

JUNE 2020

ONCOURSE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
ONTARIO GOLF SUPERINTENDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Navigating the New Norm

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

**Golf Practice Facilities –
A Tale of Two Clubs**

Managing Problematic Earthworms

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By Tim Muys,
OGSA President.

"Right now we aren't even concerned about performance, we're concerned about how we keep our clubs open ... right now it's about how we survive." – Shawn Rhodes

These are unsettling times, with the COVID-19 outbreak continuing to challenge all of us - changing the way that we live and how we work.

The effects of this global pandemic have already taken a significant toll on our industry. Golf courses were included in the provinces mandatory closure of non-essential workplaces on March 17th, but essential property maintenance on the grounds has been allowed, albeit with strict limitations which include social distancing, hand

washing, cleaning of equipment, etc.

The pressure put on superintendents to maintain courses at a basic level of conditioning has been immense, as we all struggle to determine what is essential and how much we can afford to do with our limited budget and staffing.

There is also the property security issue for some, as the public tries to use some golf courses for exercise or dog walking. Not to mention the extra stress of ensuring that enough precautions are in place for our scaled-down teams - worrying about what equipment will be used by which employees, putting up disinfecting stations, making sure washrooms and lunch rooms in our maintenance buildings can be accessed with proper social distancing and kept sanitized, etc. And of course we all have to think about what will happen if any of our staff members (or ourselves) become sick.

Shawn Rhodes has made it his life's work to study teams who found ways to survive and thrive in the most challenging and dangerous environments on the planet. He is an international expert on how the best teams pivot when change enters their plans, Shawn is a former war correspondent and author of the book "Pivot Point: Turn On A Dime Without Sacrificing Results."

The OGSA invited Shawn Rhodes to address the effects of this current crisis on our industry. The free webinar for our members took place on the Zoom platform and was held on May 7, 2020.

Shawn told his OGSA audience that COVID-19 has shown us how unprepared many of our courses and clubs were for crisis and/or change. He pointed out that superintendents are now responsible not just for maintaining the grounds, but also for the lives of staff and members.

He urged us all to think about what we can control in the midst of this pandemic, encouraging each of us to think about what is essential right now in order to figure out how to use our limited resources in the best way to get (and keep) our courses open.

I would urge all of you who did not get a chance to tune into the webinar with Shawn Rhodes, to watch the video of the talk which has been posted on the OGSA website. You will also find our website a great place to review some industry specific COVID-19 resources, including information from the government of Ontario and re-opening considerations. We know that it is more important than ever to stay informed during these extraordinary times as the situation around COVID-19 continues to develop at an increasingly fast pace, and we will continue to keep our website current.

I would also recommend reading Shawn Rhodes' book, "Pivot Point: Turn On A Dime Without Sacrificing Results." I did, and I found it helpful, especially in this time of crisis. In a nutshell, here are some of his recommendations: Avoid panicking. Make a plan (for contingency and continuity) and execute it to survive. Map out your current team, define roles and assign jobs. Take the time to communicate the objective you're all trying to reach together to get your organization through this - to your staff, your owners and your members or customers. Getting everyone on the same page will keep the group together as you navigate the changes that are upon us.

I hope that by the time you read this message, golf courses have been allowed to open. In the meantime, I also hope that despite the stress of being in uncharted territory, that you have enjoyed the once in a lifetime experience of being able to cut fairways in record time, work all day without trying to stay away from golfers, and turning on sprinklers whenever you like.

I would like to end my message with some good news. The IPM Council of Canada has reduced fees, and online audits have been postponed for 2020. And the best news of all - the public meeting requirement pursuant to Ontario Regulation 63/09 has been removed.

Take care of yourselves and each other. ■



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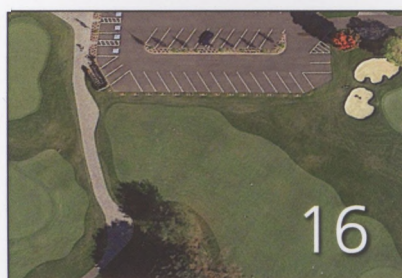
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ON THE COVER

May 16, 2020, opening day at Devil's Paintbrush. "Couldn't be happier with my crew, getting this property ready for today." Photo taken by Rob Wright, Superintendent.

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By Courtney White,
OGSA.

Spring is a time for growth and this seems to really resonate this 2020 golf season. Compiled in this issue, are personal accounts from members about how this

industry has pulled together to maintain and open Ontario courses through a global crisis, with limited staff and budget, while navigating social distancing protocol. If this isn't professional growth, I don't know what is! In this issue, we've captured some of the strategies members have employed for the season. Thanks to everyone who shared their experiences and ideas; you certainly help to inspire those around you.

Although COVID-19 and its impacts

will dominate conversations for months to come, some things haven't changed. For example, worms. Worms don't care about our current social distancing challenges. Did you know that worm casts, essentially the fecal matter left behind by earthworms that is deposited on the surfaces of greens, tees and fairways, can have a devastating effect on the management and playability of these surfaces?

If you're ready for a quick coffee break from all things COVID-19, and dreaming about building a practice facility, or maybe waiting for the day you can travel abroad again - we've included two great renovation stories to help inspire you, and Sean Van Beurden has shared his experience working in the Netherlands for a year.

As always, thanks to our volunteers for brainstorming, researching, writing articles. Your contributions are appreciated! ■

2020 OGCM CONFERENCE

Milestone 25 Year Membership Awards

We would like to acknowledge the following members for their longstanding support of the OGSA who were also recognized at the OGCMC in January, 2020 but their names were missed on the list that was included in the previous ONCourse issue, we apologize for this oversight.

- Terry Magee, Assistant Superintendent, Magna Golf Club
- Brent Stainton, Superintendent, Peel Village Golf Course
- David Svab, Superintendent, Silver Styx Golf Course
- Bill Thornton, Superintendent, Wildwood Golf Club

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WHAT'S NEW

By Sally Ross, Executive Director, OGSA.

Your Association in Action

The OGSA has been working diligently to keep members informed, provide education and information, and exercise strong fiscal responsibilities. We are ensuring that we follow Health Canada and provincial guidelines by requiring our staff to work from home, and limiting visits to the GTI only to pick up essential paperwork and mail.

The Board has met online three times since the last in-person meeting, which was held in late February, and while some projects have been tabled due to the pandemic, it has created some new projects.

Our NAGA – Ontario representatives have been meeting to send correspondence and information to our provincial government.

The OGSA sent letters to the premier's office directly, with a request to allow superintendents to perform essential maintenance on their courses.

Our directors collaborated on a document outlining changes to ON Reg. 63/09, and we were all gratified to announce that the requisite public meeting has been removed from the regulation. This is something that many directors over the past years had spent a great deal of time on. This document is posted under the "Announcement" tab at the

bottom left of our home page.

We have also prepared a summary of items to consider when courses re-open and staffing increases.

We approached GCSAA about education points for those of you who were short for the year. We wish to thank GCSAA for making all Ontario IPM accredited webinars that they have in their learning hub available to our members.

Recently we partnered with Shawn Rhodes who presented a webinar on Surviving Crisis, and delivered this presentation to OGSA members. The webinar will be made available online for members who couldn't attend the live Zoom presentation. Our thanks to Shawn.

While we started negotiations for Conference 2020 and have a venue on hold, we have not signed any contracts for that event. Whether the event will be allowed to happen, whether it is included in staff budgets, or whether people will want to attend any group gatherings, all remains to be seen.

