profession take a turn to simply looking at the data and making decisions based on numbers on a screen. The biology of our golf courses is so unique from site to site, it would be a shame to diminish how special that really is if we never left our office.”

Creamer believes it is important to not pit “the art” and “the tech” against one another in some sort of battle between the “good old days” and “this newfangled stuff”. One will never replace the other and in best practices will complement each other in every decision made on the golf course.

Just as the game of golf has had many advances in technology from equipment to clothing to teaching aids. The turf industry is advancing at a rapid pace with more tools to make the most informed decisions. Yet both still hold true to a cherished history that relies and celebrates the most humble of beginnings. Bring on the future of Greenkeeping! ■

“It gives the crew a helping hand with hand watering, and gives us a bit of breathing room. We don’t have to constantly monitor the crew while they hand water areas.” Like a golfer who cannot detect a different green speed of 6 inches, the average greenskeeper can’t detect 3-5% difference in moisture with the old school probe. Having a number goal to keep the greens at, gives many superintendents confidence that they don’t need to water the greens more than they have to.

Superintendent, Jim Flett at Muskoka Lakes Golf & Country Club (Port Carling, ON) agrees that we all use far less water using this technology. While all of this technology can transform the way in which we care for our golf course, sometimes the best thing you can do is take a walk. Flett believes we still need to try and keep things as simple as possible while utilizing technology. Information in graphic forms such as charts or graphs can easily help visualize what the numbers are reflecting.

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Current and Upcoming Research at the Guelph Turfgrass Institute



Dr. Lyons and his lab group prepping seed bed for TWCA Kentucky bluegrass trials at new GTI location - Sept 2018.

By Cam Shaw, Communications and Outreach Coordinator, Guelph Turfgrass Institute, University of Guelph.

The Guelph Turfgrass Institute will feature a number of interesting research projects at the current and new locations this summer. Stay tuned for an announcement regarding a research field day for your opportunity to come and visit with researchers to learn more about these exciting studies.

BIO SOLIDS PROJECT

Funded through the Ontario Turfgrass Research Foundation (OTRF), Dr. Katerina Jordan's bio-solids project is now in its second year of exploring the possibility of using reclaimed municipal waste products as a potential fertilizer in turfgrass systems. Dr. Jordan's graduate student, Vighnesh Sukhu, will carry on previous work looking at product formulation, application rates, potential for soil or plant toxicity, and disease suppression. The project includes two field trials on lawn and fescue mixes, as well as a greenhouse trial on creeping bentgrass.

BIO-FERTILIZER PROJECT

Separate from the bio-solids project, this research is looking into greens and fairway

height creeping bentgrass treated with bio-fertilizers. Dr. Katerina Jordan's graduate student, Eslin Oztur, will be challenging bentgrass samples with the dollar spot pathogen to explore the suppressive potential of bio-fertilizers on this disease.

TAKE-ALL PATCH PROJECT

Funded through the OTRF and now in its third year, Dr. Jordan's lab group will continue to explore management strategies of a new take-all patch pathogen called *Slopeiomyces cylindrosporus*. This year Dr. Jordan's grad student, Karen Francisco, will explore the favourable conditions for this new pathogen as well as determine specific cultural practices that may inhibit it on creeping bentgrass systems. A specific focus for 2019 will include DNA analysis confirming this new pathogen as the causal agent as well as perfecting field inoculation methods. Greenhouse trials are being performed concurrently with field trials.

TURFGRASS WATER CONSERVATION ALLIANCE (TWCA) KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS TRIAL

Coordinated through Dr. Eric Lyons and the GTI, the TWCA trial will explore

the drought tolerance of up to 59 different cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*). This project includes a variety of market-available cultivars as well as newer cultivars that have yet to be released.

NATIONAL TURFGRASS EVALUATION PROJECT (NTEP) TALL FESCUE TRIAL

Thanks to Dr. Eric Lyons, The NTEP trials are returning to the GTI this year and we are pleased to be evaluating 132 different cultivars of turf-type tall fescue. The project will be seeded at the new GTI site in the coming weeks, and establishment parameters such as fill-in and vigour will be noted. Once the research plots are established, regular data collection, including visual assessment according to NTEP protocol, will occur. The trial is expected to continue for multiple years.

