



# WESTERN VIEWS

November-December, 1996

Official Publication of the West Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association

## WMGCSA 1997 Meeting Schedule

- Jan. 14 Winter Meeting,  
The Highlands
- Jan. 20 MTF Conference,  
-23 Lansing
- Jan. 24 GCSAA Seminar,  
Lansing
- Feb. 6 GCSAA National  
-12 Conference,  
Las Vegas

\* Upcoming events will be listed in next issue.

### MEMBER NOTICE...

**Meeting Payment Policy -**  
Beginning in 1996, all meeting expenses will be on a CASH ONLY BASIS. There will be NO CHARGES ALLOWED. This will give us more control of all transactions and will eliminate having the host club having to handle all the billings.

**Meeting Cancellation Policy -**  
This is a reminder of a current policy. If you make reservations for a meeting and are unable to attend, and you do not cancel, you will be billed and expected to make a payment.

### WORDS OF WISDOM

If you want to see a shorter winter, borrow money that's due in the spring!

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

**SERIALS**  
OCT 10  
Western Views  
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## President's Message

It's hard to believe that it is the end of 1996, the 21st century is close at hand. As the year comes to a close, I would like to thank the Board of Directors and the membership for all their help and support. Looking back at 1996, it was an easier year than 1995, but maybe not that much. A cold Spring and a dry Summer delayed recovery from 1995, also the Fall was not all that great. Oh well, there is always next year!

1997 will bring a change on the Board of Directors. Mike Herbst informed me that he was resigning his position. The demands of his time and effort by North Kent Golf Club brought about this change. I personally want to thank Mike for his contributions to the Board and WMGCSA. We will miss you, Mike. To fill the vacancy on the board I have appointed John Fulling of the

Kalamazoo Country Club. John will serve the remainder of Mike's term, which expires at the end of 1997. Welcome aboard, John!

1997 promises to get off to a great start with the Michigan Turfgrass Conference and Show in Las Vegas. I know everyone is working hard on their gambling strategies, the best one I know is "Don't bet, they didn't build all those casinos by losing."

On a national note, WMGCSA member Jon Madden CGCS from Elk Ridge is running for GCSAA Board of Directors.

Happy Holidays to everyone, as we look forward to 1997. Hope to see everyone soon, take care and think about family and friends.

Paul Schippers  
President

## WMGCSA Committees, 1997

Notification:	Keith Paterson	MTF	Harry Schuemann
Finance	Keith Paterson	Scholarship	Kathy Antaya Harry Schuemann John Fulling
Membership	Keith Paterson		
Membership Search	Kurt Thuemmel Jeff Hopkins Roger Barton	Newsletter	Al Bathum John Fulling Doug Boyle
GAM	Doug Boyle Harry Schuemann Kurt Thuemmel	Fall Party	Roger Barton Jeff Hopkins Keith Paterson
Education	John Fulling Kurt Thuemmel Al Bathum	Golf Day	Al Bathum Roger Barton Doug Boyle
GCSAA	Keith Paterson Doug Boyle Kathy Antaya	Monthly Meetings	Jeff Hopkins Kurt Thuemmel Kathy Antaya
Nomination	Harry Schuemann	Bylaws and Policy	Paul Schippers Harry Schuemann

# Green Construction... In-house?

Well, normally I'd said thank you kindly... but I don't think so! It often seems, however, that there's always a way to get a little more done for the money. In this case we were planning a major overhaul of the driving range, and we kinda needed to redesign the short course to do it. So, they asked me if we could build a green, in house, while we were doing the range... in house.

Fortunately, the design only called for one new green and three new tees. The dozer would already be here anyway. I needed to build a quality green complex for about \$15,000. This green had to blend with the existing landscape on the short course, and function better than the original greens. I knew I couldn't build a USGA green for that amount. I certainly didn't want to wing it.

I remembered hearing about the California style or "Alternate" green construction method at a GCSAA seminar a couple of years ago. I dug through my notes and found, "The evolution of the modern green," by Dr. Michael Hurdzan. In it, Dr. Hurdzan outlines three different types of construction, one of which is the California style. After re-familiarizing myself with the procedure, I realized that it was simply a USGA green, without the intermediate gravel layer. A green designed to drain. Eliminating the gravel layer could save a substantial amount of money, as well.