The sharing of information from many of our partners in the industry has been phenomenal, and while so much of what

is happening today raises questions, we know that the superintendent, assistant and technician members are adept at sharing information with their peers. There is no doubt that this virus has caused everyone to rethink their business models, re-consider staffing requirements and scrutinize financial resources, we look forward to everyone finding a tolerable and executable "new normal," that will allow both profitability for clubs and safety for staff.

WELCOME to Our New Members

Blue Jay Irrigation	Class E
Stuart Bradshaw Monthill Golf & Country Club	Class A
Robert Raike Oakville Golf Club	Class C
Tyler Daigle Nottawasaga Inn & Resort	Class B

OGSA Award for (UofG) Turf Managers Short Course

Congratulations go out to Robert Bruce from Rosedale Golf Course. Robert had the highest mark from all Ontario golf course employees attending the program. Robert received a cash award of \$1,300.00

Membership Directory

Our printed directory has arrived with this ONCourse issue. Information was gathered from online profiles, and all suppliers were contacted for their updates. It has been a little more challenging to get responses from everyone of late, and we have had a lot of movement within our membership so as always we remind you that doing a search on the websites online search function will result in the most up-to-date information. ■

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GC HIGHLIGHT & MEMBER PROFILE

Legends on the Niagara

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Club House

Member since 2004

Tom Newton

Senior Superintendent, Legends on the Niagara

*By Ryan Scott, Golf Course Superintendent,
Oakville Golf Club.
Photos courtesy of Tom Newton.*

About the Course

Legends on the Niagara is a 45-hole golf facility, owned and operated by the Niagara Parks Commission. The facility consists of two championship 18-hole golf courses, Battlefield (designed by Doug Carrick) and Ussher's Creek (designed by Thomas McBroom). The two architects worked together to design the 9-hole executive course (Chippawa Course) and the award winning, 360° Driving Range. The property is situated on 1000 acres along the Niagara River, just above Niagara Falls.

Private, semi-private, public, municipal, resort? Public (Provincial)

Architect: Doug Carrick and Thomas McBroom

Number of holes: Legends on the Niagara: 45,
Whirlpool Golf Course: 18,
Oak Hall Par 3 Golf Course: 9

Number rounds annually: 50-55,000

Practice Facility: Award winning 360° (26 Acre) driving range, six ½ acre bentgrass tees, chipping green and taylor made academy fitting centre

Number of staff year round, seasonal:
Year Round – 5, Seasonal - 55

When I think of Tom Newton, the first thing that comes to mind is: genuine, humble, calm and a family man. If you've never met Tom, he stands out amongst the crowd and at 6'6" the chances are, he's the tallest person in the room.

Tom is currently the senior superintendent for Niagara Parks Golf, a position he assumed in 2012. In this role, Tom provides leadership and direction to the Niagara Parks Golf Team. This includes the superintendent of Legends-on-the-Niagara, Hartley Gibb, his assistant Paul Peterson and the superintendent at Whirlpool Golf Club, Andrew McQuillan. With the Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) being an agency of the Government of Ontario, there are several high level tasks that Tom manages, from preparing and ensuring adherence to budgets (operating and capital) to acting as a liaison between his front line staff and corporate. "I'm sure it is very similar to what many of my colleagues deal with, just more



Tom Newton, Senior Superintendent, Legends on the Niagara.

formal and structured." I can attest to this, as I had the pleasure of working with Tom for a season. The NPC is very structured, and policy and procedure driven.

As a kid, Tom played AAA hockey for the Niagara Falls Flyers, and played competitively at Willodell Golf Club of Niagara where he would become a perennial junior club champion. While trying to qualify for the golf Junior Championship at Port Colborne Golf and Country Club, he managed to shoot a 70

In the Hot Seat

Q: Favourite Major?

A: Masters

Q: Best piece of turf equipment?

A: Toro 648 Aerator

Q: Lowest round ever and where?

A: 70 – Port Colborne Golf and Country Club

Q: Ultimate foursome: You and which three?

A: Myself, my old man, my grandfather and my son

Q: Favourite meal?

A: Steak

Q: Favourite movie?

A: Pulp Fiction

Q: Favourite golf course?

A: St. Andrew's

Q: Favourite course designer?

A: Jack Nicklaus

Q: Favourite Band?

A: Fleetwood Mac

which included a hole-in-one. This was not his first; that happened when he was just 11 years old at the par 3, Oak Hall Golf Course, a property owned and managed by the NPC to this day. With Tom's stature, it's not hard to believe that a sport like basketball would come natural to him too. While competing in high school, his talents naturally drew outside attention. Tom was recruited and offered scholarships by several U.S. schools including the University of Niagara in Lewiston, NY. The program at the time was coached by the OGSA's recent keynote speaker, Jack Armstrong. Tom decided to pass on the U.S. scholarships and play ball a little closer to home at McMaster University, where he earned his Bachelor's degree (BA) in Kinesiology, in 1996. During his tenure, the team would become returning contenders at the CIAU (now CIS) final eight every year in Halifax, NS. "Unfortunately, we got a bit of a stigma associated with us as we made it to the final eight so many years in a row, never to win it...we were the Buffalo Bills of



Tom Newton and his family.

the 1990's." In his senior year, he overcame that moniker leading the Mauraders to the Ontario (OUAA) Championship.

Long before being recruited by Jack Armstrong and making it to the final eight for McMaster, Tom had a job working in the back shop at Willodell Golf Club cleaning clubs and picking the range. It was here when

superintendent, Angelo Toto encouraged Tom to join his team on the golf course. Tom would spend a few summers working with Angelo honing his turf managing skills, but he was considering a career in teaching. He spent a couple of summers away from the golf course to work at summer sports camps for kids. He quickly realized that his true

What You Need to Know

Predominant grass type: Creeping Bentgrass

Predominant soil type: Property was capped in a sandy/silt

Types of greens: 46 USGA greens,
1 California Style green

Course length: Battlefield Golf Course – 7309,
Ussher's Creek Golf Course - 7180

Size of greens: 10 Acres

Size of tees: 100 Acres

Size of fairways: 100 Acres

Major Challenges: Providing acceptable playing conditions while maintaining financial self-sufficiency in a very competitive and saturated market on a property with an excess of maintainable acreage.

"I remember when Tom worked in the back shop at the club (Willodell) he was a nice kid and when he wanted to make the transition to turf, I remembered that the most about him. It turned out he was also a hard worker and did a great job as my Assistant. In this industry you want to be with nice people and Tom is just that."

**– Angelo Toto, (Retired) Superintendent,
Willodell Golf Club of Niagara**

passion lies on the golf course. He went back to work for Angelo and became his assistant until the late 1990's. Angelo encouraged him to take the Horticulture program at University of Guelph. Later, Tom would go to work for Bill Glashan at the Whirlpool Golf Club where he would be exposed to more structure, projects and opportunities. In 1999, the Niagara Parks Commission was about to embark on a massive construction project. Tom was chosen to be one of two assistant superintendents to help lead the grow-in of Legends on the Niagara, Battlefield, Ussher's Creek and the Chippawa Course. Five years later Tom would be promoted to Golf Course Superintendent and tasked with preparing for the Battlefield course to host the 2004 BMO Financial Canadian Women's Open.