SWITCH GRASS PROJECT

Switchgrass is a key crop in the bio-energy sector in Ontario due to the substantial biomass it produces. However, head smut, a disease caused by the pathogen *Tilletia mcglaganii*, has threatened to substantially reduce biomass yields of this

crop. Dr. Jordan and her graduate student, Clyde Yan, will be looking into low-risk chemical strategies to manage head smut in switchgrass in addition to assessing various cultivar resistance/susceptibility to the disease. This project will be conducted in greenhouses on the main University of Guelph campus, as well as through two field studies occurring at our Simcoe and Elora agricultural research stations.

DEVELOPMENT OF A FIELD KIT TO TEST FOR FUNGICIDE RESISTANCE

Dr. Tom Hsiang has been working on fungicide resistance at the GTI for over 25 years. There are increasing concerns by turf managers about the potential development of resistance against fungicide groups where turf managers see reduced intervals of control or even lack of control by standard fungicides. The purpose of this work is to develop a kit that would allow turf managers to test this out on their own and have an answer within a few days.

FUNGICIDE ALTERNATIVES FOR CONTROL OF TURFGRASS DISEASES

For the past several years, with the support of the CTRF, Tom Hsiang and his research team have been investigating low risk alternatives to conventional fungicides (including items that are on the Ontario Government Class 11 list). They hope to complete this research in 2019 and will release reports on which actives have been found to be as efficacious as conventional fungicides, which ones don't work as well, and which ones may increase disease.

TESTING PROBIOTICS TO REDUCE NITROGEN FERTILIZER AND WATER USAGE IN TURFGRASS

Dr. Manish N. Raizada, from the Department of Environmental Sciences at the University of Guelph will be starting a three-year study, funded through the OTRF and QTRF (Quebec Turfgrass Research

Foundation) exploring the potential for probiotics to reduce nitrogen and water usage in turfgrass systems.

SERVICE BASED RESEARCH

In addition to our graduate student turfgrass research projects, there are a variety of service-based research trials that take place annually at the GTI. This type of research provides companies with Canadian testing data for registration purposes, provides information to prepare fact sheets for their products, and provides rate/application information to clients. The service-based research program for 2019 will include projects such as looking into rates and efficacy of various soil surfactants on newly-established bentgrass greens at the new GTI site. In addition, there will be continuing research on a new plant growth regulator on fairway turf and potential for continued testing of new formulations of Fiesta herbicide on lawn height turf. ■

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Ten Years Ago Today

THE 2009 OGSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



The Board of Directors of the OGSA in 2009 were as follows: Randy Booker (president), Otter Creek GC, Jeff Stauffer (past president), Credit Valley G & CC, Jeff Alexander (vice president), Parry Sound G & CC, Chris Andrejicka (treasurer), Essex G & CC, Doug Breen (secretary), Brookfield/Golf North, Jarrod Barakett, Deer Ridge GC, Phil Brown, Summit GC, Rob Gatto, King's Forest/Chedoke, Scott Heron, Bigwin Island GC, Stuart Leachman, Diamond In The Rough GC, Jennifer Pendrith, Kawartha G & CC and Phil Scully, Granite GC.

ON THE MOVE:

Jay Sisko moved to Idylwyld, Brad Plummer became superintendent at Batteaux Creek taking over from Paul Mickalko who became general manager. Steven Hatch moved to Seven Lakes, Mark Reich moved to Orangeville and Jason Cooper became superintendent at Angus Glen, replacing Doug Taylor.

Tom Fischer rejoined Maxium Golf Leasing and Teri Yamada became the Executive Director of the IPM Council of Canada.

IN MEMORY:

Richard Duke, CEO of G. C. Duke Equipment Ltd. passed away. Nick Panasiuk, 92, founder of Hydeaway Golf Club in Windsor, passed away. Art Dodson, OGSA member since 1950 passed away in his 89th year.

AWARDS:

The 2009 John B Steel Award recipient was Vince Gillis, retired former Executive Director and Honourary member of the CGSA.

Blake McMaster, Royal Montreal Golf Club, was named the University of Guelph Superintendent in Residence for 2009.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

The following golf clubs celebrated special anniversaries: Oxford Golf and Country Club, Jerry Richard, 100th; Fox Glen Golf Club, Kelly Barnet, 50th; Puslinch Lake Golf Club, Jim Moore, 40th; Victoria Park East Golf Club, David DeCorso, 35th; and Deer Creek Golf and Country Club, Neil Acton, 20th.

The Raven Golf Club at Lora Bay achieved designation as a "Certified Audubon

Cooperative Sanctuary" under the guidance of Chris Lecour, superintendent.