The procedure seemed basic enough that I *could* do it in house. Construct the base as you would for a USGA green, making sure that the sub-grade conforms to the desired putting surface grade. Add drainage using 4 inch tile, and back fill with washed pea stone. Install 12 inches of root zone mix. Compact and grade the mix to specification.

The new green is a modified design of an existing green, down sized to about 3,900

square feet. The sizes of the greens on the short course are anywhere from 3,500 to 4,000 square feet. I used about 1,000 yards of fill sand from a local excavator, who, just *happened* to digging a tunnel at the time. Their dozer operator spread the fill over the new site. We then selected a base elevation and staked the perimeter and grades for the new green. The operator, who had never built anything on a golf course, was able to do a great job with the sub-grade. After minimal hand work, we added the drainage.

We reset the stakes and brought in the root zone mix. I used an 80/20 mix from Michigan Sand. The dozer spread the mix to about 12 inches. We fine graded the mix by hand. The dozer then pushed up the surround to meet the green. I know I should have formed a bowl, and *then* added the mix, but all the time I had yet to decide where to place the bunkers. We added irrigation, cut in the bunkers, and sodded the surrounds.

The design specs are less precise than those of the USGA green. The USGA green has intricate water retention properties, while the California style green moves water through its profile quickly and efficiently. This meant a drier putting surface, that may see some heat and drought stress on occasion. I felt Penn G2 would be the perfect choice for this type of environment. I had heard stories about superintendents who had watered their G2 greens only once throughout all of 1996, and I needed a drought tolerant turf.

We seeded the G2 at 3/4 of a pound per 1,000 sq. ft. We installed Penncross in the collar. I used the Scott's "grow in" fertilization program for bentgrass greens. The G2 took about 14 days to germinate. It seemed very thin at first. I almost panicked. I had convinced myself that I misapplied the seed. I didn't know

how I lost the seed, but it was gone. You ever have that feeling?... I knew deep down though that the seed was there. Thank goodness I held out, because within 4 weeks it surpassed the density of the Penncross.

To this point, the green has functioned as expected. It drains extremely well, maybe too well. The G2 has 8 to 10 inch roots and has filled completely. Its color is outstanding. I look forward to working with both the green and the G2 in 1997.

The California style green is definitely not for any situation. The green must be in an area where wind desiccation is not a factor, and water is readily available. They are ideal for low lying areas, or perhaps in wooded settings. Our site does not sit low, but it is well protected from wind by trees. It gets ample morning light, and has a sound irrigation system.

The green cost about \$14,000 to complete. We did all the work in house, except for the bull dozer operation and compacting. We started August 12, and seeded September 2.

Looking back, it was a good project. The nice thing about a big project is you get too busy to worry about silly things... like failing miserably. In all honesty, it did turn out well. I am still a little leery of installing this type of green on the regular course, though. I don't know what its management demands will be, or even how it will perform. I hope, for my sake, the results are favorable. I am fortunate to have an executive course that allows me to experiment with things that I would not try on the regular course.

I will report back to you on the green and the G2 next fall. Feel free to stop in if you want to see the G2, or just to say hi. Have a great holiday season. See you soon!

*John Fulling, CGCS*

## Exposing Golf's Delusions of Grandeur

*Mark Massara, Guest Columnist  
Golfweek, Nov. 23, 1996*

For a game claiming to be centuries old, golf is looking rather disconnected lately. What began with rugged outdoor-types chasing a white ball across native terrain called "links" has metamorphosed into something resembling a line of minivans at a drive-thru-fast-food joint. Today's American-style "championship" courses are typified by modern accoutrements that are both tacky and environmentally destructive.

Among other things, contemporary golfing requires hundreds of acres of artificial superlawn, thousands of gallons of water per day and thousands of pounds of chemicals annually. The result is polluted aquifers, displaced native peoples and converted agricultural lands, wetlands and forests.

What true golfer would be caught annually walking these Disney-style venues? Today's golfing experience includes motorized golf carts, female caddies (practically de-

regueur in Indonesia), with rounds played at huge expense across gigantic, nation-sized estates and conquered with a bag o' clubs made of exotic metals. Nothing, it seems, is particularly venerable about the game of golf.