Tom recalls that it was easy to get staff buy in due to the fact that the entire team were in the loop two years in advance of the event with regards to course requirements. "This created a buzz and excitement for the team." The biggest challenge leading up to the event, was maintaining and managing the other 27 holes that were still open for play to the highest level. "This would not have occurred if not for the leadership roles and dedicated staff." Tom also mentions that Jason Whalen, lead mechanic who has been by Tom's side since day one at Legends, has been instrumental with the everyday operations of the facility.

In 2014, Legends-on-the-Niagara achieved Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for Golf status, lead by their Environmental Technician, Gillian Biggar. This was a critical facet to the operation as it aligns itself with the mission of the NPC, which is to protect the natural and cultural heritage along the Niagara River.

For those unfamiliar with the NPC, it's a large operation with many different facets including attractions, nature trails, road departments, greenhouse operations, and even has its own law enforcement division. The NPC is like a small city within Niagara Falls. One of the challenges with working in such a large outfit is the NPC is under the collective bargaining agreement with OPSEU (Ontario Public Service Employees Union) which dictates call backs and layoffs for seasonal employees based on seniority. Tom and his superintendents were however



Snapping turtles hatched, 2019.

able to turn this into a positive as they appreciate individual skill set and allocate the appropriate work. "We have a great team of dedicated seasonal staff that return year-after-year which makes things well-situated for us as property managers" Tom has learned over the years to recognize his staff's unique individualism, and that it has to be respected. "I feel that if your team is not being listened to, they will not respect and listen to you as a leader." Well said Tom, and spot on!

Through all the years managing such a massive property along with overseeing the Whirlpool Golf Club and the par 3 course, Oak Hall, Tom has never lost sight of what matters most to him, his family. His wife, Mary, and his two kids, Mya (16) and L J (15) have been his biggest supporters throughout his career. He has managed to keep a balanced lifestyle by being involved in coaching his kid's basketball teams, maintaining his own country property and taking those much-needed summer vacations. These efforts have kept the family healthy and together. Tom and Mary started their family summer vacation tradition before they had kids, taking adventures through places like Algonquin Park. Tom and the kids still try and get to the park every summer for new adventures and much needed solitude. "The sound of my paddle when out on the water, the peacefulness, the wind in the pines

above, I just always found it an excellent way to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life." I believe this is the recipe for a long and successful career. ■

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Navigating the New Norm



Opening day at Devil's Paintbrush. Photo by Rob Wright, Superintendent.

By Courtney White, Member Services, OGSA & ONCourse Editor.

On May 14, 2020 Premier Doug Ford announced that golf courses are allowed to open their courses for the upcoming season after previously noting, "We are allowing certain businesses to reopen under strict guidelines because we are confident they can operate safely and adapt to the current environment."

This encouraging news comes after an unnerving spring, where non-essential business closures and long-term speculation seemed to foreshadow a nonexistent season for golfers and lonely one for superintendents. With Ford's announcement, the industry was eager to tee off just in time for Victoria Day weekend, but for superintendents, topnotch disinfecting protocol, social distancing and eliminating shared equipment are still the name of the game.

As we move into this best-case situation (under the circumstance), the OGSA recently posted a number of suggestions for superintendents to consider while navigating this 'new normal'. The complete list can be found on the OGSA's website, and includes ways to help distance staff, sterilize and share equipment, and prepare the course to create a contactless golf experience.

Removing course furnishings like traffic stakes, rakes, pins and ball washers, pins, limiting player access to common areas are an excellent start to ensuring player and staff safety. Some courses are getting creative when it comes to players avoiding the pin. Christian Pilon, the superintendent at GreyHawk G&CC, explains, "We will use a homemade device that will allow golfers to lift the ball from the hole without touching the pin or put their hand in the hole." Washroom facilities on the course are also a concern and he adds that, "the on course washrooms will be open but we will not add the six portable washrooms that we normally provide for golfers. People will be allowed on the property 30 minutes prior to their

tee times and out of their cars 20 minutes prior to their tee times. In the event of bad weather, people will be directed to their cars."

Social distancing is key, and in some cases, there is limited maintenance building space and available equipment which makes implementing safety protocols challenging. Leading up to the May 14th announcement, superintendent, Chris Chapman from Camelot C&CC shared, "Presently we have held off on new staff as we are still trying to bring back all returning staff. Typically we would be running a crew of 12 up until May 1 and gradually get up to 20 full time and 12 part time staff. Through the spring we were a team of seven and brought back three staff on May 4th. We will probably get to full staff numbers in a month (June) but might not be able to provide the hours normally given during the normal summer due to the shop size and vehicle restrictions."

Many superintendents have already begun staggering start times, breaks and lunches for employees and implemented morning meetings via Whatsapp or other online meeting tools. Staff rooms and lunch

Many superintendents will also:

- Schedule shorter work days to limit exposure to staff.
- Provide individual spray bottles for disinfectant with refill station available.
- Staff will use their personal vehicles to store personal belongings (no locker room use).
- Prohibit punch clock use and assistants are responsible for logging start/finish times.



Photo courtesy of Jayson Griffiths, The London Hunt Club.

rooms are limited to one person entry at a time, and some buildings or rooms are off limits to all but one designated staff member.

Superintendent, Jayson Griffiths, from the London Hunt Club has assigned washrooms to individuals, implemented extensive cleaning protocols, has limited the number of people in a room with social distancing measures, and shared equipment is cleaned and sprayed after each use. "All current staff plus new staff members are provided a 10L personalized protective equipment (PPE) bucket with a lid. Each bucket (seed pails or box store pails) is named and contains one box of nitrile gloves, PPE glasses, hearing protection plus a small hand pump 1/3 gal psi pump spray bottle for quick personal sanitation of surfaces (bleach solution or disinfectant). Brown paper towel rolls are provided. A second bucket for personal litter is advised. In addition to the PPE bucket, each staff member is assigned their own cart along

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Other considerations superintendents can look at implementing include:

- **Waivers to be signed by staff to ensure they understand all new policies and protocols as it relates to social distancing/disinfection procedures/stay home when ill, etc.**
- **Policies drafted to reflect instructions for staff that have been in possible contact with someone who is ill/is being tested.**
- **COVID-19 safety protocol signage posted in common areas.**
- **Sanitization stations readily available throughout building.**
- **Develop policy regarding impending inclement weather (staff stay home/where can they shelter safely).**
- **Staff questioned/monitored daily for symptoms or possible exposure.**
- **Staff to wear clean clothing daily.**
- **Eliminate meeting with outside visitors.**



Whitevale GC, team meeting. Photo taken by Blair Rennie.



with tagged and named backpack blower and rake.”

And for those looking for more ideas, Work Place Safety and Prevention Services also make a number of recommendations for facilities maintenance employees during the 2020 season, which can be found on their website.

Limiting player activity and services offered will have an impact on revenues this year but to what extent, remains to be seen. Clubs are finding great ways to meet the player’s needs while on the course. Pilon explains that at GreyHawk, “People will be allowed to use the clubhouse washrooms and go in the golf shop to get limited items, take out sandwiches and drinks. We will offer a take-out menu that people will be able to order prior to, or during their rounds to take home during their rounds.” And, at Listowel Golf Club, their club house is offering food delivery to the first tee as player begin their round.