Alex Barrett from the National, received the highest overall mark in the 2009 Turfgrass Managers Short Course and was the recipient of the OGSA's short course award.

TOURNAMENTS:

The Can/Am Challenge was held at Essex Golf & Country Club hosted by Chris Andrejicka. The big winners of the day were the Americans winning the Can/Am Cup with a score of 21-17.

The Pro/Super Challenge was held at the Kawartha Golf & Country Club hosted by Jennifer Pendrith. The winners were: Oslerbrook (1st), Jason Honeyball, Kawartha (2nd), Gavin Carnegie (assistant), Cedarbrae (3rd), Darren



Assistant's Tournament Winners (L-R): Paul Grovesnor (St. Thomas G&CC), Nick Graham, Pat Anderson, & Tim Hornick (all from Riverbend GC) with John Bladon (Agrium).



The U.S. take home the Ryder Cup. (L-R) Gregg Matthews, Randy Booker (OGSA), Tim Dark.



41st Annual President's Day, first place team, The National.



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Little (assistant) and Brampton (4th), Martin Kopp.

The Presidents' Day golf tournament was held at Bigwin Island Golf Club hosted by Scott Heron. The winning teams were: the National (1st), Chris Dew, St. Catherines (2nd), Dennis Piccolo and Port Carling (3rd), Justin Heptinstall.

The 3rd Annual Seniors Tournament was held at Mono Hills hosted by Al Beene and Doug Suter. Low gross was Rod Hermitage, AgTurf, and low net was Simon George, Maple Turf Supply.

The Ontario Turfgrass Research Foundation's 30th Annual Golf Tournament was held at the National Golf Club hosted by Chris Dew.

The Alex McClumpha Memorial Tournament was held at the Summit Golf & Country Club hosted by Phil Brown.

Low Gross Flight A winner with a 74 was John Gall, Cherry Hill, won by

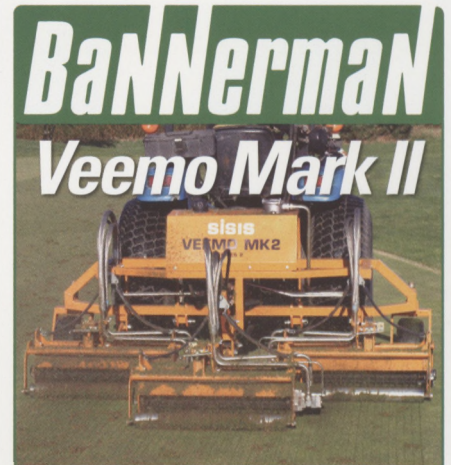
retrogression over Jason Cooper, Angus Glen. Low Net Flight A with a 64 was Martin Kopp, Brampton.

EVENTS:

The "Megan and Sara Golf Classic" was held, in memory of Gary Sutherland (1964-2008), at Carrying Place Golf & Country Club in Kettleby. All proceeds were donated to an educational fund for Gary's children, Megan (9) and Sarah (5).

There was a fund raiser tournament held at Hidden Lake Golf Club for John Parker, superintendent at Scenic Woods Golf Club who recently suffered a brain aneurysm.

Writers Note: I met John at Lowville Golf Club last summer (2018) and he is making a good recovery and playing golf on members day at Lowville. Keep up the fight John. ■



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Native or Natural? That is the Question

More often than not, people want natural or native plants as a way to achieve low cost maintenance and feel good about being environmental. I know I shouldn't generalize but I have lost count of how many times I have been asked to make gardens look natural but once I dive deeper into a discussion about "natural" plantings it turns out that a natural aka native garden, is not really what the client wants.

Native plants grew in our region before European settlement and have evolved alongside native animal, insect and bird species. These plants that we define as native have developed relationships with other species, providing shelter, food, breeding habitats, and creating ecosystems for a large host of organisms to survive in. As a result, these plants are best suited for the growing conditions that can be found across Ontario, meaning they typically require less inputs for their success.

Golf courses having periphery space and some space within the grounds (obviously each property is different) have a lot of opportunity for adding native plant communities that can be left to their own devices. Once established you can turn the maintenance tap to a slower drip, as long as the aesthetic goal is discussed, and everyone is on board with what is to be achieved.