There are more than 27,000 golf courses world-wide, each using as much water as a city of 6,000 people, sustained only by constant disbursement of chemicals, and at the cost of a large amount of prime agricultural soils, public lands, forests, deserts, wetlands and coastal environments.

Scarier yet, rampant golf course construction in Mexico, Indonesia, Australia, India, turkey and dozens of countries across the globe has given rise to something akin to "golf wars". As public and private lands are strip-mined away from agricultural and natural uses to golf, entire cultures are being displaced and destroyed. Visualize working at a golf resort on land that was used to farm rice for 10,000 years in China, Malaysia or Bali. The reality is that no civilization was ever founded on golf, and the loss of vital agricultural lands and fresh-water supplies should concern everyone.

It may seem absurd to the average American golfer, but an organization called GAG'M (Global Anti-Golf Movement) has documented hundreds of these "golf wars" worldwide. Kidnapping, land and water theft, caddie-whores, involuntary relocation, eviction and violent deaths are becoming increasingly common as threatened native populations struggle to resist golfing's worldwide tentacles.

Yet like a spreading cancer, new golf courses open constantly. The transitional and imperial appetite of the \$30 billion golf industry is astonishing, and it appears insatiable. The game, it seems, has had all the "wild" taken out of it and has been reduced to an experience rather like schlepping through a strip mall. Sustaining the game has been elevated above such trivial concerns as world hunger, global warming and ozone depletion.

Rather than criticize the 20th-century golf experience, the goal here is an appeal to the 25 million golfers in the United States. Golfers

*Continued, page 4*

# Environmentalists a part of radical new religion?

On the recommendation of Tim Hiers, a member of our Reader Advisory Panel, I recently read an interesting new book, "Environmentalism: the Dawn of Aquarius, or the twilight of a New Dark Age," by Dr. Michael S. Coffman.

If ever a person stood up as a radical anti-environmentalist, it is Dr. Coffman, who taught forest ecology classes for 10 years at Michigan Technological University. He's not against the environment (quite the opposite), he's just reached his wit's end when it comes to extreme environmentalists.

"What is going on?" he asks in the book's first chapter. "Environmental activism is often irrational...logic is superfluous, even despised. The environmental movement has shifted from a 'wise-use' conservation movement prior to the 1960s to a religious movement today."

Coffman points out that Americans now believe environmentalists over scientists by nearly 5 to 1. "In 1990, over two-thirds of all Americans believed what environmentalists had to say about environmental problems, compared to statements made by institutional scientists (15%)."

Here are some other statements Dr. Coffman makes, verbatim:

• The true battleground is over what we as Americans believe. In a sense, it is a Holy War, one in which the opposition know no compromise.

• Most Americans concerned about the environment are white, middle to upper class, far removed from the natural resources they depend on for their standard of living...at the highest level of Maslow's Need Hierarchy...a

mix of people who are likely to believe environmental horror stories more than scientific fact.

• Fear and raw terror, based in legitimate problems but rooted in the belief that nature is God, are being used to push us headlong into radical social change. Those studying the environmental movement acknowledge (its base) in Eastern mysticism and pantheism.

Dr. Coffman's statements, taken in context by someone who's followed the environmental movement for the last 10 or 11 years, don't sound far off the mark.

For instance: when was the last time you heard Jay Feldman of the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides back down from his radical posturings? Two years ago at the GCSAA convention, in the face of thousands of golf course superintendents, he demanded an end to pesticide use, for goodness sake!

As industry tries to keep America prosperous without unduly damaging the environment, the self-proclaimed environmentalists continue their crusade against "one part per trillion."

In the book's final chapter, Dr. Coffman ties things together nicely, suggesting concessions by both industry and environmentalists.

"The sky is not falling," he writes. "But we do have serious environmental problems that we, as a nation, must address. Industry must seriously review its business and conservation practices to determine where changes can be made. But we must also question the motives of the environmentalists...and demand that objectivity rule in the regulatory process."

"Environmentalism...Aquarius or...Dark Age?" is available from Environmental Perspectives, 1229 Broadway, Suite 313, Bangor, ME 04401. Cost is \$9.95 plus \$2 shipping. It's an easy, important read, recommended for anyone whose livelihood affects the environment in any way.