Despite these resourceful work-arounds, superintendents across the province have been asked to reduce budgets to help mitigate this expected dip. Al Schwemler, The Toronto Golf Club notes, “Budget adjustments have not been finalized, but reductions will be substantial since revenues will be impacted due to clubhouse closures. All necessary maintenance

practices, nutrient applications, and pest prevention treatments will be performed. Labor reductions will be the most impacted, as we anticipate a 25-30% reduction in staff for 2020.” Many

superintendents and their clubs have taken an all hands on deck approach to the season and have taken to twitter to thank colleagues from other departments for their help preparing the course for opening day.

Many associate members have implemented similar safety protocol and are working through their own budget restrictions and trying to find new ways to connect to their clients. For sales manager, Mark Scenna, and his team at Target Specialty Products, their company has seen a 15% staff downsize (across North America) as a result of a two to three month projection of estimated revenue loss, resulting in one sales rep on their team. “While the most obvious challenge of operating under current golf restrictions is the impact on our projected revenues, the inability to easily meet with our

customers, with whom we have many close relationships and who count on our input is also an obstacle we’re working to overcome.”

Paul Grotier, Belchim Canada, Sales and Account Manager Professional Turf Products, shares this sentiment and is also trying to find ways to overcome social distancing during this time.

Limiting player activity and services offered will have an impact on revenues this year but to what extent, remains to be seen. Clubs are finding great ways to meet the player’s needs while on the course.



Foursome at Listowel GC, Aidan French, Steve Boehm, Bill Lang, Eric Boehm social distancing before their first tee off. Photo taken by Brenden Parsons.

"The biggest challenge we face is communicating with end users. Cell phones and web conference calls help but it's not the same as meeting customers at their courses. Golf course personnel are also stretched thin and extremely busy this spring which leaves little time for managers to meet with vendors; there definitely is an element of guilt when you reach out to a superintendent to book some time to discuss product material."

For both superintendents and associates, the intense focus on personal safety, the restricted budgets, operating with reduced staff, and for some, job insecurity, has an enormous impact on the human psyche. Manager, Gavin Carnegie with DLF Pickseed shares, "The biggest challenge has been finding balance and achieving a healthy mindset during the crisis for all the employees." Whether you're behind a desk in a makeshift home office or alone on the course, this sentiment is echoed by all. Thankfully, golf is back, and a day on the course and bustling activity can do wonders for everyone's wellbeing.

It's been an impressive effort by everyone to see Ontario's golf season come to fruition this year. Rob Wright, the superintendent at Devil's Pulpit Golf Association, says it best, "I couldn't be happier with my crew getting this property ready for today. Members and guests please enjoy responsibly and help take care of your course. Stay well, keep distance, and swing easy." Despite the obstacles, superintendents, associates, and their staff are eager to make the best of the season – even if we're standing two metres apart. ■



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Golf Practice Facilities A Tale of Two Clubs



*By Owen Russell, Superintendent, Markland Wood GC and Al Schwemler, Superintendent, The Toronto GC.
Photos provided by Markland Wood GC, and The Toronto GC.*

Recent trends have shown that golf courses are placing priority on improving their practice facilities. There are numerous reasons why practicing is becoming more popular.

This article looks at how Markland Wood Golf Club and The Toronto Golf Club approached their practice facility restructuring.

Markland Wood Golf Club Reconstruction Project

In 2015 the members at Markland Wood Golf Club began to entertain the idea to improve their practice facility which consisted of a 5,500 sq. ft. green and two bunkers that were used for practice. The green was located in a small area that was approximately 38,500 sq. ft.

The club's marketing director was consistently faced with the challenge of impressing prospective members with the golf course, but the limited ability to practice sent people to other clubs.

The research strategy with this project

was to take the Long Range Committee members to visit other properties that had created good practice facilities in limited spaces. Architect, Cam Tyers, took the committee to meet with Dean Baker at Burlington Golf Club, who had erected an impressive small net structure, and Jason Crawford at Eagles Nest, to look at the Titleist fitting centre which was also very impressive. Once the committee had an idea of what elements should be included in the new practice facility, Tyers placed them in a drawing over-laid on the existing small space and the plan was presented to the membership. There was a great deal of support but some resistance as some people could not visualize fitting a new green, a practice bunker, 11 hitting bays and a training building with the Trackman system into the 11,000 sq. ft. space. The members voted to proceed with the project.

Markland Wood is located in a City of Toronto flood plain which means that the TRCA, Toronto Urban Forestry, Toronto Building Department, Toronto Planning & Development and City of Toronto Parks and Recreation all had to approve the project before the construction could begin. This project also required the services of a Geotechnical engineer, Structural Engineer and the Golf Course Architect to obtain the

Some reasons why practicing is becoming more popular:

- It is the quickest way to improve your game which makes playing more enjoyable.
- The health benefits of exercise and being outdoors.
- Time constraints.
- Practice can be fun and challenging.
- The social benefits – practicing with friends or family.
- Practicing can be very affordable.
- Provides a platform for expanded teaching opportunities.



Markland Wood GC, original practice area.



Markland Wood GC, renovated practice facility.



Markland Wood GC, inside the teaching academy.

required permits. Work began at the end of March, 2016 and was completed by the middle of June, 2016. The permit related costs were \$85,000 and the construction and materials were \$700,000.

The practice facility was a great investment and has been a key factor to the club's growing population. Although the practice space is small, it's very useful because even though you don't get to see your ball travel 250 yards, it is deep enough that golfers can watch their ball carry after they hit it so they can still assess whether they hit it well or poorly. The Trackman is also of great value because even though golfers can only hit the ball 100 feet, it registers all of their statistics, and records a video of each swing. It is free for the members to use and they can email their videos to themselves and watch them at a later time. It's also worth noting that it only takes the attendant three minutes to walk the collector around to pick up all the balls.

Since the completion of this project, Markland Wood members and their guests rave about the facility, and have found their favorite uses for it. Some members take advantage of the space before work, and some bring their grandkids in the evening and have a glass of wine while the kids hit balls. Golf club suppliers use it for fitting days and the golf professionals give lessons

and hold ladies and junior clinics.

One of the most enjoyable conversations had after the project was complete was with a member who said, "I wasn't in favour of the project when it was presented, but I love it and I am glad we built it." Now, instead of talking about the tuna fish at the halfway house, he talks about his improving Smash Factor on the Trackman.

The Toronto Golf Club Reconstruction Project

After the success of the Colt course renovation works in 2009/2010, the club requested their consulting architect,

Dr. Martin Hawtree, to develop a master plan for the 9-hole Watson course and practice facility. Safety issues between the Watson course, practice facility, and surrounding homes required immediate attention and ultimately were the driving force behind the proposed reconstruction. Additionally, both entities had not had a facelift in numerous years and playability and functionality did not meet the club's standards

The issues that needed to be addressed included:

- Errant balls from the existing practice facility landing on adjacent Watson fairways and greens.