Consider a forest floor, or a pollinator garden in a field. They're beautiful, no? The chances are, that if you did a native plant design for your club to achieve that same look using most of the same plants they

had just admired in a natural setting, they would for the most part be unimpressed. They might ask about the lack of colour or suggest the design looks a little messy.

So, what should we do when members, owners, chairpersons, or directors are

Ensure they understand
what native plants are, or
what planting for pollinators
really means from an
aesthetics point of view.

requesting a new design, and the request consists of having low cost plant material that looks great, is native, pollinator friendly, low maintenance, colourful, natural looking and formal?

To really lock down the club's goals, try finding some pictures of mature native species plantings to show the requestee. Ensure they understand what native plants are, or what planting for pollinators really means from an aesthetics point of view. In your discussion, focus on what kind of maintenance is required to make the garden successful and look good by the club's definition. You may find that low maintenance planting isn't actually what

they want, so you will have to be creative and incorporate native species plantings with some that are not, to achieve the goal. And remind them that there's no such thing as a no maintenance garden, unless of course, they really do want a forest floor.

Thankfully there are many native perennials that will provide colour and thanks to breeding there are many cultivars of these species, for example Echinacea, Rudbeckia, Monarda and Liatris; all of their original cultivars are native species.

However, site conditions are not always conducive for growing the aforementioned plants. When planning a natural looking design, try to find a native substitute for something that you would typically use or know succeeds in the growing environment your trying to fill, something that can perform similarly to the native selection and is suitable for the growing conditions. For example, instead of Vinca (Periwinkle) as a groundcover, which is now on the invasive species list, try Bearberry or Wild Geranium. In replace of Spirea's or Barberry try Shrubby Cinquefoil or Bush Honeysuckle.

Environmentalism isn't losing any steam which means native plantings and planting to promote pollinators is growing ever more popular and people want to know more about it. It's hard to justify putting resources towards something that doesn't impact playability or course conditioning and I understand that. If that is the discussion with your club, using native planting projects as marketing tool may be an outside the box way to think about the investment. Native, or natural looking gardens can be used as a way to generate foot traffic to your golf course property. Reach out to local environmental organizations, associations, schools, governments, charities, local professionals, retirement homes and general public in your area for coordinating projects or use your property to host educational events. We are reaching the late innings of the economic cycle which usually means leaders in any industry need to get creative to generate success and sustainability. ■



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Battling Brain Cancer Gord Somerville's Story



Cindy Somerville and Gord outside Sunnybrook on Brain Cancer Awareness Day, in October 2018, prior to first radiation treatments.



Friday night meet-up at Somerville's home. (L-R) Back row: Scott Horsbourg, Peter Lucas, Rod Speake, Richard Heffering, Kevin Holmes, Tim Colin. Front row: Mike Ettles, Steve Kajan, Tyler Ruest, Gord Somerville with his dog Nelson.

By Gord Somerville.

It was a typical Saturday morning. I was puttering around outside in the yard completing my honey-do list, and I needed to move my truck over in the driveway. While I was backing my truck into the selected spot, I inexplicably made contact with a tree and then took out part of our fence. My wife wondered what the heck was wrong. I advised her that I did not feel well and that I was going to lie down for a while. After a short rest, I had the following symptoms: headache, nausea, a little confusion and a slight slurring of my words. A friend, who was visiting, suggested I proceed to the hospital to have things checked out. I certainly was feeling a bit off.

Once we arrived at the hospital a team of health care professionals said I was beginning to show signs of a possible mild stroke. I had developed mobility issues, especially on my left side. They performed a CT scan and then came the first wave of shocking news. It was determined that there was a tumour on the right temporal area of my brain, close to my ear. The tumour was between the skull and the brain. I would be sent to the Kingston Hospital Neurological Centre for surgery.

I was taken by ambulance from Peterborough to Kingston. I was medically sedated, so I don't remember the journey, but my wife was by my side and swears it was the longest two and a half hours of her life. Not 12 hours earlier, on Friday evening, my world was the same as any other fall evening, dinner, an outdoor fire and some beverages

We met with Dr. Saunders and he shared the diagnosis with us. *Gord, you have Glioblastoma Stage 4 Brain Cancer.*

I didn't understand how this could be possible..

to start off the weekend. Now I was heading to Kingston for major brain surgery.

The surgery was performed on October 3, 2018 by Dr. Saunders. He informed me that he was able to remove as much of the tumour as possible, and that I would have to wait 10 very long and anxiety filled days for the pathology report. It certainly was nerve wracking, to say the least, but during that time I was recovering from surgery - half of the time I spent in the hospital and half of it at home. Did it ever feel good to be home again! The piece of my head they had removed to do the surgery was healing really well and I was feeling pretty good.