Jerry Roche, Editor-In-Chief  
Landscape Management, August, 1993

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## CONGRATULATIONS!

Heather Nabozny, head groundskeeper for the West Michigan Whitecaps has been named "Groundskeeper of the Year" for the Class "A" Midwest League. In addition, Old Kent Park was named as the "Field of the Year" for the league's eastern division.

Heather, a graduate of the MSU's two-year Lawn Care and Athletic Field Program has been with the Whitecaps since they began in

1994. The awards to her and Old Kent Park were announced following the 1996 season, and provided additional luster to the team's league championship.

Congratulations Heather, from all of your friends in the turf industry!

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## Exposing Golf's Delusions...Continued from page 2

play golf, I suspect, in order to be outside, breathe fresh air, get exercise and enjoy nature. Golfers play golf for the same reasons that Sierra Club members go hiking and surfers go surfing.

The problem is that golf has been co-opted, kidnapped, hijacked and manipulated by real estate speculators, chemical manufacturers and golf course architects and designers. Nearly 10 million acres of the earth are now dedicated to golf. Golf courses are nearly a required appendage for residential developments and a not-so-secret excuse for resort development worldwide. The big chemical companies are shameless; they pander like drug dealers, doling out over \$6 billion annually of pesticides and fertilizers, nearly 7 pounds per acre.

And what is the impact on green fees from paying \$1 million per course in design fees to the big name course designers? Does the fact that California coastal courses routinely charge hundreds of dollars for a round of golf make the sport accessible to low-income youth or minorities?

If golf is to be saved from itself, a number of fundamental changes to the paradigm are necessary. First, for existing courses, inappropriately sited courses must be reclaimed. Thousands exist. Return these lousy courses to agricultural uses, wetlands and forests. Put the wild back in golf by letting wild be wild, instead of living in the rough, along the fairway. It isn't enough to say that courses are environmental amenities because they provide "open space". Clearing forests provides "open space" too, but only in-

dustrial timber corporations actually advocate it.

Second, the world's golfers make a powerful coalition. In the United States alone, 25 million people pay \$10 billion to \$15 billion annually in green fees. Take a small percentage of that money, say 10 percent, and use it for land acquisition for public parks and recreation opportunities. This small dedication has numerous benefits, including preservation of farms and alternative forms of recreation, which should make golfers feel good and prevent nongolfers from playing golf, which will relieve the bumper-to-bumper golf cart traffic at your local course.

Third, eliminate chemicals. Go cold turkey. It will initially cause convulsions, withdrawals and cold sweats. The chemical industry will use dire predications, threats and intimidation to resist the effort. But in the long run players, course workers and the planet will be better off.

Fourth, drastically reduce water consumption. Resist the temptation to build desalination plants and improve treated waste facilities merely to facilitate and fuel new golf-related development.

Lastly, and pertaining to new golf course construction, drastic limitations are needed. Though a complete worldwide moratorium is perhaps justified, at a minimum, new courses should be confined to previously degraded environments such as landfills, quarries and mines. In these few disturbed and wrecked locations, its arguable that carefully planned courses, using limited resources and sustaining native plants and animals, actually improve habitat and envi-

ronmental quality. In no event should the world's sensitive coastal resources, home to most of earth's people and natural biodiversity, be further converted to golf.

Of course this admonition can be ignored or called shrill, but be forewarned. Open your eyes and listen. A nearly imperceptible grumbling can be heard and felt around the world. And it is growing. Activists in Japan have stopped more than 1,000 proposed courses; in Korea, 96 courses. The El Tepoztlan course project in Mexico was abandoned after a native activist was kidnapped and killed. China has imposed a virtual moratorium on new courses. In the United States, Arco Oil's controversial Naples Ranch course in Santa Barbara, Calif. has cost about \$10 million — and construction hasn't even begun. And citizens in Monterey, Calif. voted to amend their General Plan and reject officials' approval of the 20,000-acre Rancho San Carlos golf resort and residential project.

The seeds have been sown; the discontent grows. Though the sound of billions of dollars being made may insulate the game from world realities for another decade, the writing is on the wall. Golf isn't nearly as noble, or wild, as it believes itself to be.

**Mark Massara is a San Francisco-based public interest environmental attorney specializing in coastal land use and protection. He directs the Sierra Club Coastal Program.**



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