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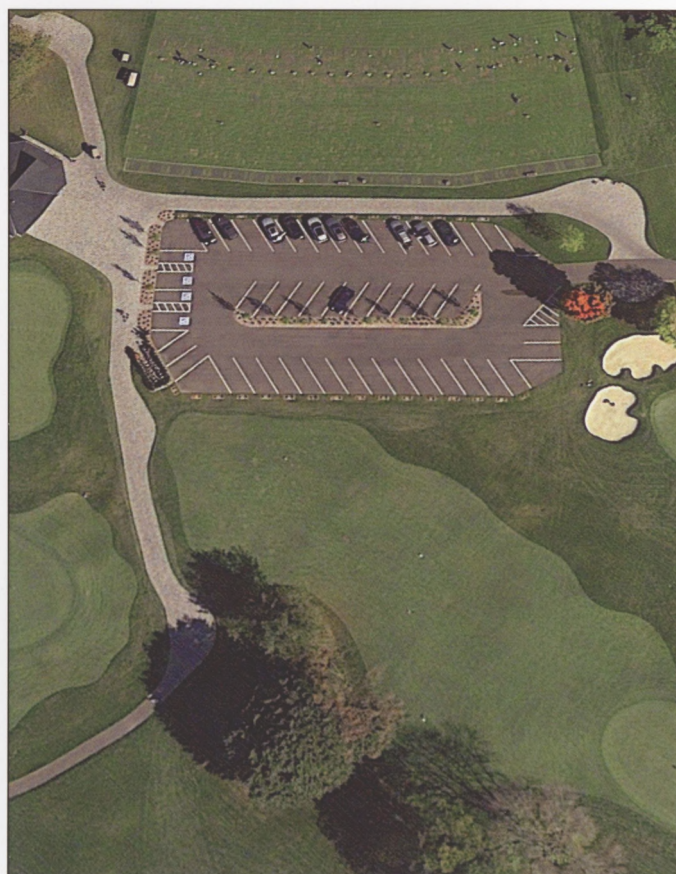
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The Toronto GC original short game area.



The Toronto GC, new short game area with range tee.

- Errant shots from the Watson course landing in adjacent properties, member parking areas, and onto the practice putting green.
- The practice green did not have similar slopes/contours to any of the Colt or Watson greens.
- The pitching fairway and greenside practice bunkers shared a common green.
- Limited practice opportunities and space - the practice range had a maximum of 13 hitting stations, the short game area was not reminiscent of any Colt course features (bunker style, short cut surrounds), the practice tee was only 1800 m², the teaching tee was 450 m², and tees were comprised of perennial ryegrass.
- Parking was limited to 26 vehicles – overflow parking was often on the grass near the short game area.
- Buildings were not functional for any social gatherings and storage space was limited.
- The infrastructure on the Watson course and practice facility was outdated and

required upgrading: irrigation system, information technology, septic systems, potable water supply.

The new practice facility has been very popular with members and guests. It has become the “hub” or “pre – event” meeting place prior to large golf outings, a boon for the teaching professionals, and another popular social gathering spot for a BBQ or private function.

After numerous committee and town hall meetings, design changes, and a membership vote (in 2014), the club approved embarking on completely rebuilding the practice facility, Watson

course, associated irrigation installation, buildings, infrastructure, and parking areas. The total budget for the project was \$4.5 million, inclusive of all approved works, designs, on-site supervision, and site plan administration and fees.

This allowed additional lands for expanding the size of the practice range, range tee, teaching tee, parking area and building construction, and the enhancement of a short game practice area.

Construction began in early August of 2015 and continued into the spring of 2016. Most of the practice facility and Watson course construction was completed and re-grassed by the middle of November. To expedite the design and construction approvals, Christine Fraser of Hawtree and Associates Ltd remained onsite for the duration of the project. The practice facility had a soft opening on June 1, 2016.

Practice Facility Facts:

- 3860 m² bentgrass practice tee which can accommodate 23 hitting stations.
- 1355 m² bentgrass teaching tee.
- Range consisting of a centralized fairway and four back to back target greens.



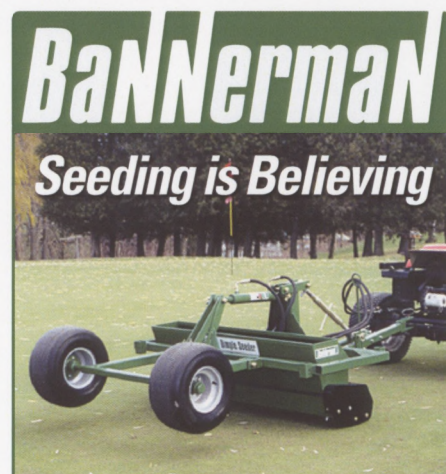
The Toronto GC teaching academy



Markland Wood GC teaching academy.

- Short game area comprised of putting green, bunker complex/green, chipping green and surrounds, 82-meter (90 yard) pitching fairway/green complex with a variety of lies, and a fairway practice bunker.
- The entire practice facility and parking area is 48,488 m².
- Virtually all architectural features, found on the Colt and Watson course, have been portrayed throughout the practice facility.
- Green, tee, and fairway turf types are consistent with those found on the Watson and Colt courses (short cut turf was propagated by aeration cores from the Colt course and seeded with bentgrass).
- Greens mix was produced onsite by blending a 50/50 mixture of native sandy soils and topdressing sand to mimic the greens mix on the Colt greens.
- Ability to practice shots from rough height turf.
- 23 station "turf hound" artificial mat complex.
- Two bay heated teaching academy building with various teaching equipment - Trackman for ball flight and club data, Swing Catalyst for video and pressure, Bull 3D software and Polhemus G4 six sensor wireless 3D for motion capture, and SAM PuttLab for measuring how the putter moves.
- Tee house – remote clubhouse with food and beverage capabilities, indoor and outdoor seating.
- Parking for 45 vehicles.
- Ability to have approximately 65 golfers practicing simultaneously throughout all facets of the new facility.
- Teaching clinics have been very popular and in high demand.

The new practice facility has been very popular with members and guests. It has become the "hub" or "pre – event" meeting place prior to large golf outings, a boon for the teaching professionals, and another popular social gathering spot for a BBQ or private function. The entire project was a great long-term investment for The Toronto Golf Club. ■



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Managing Problematic Earthworms

By Chris Lecour, Target Specialty Products
with special thanks to Ben McGraw for his
contribution to this article.

Photos provided by Ben McGraw.

There are approximately 1800 described species of earthworms found on Earth (though very likely many more undescribed species).

All species of earthworms play a role in the soil ecosystem:

- Some consume both living and dead organic material and produce casts which are rich in humus and macronutrients. By consuming this organic material, they may aid in reducing thatch.
- By burrowing through the soil, channels created by earthworms improve soil aeration and drainage and reduce compaction.
- Microbial activity in the soil is stimulated by worm activity and some plant nutrients can be made more available.

Unfortunately, the positive effects of some earthworms have on the soil ecosystem come at a cost to golfers and turf managers. Worm casts, essentially the fecal matter left behind by earthworms that is deposited on the surfaces of greens, tees and fairways, can have a devastating effect on the management and playability of these surfaces. They create uneven and messy playing surfaces and reduce turf density, leaving damaged turf vulnerable to weed infestations. With a reduction in turf density comes a drop in the turf's photosynthetic capacity which will have a negative influence on plant health and its recuperative ability. The casts will also inevitably build up on the rollers of mowers which can severely impact their height of cut.