Then came October 16th and the pathology report was in. We met with Dr. Saunders and he shared the diagnosis with us. *Gord, you have Glioblastoma Stage 4 Brain Cancer.* I didn't understand how this could be possible. I was perfectly healthy just two weeks earlier. I had never felt any symptoms and now I had Stage 4 brain cancer. We talked about treatment options and locations. I elected to receive treatment at Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto.

We had our first appointment with the oncology team shortly thereafter. We met with Dr. Soliman and Dr. Perry, the most compassionate medical team I have ever met. They were very positive, and they felt confident that I would respond well to their treatment regime. I was encouraged by their words and anxious to get started.

My initial reaction to all of this was, *why me?* The oncology team did say that brain cancer really is just a matter of bad luck. There



Gord and his wife Cindy, playing golf at Hockley Valley on their 30th wedding anniversary.



Gord and his son Andrew at Wildfire GC.

really is nothing you can do to prevent it from a health perspective. In these cases, it is important to determine if the tumour is primary or secondary. In my case it started in the brain and was not an off shoot from any other source of cancer within my body. This was good news.

Did you know that 27 people in Canada are diagnosed with brain cancer every day? This is a startling statistic, not to mention all of the other cancer diagnosis that take place.

My treatment schedule was as follows: 42 radiation treatments over a six week period with weekends off. There was also oral chemo 150 mg per day during radiation and on weekends. Then one month off from radiation and a second treatment program of oral chemo to begin. This form of chemo is a heavier dose they call chemo top up: 300 mg per day, five days on and 23 days off. I was told this treatment program could last six to eight months depending on how well the treatment was working and my body's response. I would have a number of MRIs during this process to allow the doctors to monitor any changes in the cancer.

After the first stage of treatment and a follow up MRI the oncology team, or the "A Team" as I call them, were very pleased with the images and results. They reiterated that they felt they were going to talk about me for a long time yet. That was definitely a big boost for me and my attitude towards this whole experience so far. They told me that everything was shrinking and that there were no new growths. "No new growths" are the best three words a cancer patient can hear.

Chemotherapy weakens the immune system. One must be very careful not to be exposed to every day illnesses when in chemo. Unfortunately, I must have been exposed at some point as I ended up back in hospital for a week. I contracted Influenza A and Bacterial Pneumonia. It was a tough week, both physically and mentally, but I got through it. The steroid I was prescribed has an effect on blood sugar levels so while in hospital I was put on a diabetic diet to regulate this. I caught just about everything you could catch while in hospital. This was a very tough time, but I dug deep and found some

wit left within me to persevere and I recovered. There were some minor setbacks, but it was great to know that with a little medical assistance my body could fight off anything.

I believed, from the diagnosis stage, that I would get through this whole experience with wit, the power of positive thinking and a belief in modern medicine. I have also been showered with thoughts, prayers and positive vibes from friends and family. All of these things have helped me maintain a positive attitude.

I have also taken up meditation at the start of each day. I use it as an additional strategy to stay positive. I follow the teachings Dr. Joe Dispenza. I recommend following him as his videos and lectures have helped me immensely. Using one's mind to help heal the body through meditation is remarkable.

In difficult times, such as these, one worries about everything. You look for

those people who are going to be the rocks that anchor you. My son Andrew is one of those people, and he placed the call to my daughter Kailey in Vancouver. He told her that, *Dad has a brain tumour and you need to come home as he requires surgery.* This was a really tough call to make but he was incredible.

My daughter, who is a nurse by profession, has taken a lot of time off work to be with me and provide care and comfort. She has also been a rock through all of this, especially when she is not with me and has to deal with all of this from Vancouver.

I worry about my children and my wife, Cindy, and how they are coping with my health issues. I can't image what each of them is going through. I weep daily for them and what they are coping with. This is a scary time for all of us, but we are getting through it together and supporting each other.

I feel fortunate that the tumour was operable given where it was. Had it been within the brain it would not have been operable. The success of my treatment regime will keep the cancer at bay, and I am too stubborn to let this cancer return. I fully intent to get old and crusty, just like everybody else.

My medical experience and journey have shifted the way I think about everything. Things that mattered before no long matter nearly as much and things that I paid less attention to now receive my full attention.