Recently Ben McGraw, Associate Professor of Turfgrass Science at Penn State, spoke to attendees of the Ontario Golf Course Management Conference in Niagara Falls about the damage earthworms cause and what turf managers can do to minimize their impact. McGraw presented several key takeaways about earthworms and their behavior in the soil:

Problem species

The damage caused by worm castings on golf courses in Canada and the U.S. are caused by species not native to North America. Several non-native species were brought over by European settlers as early as

the 18th century. Native species were wiped out during the movement of glaciers during the last glacial period in North America. Since the retreat of the ice, forest ecosystems have evolved and managed to get along just fine without earthworms. Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program states that of the 19 species confirmed in Ontario, 17 originated in Europe and two from the US. Without competition from worms that are native to the region, invasive species of worms have been allowed to flourish, in particular *Lumbricus terrestris* and *Apporectodea spp.* In forests, invasive earthworms can have a devastating effect on the ecosystem, devouring leaf litter and transforming what was a rich organic forest floor into bare soil. The forest floor is now prone to erosion and the natural habitat for animals, insects and native plants is now gone and nutrients stored in the understory for decades quickly disappear.



Ben McGraw, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Turfgrass Science at Penn State.



Cast in topdressing.

Not all earthworms are created equal

Earthworms can be categorized into three groups based upon their behavior in the soil:

- Epigeic earthworms help breakdown organic matter and leaf litter and reside near and at the soil surface. This type is most problematic in forests ecosystems. However, the Green Stinkworm (*Amyntas hupiensis*) may cast within the interior of sand-based root systems during the summers in Kentucky-Ohio River Valley region.
- Endogeic worms live in the top 30cm of the soil profile. Their tunnels are horizontal, and they live, eat and cast within the soil. They feed on soil and leave their casts within the tunnels beneath the surface.
- Deep burrowing or Anecic earthworms create deep vertical burrows or tunnels from the surface into the soil. Anecic worms will emerge from the burrow at night to feed on leaf tissue. They will deposit their casts on the surface as well.

It is the Anecic earthworms that cause the playing surface disruption that frustrates turf managers and golfers alike.

Behaviours of European Anecics

A combination of soil moisture and temperature will usually see an increase in worm activity. Most earthworms avoid droughty conditions and temperature extremes and will find relief deep in their vertical burrows during these periods. Conversely, regular irrigation or rain events on greens, tees and fairways combined with an abundant organic food source and favourable temperatures in spring and fall will mean an increase in surface activity and damage. Juvenile anecics are especially voracious eaters. All of these factors combine to ensure that the fall is typically the time of year that fosters the greatest increase in worm activity, leading to an increase in casting and ultimately, potentially severe turf damage.

Casting issues are a growing problem on highly maintained turf areas, more so than they were 20 and 30 years ago. Insecticides can have a significant effect on earthworm populations in the soil. Older



chemistries tended to have a very long lasting residual effect on worm populations. As governments began phasing out many of these older chemistries, they were replaced with pesticides that were more quickly broken down in the soil. The new chemistries also tended to be more selective and less harmful to non-target organisms. Chlordane, for example degrades very slowly in the environment and can remain in the soil for as long as twenty years after an application. It's widely known that chlordane was harmful to many non-target organisms, including earthworms. The use of chlordane was completely phased out in the mid 1990's in both Canada and the United States.

It is important to note that currently there are no products registered for the control of earthworms in Canada. Some turf managers have reported seeing less worm activity and casting on turf treated with some fungicides in the fall for late season dollar spot and fusarium control. Thiophanate-methyl, which is registered in Canada for dollar spot, brown patch and microdochium patch can have a negative effect on earthworm activity when incorporated into a golf course disease management program. These

residual effects are temporary and may last up to four or more weeks.

In recent years the use of organic fertilizers made from tea seed has proven to be very effective in curtailing worm activity

There are cultural controls available to reduce worm activity and casting on the surface, but results are often mixed at best.

and surface casting. Tea seed contains saponins which disrupt the worms' mucous coating, forcing them out of the soil where they desiccate on the surface. During his presentation, McGraw indicated that a 43-46% suppression in casting can occur following an application of a tea seed based organic fertilizer. Early Bird 3-0-1 is one

such type of organic fertilizer available for use in Ontario.

There are cultural controls available to reduce worm activity and casting on the surface, but results are often mixed at best. Fairway topdressing became popular on golf courses in the 1990's as a way of creating a firmer playing surface and by extension, providing a less hospitable environment for worms. In fact, short term results have indicated that fairways topdressed with sand have actually shown an increase in worm casts. To reduce worm casts effectively, a course needs to be committed to a long term topdressing program with multiple applications per year, over multiple years, which can be very expensive and labour intensive. Unfortunately, this commitment is still no guarantee that the casting problem will disappear.

Attempting to reduce pH by applying acidifying fertilizers is another option. Lower earthworm populations have been observed in soils with a low pH, ideally around 5.0. Acidifying fertilizers such as ammonium sulphate, ferrous sulphate, and elemental sulphur can lower the pH of the soil. This method is also not without its challenges:

the shift in pH from applying fertilizer is temporary and cannot be achieved with a single application; heavier soils will buffer pH more easily than loamy soils, so more fertilizer is often required; the risk of turf burn is possible, especially when using elemental sulfur at higher rates, rates that in some cases may need to be used to be effective. And soil pH adjustment can have varying effects among earthworm species. *Lumbricus terrestris* appears to be much more tolerant of the reduction in pH than other invasive species. By adjusting the pH of the soil to reduce earthworms, perhaps a simple shift in the population from one problem species to another will be the end result.

Some studies have looked at reducing the amount of organic matter by removing clippings as a way to reduce earthworm activity. Unfortunately, even after several years of clipping removal, there was no change in worm activity and casting damage.

While there are some options available to deal with the problem of worm casting on playing surfaces, a viable solution may remain elusive for many golf courses with smaller budgets and limited manpower. Researchers continue to look for answers to control this turf pest that won't disappear any time soon. ■



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(L-R) Front row: Rob Gatto (sec), Chedoke GC, Chris Andrejicka (vice), Essex G&CC, Jeff Alexander (pres), Parry Sound G&CC, Randy Booker (past), Otter Creek GC, Doug Breen (treas), Brookfield GC. Back row: John McLinden, Toronto Ladies GC of Toronto, Phil Scully, Granite GC, Stuart Leachman, Diamond in the Rough GC, Jarrod Barakett, J. Barakett & Associates, Mark Prieur, Trafalgar GC, Chad Vibert, Mad River GC. Not available for photo, Jennifer Pendrith, Kawartha G&CC.

ON THE MOVE

Sean DeSilva left Coppinwood GC and went to Cedar Brae GC, Brad Bell went from Markland Wood GC to Lakeview GC, Ken Emory went to the Ambassador GC and John Taylor was the superintendent at Oakville GC.

Plant Products appointed Jason Ireton to General Manager and Graeme Calder is the new Technical Sales Representative.

ACHIEVEMENTS

OGSA member Neil Acton, CGCS, Deer Creek Golf and Country Estates, Ajax, was one of 23 GCSAA members honoured in San Diego for 25 years of certification.

Andrew Hardy and the Pheasant Run GC became the 43rd golf course in Ontario to earn Certified Audubon Sanctuary status.

Jim Flett, superintendent at Muskoka

Lakes GC, was named the Ontario Director for the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association.

Congratulations went to Claus Zander of Zander Sod who was appointed President of Turfgrass Producers International (TPI).

Congratulations went to Aldo Bortolon, superintendent and his course dog, Bronson at Lookout Point Country Club in Fonthill. The Lebanon Turf Dog Days of Golf calendar committee has chosen Bronson to appear in their 2011 calendar voted on at the GCSAA Orlando conference in February.

IN MEMORIAM

Keith Stevenson passed away on December 20 in his 80th year. Keith was the superintendent at Haliburton Highlands before retiring.