I have enjoyed my career in the golf industry and other areas of the industry. I have made some amazing friends and their support as of late has been priceless and overwhelming. Thank you all. As I conclude my story my advice to friends is this: if there are sources of safety or protection you can utilize to protect yourself from any health risks, just do them. Practice them regularly to reduce the risks. It doesn't matter if you are a golf course superintendent, a painter, or work with LD50 products or whatever, protect yourself and pay attention to the most important things in your life—because life can change on a dime. Mine did. ■

Spring 2019, National Golf Day

By Doug Breen,
Superintendent,
Golf North Properties.

May 1st was National Golf Day in Canada - also in the United States, so I suppose it was North American Golf Day. I'm sure Americans wanted to call it "World Golf Day", in the same way that Major League Baseball has the "World Series". In any event, representatives of the Golf Industry sent delegates to Washington DC, Parliament Hill in Ottawa, and each State or Provincial capital. The delegates came from Superintendent associations, the PGA, Club Managers, the RCGA/USGA, and the National Golf Course Owners Association - which have come together as "WE ARE GOLF". The group was formerly known as NAGA (the National Allied Golf Association) but some clever marketing guru dreamed up the moniker "We Are Golf" - which I think we can all agree is pretty much on point. I was honoured to be one of those given the opportunity to go to Queens Park in Toronto to speak with MPP's about the state of the Ontario Golf Industry. This is the message that we delivered:

It's hard to find an article about golf in the mainstream media, that isn't filled with doom, gloom, and dire predictions about our business spiralling into the abyss. So - job number one, was to deliver some good news about the true state of golf. Fortunately, we have excellent data, garnered from the recently completed Golf Economic Impact Study. Golf is still the #1 participation sport in Canada, and we have the highest participation rate in the world. In other words, more Canadians per capita play golf, than residents of any other country on earth. Furthermore, more Canadians have golf clubs, than hockey equipment, skis, tennis racquets, bocce balls, or any other sport you can think of. That wasn't a bad opening statement.



HONEST PROTEST SIGNS

Golf contributes \$14.3 billion to the Canadian GDP. To put that into perspective, auto manufacturing contributes about \$20 billion, and golf has never once asked for a bailout. Additionally, golf hosts 37,000 charitable events, which raise in excess of 533 million dollars, and is responsible for over 300,000 jobs. An average round of golf (walking) burns 2000 calories and is the equivalent of a 5.6 km run or an 8 km walk. From an environmental perspective, Canadian golf controls 175,000 hectares of managed greenspace and an additional 30,000 hectares of wildlife habitat. Delivering those facts to our provincial representatives raised more than a few eyebrows.

In summary, the message delivered was; that golf may look like a small business, but when you add them all together, the 800 individual Ontario courses add up to be a significant employer, economic engine, and environmental steward.

Then came our "ask". A few days later, William Watson would publish an article on the Fraser Institute Blog, called "Golf is great, but don't even think about subsidizing it" - where he completely and utterly missed the entire point of the exercise. No delegation, from Ottawa to Washington, Vancouver to Florida, and certainly not

in Toronto - asked for a dime of government subsidies.

Rather; in Ottawa, the request was for tax fairness. Due to a strange quirk in the Canadian Tax Code, golf is treated in an unusual and penal manner. Any other form of entertainment in Canada is eligible for a business entertainment expense tax deduction. Businesses can take customers to hockey games, baseball games, even strip joints - and claim a portion of that expense as a business tax deduction. Since 1971,

golf (and golf alone) has been singled out as non-deductible. The MP's in Ottawa were simply asked to put golf on an even playing field with every other form of entertainment. No subsidies.

Across the continent, federal, state and provincial officials were asked to consider (or reconsider) legislation which could help to improve the financial state of the game. Again, no subsidies. In Ontario, we asked that the public meeting portion of the IPM program be scrapped. No one reading this, needs to be told that the public meetings are expensive, ineffective, poorly attended, and redundant. After signage and the EBR - informing the public for the third time of our pesticide use (months later) is clearly unnecessary and not having the intended effect.

The good news is that in Queen's Park at least, our delegations were well received. There will be some follow up, and it will take some time before we find out whether we'll see any changes in legislation, but it is hoped that National Golf Day was the first of many conversations to come. In the meantime, a quick call to your local MPP, to rationally explain why this is a reasonable request, will have more impact than all the protesters who populate the front lawn of Queen's Park every day. ■

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