Gordon Witteveen passed away on



Pro Super winners Jeff Thomas and golf pro, Warren Thomas.

December 16 in a Toronto-area hospital at the age of 76.

Born in the Netherlands, Gordon emigrated to Canada in his early twenties and attended the Ontario Agricultural College (now the University of Guelph). He was the superintendent at London Highland Country Club, Northwood GC and finally The Toronto Board of Trade Country Club.

He became active with the OGSA and later helped found the CGSA. Gordon initiated *The Greenmaster* magazine of the CGSA and served as its editor for five years. He also served as a director of GCSAA.

TOURNAMENTS

The OGSA Pro/Super Challenge was held at Otter Creek GC hosted by superintendent, Randy Booker. The winning team was from Cobble Beach Golf



(L-R) Randy Booker, Otter Creek GC, Host of the Pro Super Challenge, and OGSA director, Phil Scully.



President's Day, Orr Lake GC Champs, lead by Jason Harris.



(L-R) Back Row Alan Beeney, Jim Flett, Jim Wyllie, Paul Dermott, Simon George, John Arends, Bruce Berger, Thom Charters, Barry Endicott, Chris Andrejicka, Stu Leachman, Jennifer Pendrith, Doug Breen, Keith Bartlett. Front Row: William (Bill) Hynd, Robert Moote, Rob Ackermann, Pelino Scenna, Randy Booker, Paul White, Jeff Stauffer, Paul Scenna, Jeff Alexander.

Links consisting of assistant, **Jeff Thomas** and golf pro, **Warren Thomas**.

The Presidents' Day was held at Brampton G & CC hosted by **Martin Kopp**. The winning team was from Orr Lake GC led by **Jason Harris**.

The OGSA Summer Scramble was held at Springfield G& CC in Guelph, hosted by superintendent, **Ray Dlugokecki**. The winning team consisted of **Jamie Spencer**, Westminster Trails GC, **Mark Durand**, Ontario Seed, **Mark Trudell**, Maple Ridge GC and **Scott Gardner**, Echo Valley GC.

The OGSA Assistants Tournament was held at BraeBen GC in Mississauga hosted by **Dan Magrin**, superintendent and assistant, **Blake Sicard**. The winning player was **Greg Brown**, assistant at Essex G&CC.

The 4th Annual Seniors Golf Tournament was held at Mono Hills GC, with hosts **Doug Suter** and **Alan Beeney**.

The McClumpha Memorial Tournament was held at Black Bear Ridge GC in Belleville, hosted by **Bill Fach**. Low gross honours went to **Bill Gilkes**, Scarboro GC and the George Darou Trophy was presented to **David Stevens**, Beaverbrook GC by **Ron Craig** of Turf Care.

EVENTS

Ontario Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Act, 2008 regulated that all golf courses in Ontario using pesticides are required to be accredited by an IPM body approved by the Director. ■



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Leven in Nederland: een jaar in het buitenland

(LIFE IN THE NETHERLANDS: A YEAR ABROAD)



By Sean Van Beurden, Assistant Superintendent, National Golf Club of Canada. Photos taken by Sean Van Beurden.

I've always known that the turf industry is a small tight-knit group, but over the past few years I have learned how small it truly is. In 2018, I wrote an article summarizing my week down at Shinnecock Hills for the U.S. Open. Little did I know that the contacts I made and the conversations I had there would lead me to a year abroad, working in the Netherlands. In the classic, "I know a guy, who knows a guy" fashion, fellow volunteer Stu Sheridan was able to connect me with Paul O'Donahue (Head Greenkeeper at The Dutch) who then connected me with Tom Maddison (Head Greenkeeper at The International Golf Club). With the European Tour's KLM Open heading to the private club located between the Schiphol Airport and the lovely city of Amsterdam, there was a clear interest on my part to vie for an open Assistant Greenkeeper position. After a few conversations, a little bit of research on what it would take to move abroad, my wife and I decided that this was an opportunity that I could not turn down.

From a turf perspective, this was a unique opportunity as the Netherlands was on the cusp of a complete synthetic pesticide ban (implemented April, 2020). Therefore making the challenge of hosting a European Tour event, without the use of pesticides, even bigger. With 30% of the country built on reclaimed land, and an extremely high water table, the Netherlands has taken the strictest approach to pesticide usage in the EU. As we have recently been evaluating our pesticide usage here in Ontario, I thought it would be beneficial to learn from a country with world class agriculture, how to truly grow some grass.

The development of a sound agronomic plan is paramount to the



success of a golf course, particularly one that does not have the use of synthetic pesticides. We had to truly understand the importance of plant health and learn how the timing of fertility and aeration, water management, and mowing/rolling frequency affected the amount of disease pressure we saw. With the coastal climate of the Netherlands and the cool and wet winters, it's particularly difficult to manage the *Microdochium* patch. Matching the nitrogen rates with growth potential, eliminating dew as early and frequently as possible, and a couple heavy iron applications were a few of the secrets to success.

For the past several seasons the course has been trying to push for as much bentgrass into the greens, as we know that poa annua is often more susceptible to diseases, but with their climate and no control products available poa is impossible to keep away.

As we moved closer to the tournament, the Netherlands had a record-breaking heat wave that pushed the turf (and the staff) to the limits. Despite having a lot of water surrounding the country, water usage is monitored quite strictly, which adds to the challenge of keeping bent/poa greens and ryegrass fairways alive through a 40°C heat wave.

After surviving the heat wave, we had a moment of relief when we got a sprinkle of rain on the Wednesday right before the tournament. This gave us the opportunity to shift some of our focus from keeping grass alive to polishing up the last final details before the tournament began. Anyone who has been involved with a large tournament knows that the volunteers are the most valuable asset of the week. We had an incredible team of volunteers coming in from across Europe who not only helped us put together a high caliber product, but made sure that what could have been an extremely stressful week, fun and memorable. Although the KLM Open may



not be the premier tournament on the European Tour, with names such as Patrick Reed, Lee Westwood and the tournament winner, Sergio Garcia, the event had record setting attendances on all 4 days of the tournament, and the 100th KLM Open was considered quite the success.

As much as this past year has been a great learning opportunity from a turf standpoint, there are many exciting but challenging aspects to moving abroad. The Dutch language certainly isn't the easiest to learn, with some words that sounds almost identical to the English version and others that seem like they came from another planet. Fortunately, the majority of people that live in Amsterdam speak fluent English, and are more than accommodating to someone who struggles to pronounce words such as gezellig or gemeente. (If you look it up, it's not how you would think to say it!)

Although many hours were put into work leading up to the tournament, my wife and I certainly made time to take advantage of travelling around Europe. The ability to travel to different countries all within a couple hours flight is something that we obviously cannot do here, but makes living in Europe so interesting and appealing. There were even a few occasions that I would hop onto my bicycle (which in true Dutch fashion, I rode to work every day), and head straight to the airport from work for a quick weekend trip.

As I reflect on my time in the Netherlands, I realize that the year was much more than just a great career learning opportunity. Not only did I create a whole new network of friends and colleagues, I was able to see more of the world than I had ever thought I would have. Traveling to places such as Lisbon, Krakow, Dubrovnik and Bordeaux, and being able to experience so many different cultures was something that I will truly cherish and will not soon forget. ■



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Disease in the Plant World

In the plant world there are a countless number of diseases that can stunt, deform, discolour, cause growths, and or kill the host plant. In my experience, the biggest contributor to the occurrence of disease is plant health, or lack thereof. I always stress about getting the growing conditions correct for the plants I choose or selecting the right plant for the growing conditions I'm working with.

Essentially, installing a plant that requires full sun in an area with inadequate light levels won't be killed by the lack of sun. It will be because of a disease that overcomes the plant as a result of its poor health due to the lack of light. Some plants are more susceptible to disease than others, but it's typically not the plant's fault. It is almost entirely a result of location, environmental conditions, soil quality, water, fertility, etc.

The most common diseases we see in the ornamental horticulture world are powdery mildew, anthracnose, blights, galls, root rot, leaf curl, leaf spot, bacterial spot, black spot, downy mildew, rust, verticillium wilt, fusarium wilt, botrytis, cankers, and damping off. Plant diseases are caused by fungi, viruses, bacteria and nematodes. They can be waterborne, soil borne, transmitted through air or transmitted by insects. An interesting example of insect transmission is about Aphids. Aphids are one of the most common garden and greenhouse pests. Not only do they cause damage by sucking sap from plants causing weakness but they secrete what is called honeydew. This sticky honeydew supports the growth of a fungus called sooty mold. The sooty mold itself doesn't directly injure the plant, however

it appears as a thin black coating on leaves which can interfere with photosynthesis resulting in a further weakened plant.

You can avoid a lot of disease battle time if you step back and really look at your situation. There are situations where you can install something in the absolute perfect spot for that plant and give the plant all it requires for

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optimum health and a disease can still come and wipe them out. I will give an example.

Downy mildew had never been seen before on Impatiens (*Impatiens Walleriana*) until 2004 in the U.S., and by 2011 it had spread to almost every continent. I had no idea it was a thing until around 2012. For a number of years I was planting a large mass of Impatiens in the perfect spot; it was a shaded spot in a high traffic area where I wanted a lot of colour all season. Impatiens

have been used for that reason for years and was very popular for getting colour in shaded areas. I was planting somewhere in the realm of 700 individual plants. One year the entire mass had just started to die with no hope of saving them. It had completely wiped the entire bed out in the matter of a week or two. Upon further research, I found out that the cause was Downy mildew. I also discovered that, one - there is no cure, and two - you can no longer plant Impatiens in an area where the disease had been. This species of Impatiens has been one of the most popular bedding plants on the planet for a long time. From the producers stand point to all the way up the supply chain, this was major financial loss; one of the top selling products was being wiped from shelves and greenhouse production across the globe.

The demand for the product is still really high, as a result breeders have been working on developing resistant varieties.

Ever since the pesticide ban in Ontario gardeners have had to become much more diligent with plant selection, site analysis, tool cleaning and disposal of infected tissue to avoid the spread of disease. We've also had to become more inventive and creative with nonchemical remedies. A book that I refer to often is, "The Organic Gardeners Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control."

Some things you can do to minimize some disease pressure culturally are select disease resistant varieties, prune shrubs to allow air flow through them and around surrounding plants, do some selective pruning on trees around your area to allow air flow and water at the base of plants, amend soils with organic matter (compost) to encourage beneficial microbial life, and keep the garden tidy. You should also avoid overcrowding, and prolonged moisture on foliage.

This spring hasn't been an easy one, and everybody will know someone who is impacted by health or economic issues as a result of COVID-19. As we ease back into our new normal this season, wash your hands, wash your tools, and may the rest of our gardening season be disease free. ■



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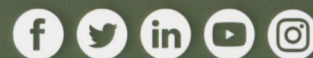
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The Spring of COVID-19

By Doug Breen, Superintendent,
Golf North Properties.

I've never been more proud of Ontario golf superintendents, than I was this spring. Actually, I'm proud of our entire industry. It obviously wasn't what any of us were expecting, when we returned from our much deserved Christmas break. What looked like a typical off season of reel grinding, equipment repair (boy have those carts turned out to be important), seasonal preparation, hiring, and dropping the odd dead ash tree - was thrown into absolute chaos by COVID-19.

Some courses were ready to open on the weekend after St. Patrick's Day, and it appeared as if we would have one of the best springs in years. Some actually did open for a few days, before the Provincial Order mothballed our early start. Suddenly we were all learning the intricacies of layoffs, EI, CERB, and dozens of other programs. Ontario superintendents had to become emotional support, employment councillors, statesmen, and financial advisors - on top of usual 25 jobs that we do every day.

Then we started watching the Doug Ford show at 1:00 every day, and reading endless articles about virology and statistical analysis every night. And we worried. I heard from owners who didn't know how they were going to make payroll, and the emotional upheaval of laying off a 20 year employee for the first time. I heard from superintendents who were immunocompromised or taking care of elderly parents, and also knew that the course owner had been paying staff salaries out of their own pocket for months. Many have spouses or other family members in the medical field. We could all see that our industry was in trouble, and yet Italy was on the news every night.

Then came the first glimmers of hope. Kids seemed to handle the disease pretty well. The hospitals in Ontario stood up to the rush. The curve flattened. The real data



**My golf game - helping me to remain
'socially distant' for decades.**

was a fraction of the worst case scenarios - thank goodness.

When we got the green light to 'maintain' the courses with skeleton crews, I saw some things that really warmed my heart. There were clubhouse GM's cutting fairways. Event planners took orders for takeout food. Golf Pros were helping to cut down trees. As courses got the word that we could start getting ready to open - the tables turned, and superintendents were seen installing plexiglass in pro shops. Everyone sat down with the endless lists of Best Management Practices from all over the world, to try to come up with a set of protocols which would allow each course to re-open, and to re-open safely. On opening day (with 36 hours notice) - all hands were on deck to make sure things went smoothly and safely - and we did it together. I truly hope that we'll be better partners going forward, now that we've taken a walk in each other's boots.

When it came time to lobby the Provincial Government (to try to get the golf industry going, to get our staff back to work, and to give some physical and mental relief to the general public) again, we were all in it together. We Are Golf (formerly NAGA)

went to Queen's Park with a common message, "We have only talked about what businesses are essential vs. non-essential; now it's time to talk about businesses that are safe vs. unsafe. Golf can be played (with additional protocols) in a manner which supports social distancing and safety." As an aside, I must tip my hat to the cannabis lobby. To go from a felony to an essential service in just over a year is quite an accomplishment. I have a buddy whose mom grounded him for a week and cried for three days when she found a ratty joint in his jeans on laundry day - now she takes it every day.

I'd also like to point out the role of social media in all of this. Not the part

about how you should inject Lysol or that COVID-19 is caused by 5G towers - the useful part of the internet. I have often said that Facebook is too sugary and sweet, and that Twitter is an angry cesspool - but both platforms were a valuable resource to share ideas, experiences, and failures from around the golfing planet. Take for example, the myriad of ideas that were used to keep the ball from dropping too far into the cup. There were dozens, and we got to see them all - for free - in real time.

It gives me hope, that people have been so willing to work together, locally and around the world. Let's not lose that when this all ends. Now that Ontario courses are as busy as 1985, it would be pretty easy for everyone to go back to our old silos. A year from now, when we're jammed with two years worth of weddings, and every company wants to run a golf tournament again - I hope the superintendent will still want to help out on a busy Saturday morning, that the Golf Pro will still want to hop on a mower once in a while, and that we'll all remember that in the Spring of COVID-19, we all got through it together. ■




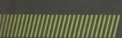
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