



# WESTERN VIEWS

Official Publication of the West Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association

## Golf Day and Annual Meeting

The 1997 Golf Day and Annual Meeting were both well attended this fall. The Blythefield Course and The Moors were both in good shape and the service was great as usual.

We would like to thank Doug and Paul and, of course, the members at their clubs for hosting these fine events.

The Golf Day event raised \$6,043.00 for research.

## Elections Held for 1998

The elections were held at the annual meeting and the results are listed below:

President	Doug Boyle
Vice President	Al Bathum
Secretary Treasurer	Keith Paterson
Directors	Kathy Antaya John Fulling

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

**Western Views**  
 725 STATE UNIVERSITY  
 Cascade Rd., S.E.  
 Grand Rapids, MI 49546

## President's Message

It is the end of October, a time when the golf business should be slowing down and our thoughts could turn to other things. Ha! This Fall has been for me, the busiest in 20 years. It all started with the summer help that used to stay until mid September, leaving in mid August. Due to the low unemployment rate, replacement help was nowhere to be found. Construction of a new practice facility, including 38,000 sq. ft. of teeing area and Fall weather that has kept turf growing like wildfire will into October, has led to more gray hairs than I care to count. Maybe each Fall has been this busy and I just cannot remember one from the other.

December 31, 1997 will mark the end of my term as President of WMGCSA. It has been a great honor to serve this association and I also want to thank the entire membership for their support. Serving on this board these past years was made much easier because of the help of fellow members. A special thanks to past president Harry Scheumann, friend, mentor and guiding hand. Harry was always there when I

needed him (thanks Harry). Keith Paterson, who has done so much for this association and kept me on the straight and narrow. It is through Keith's efforts that this organization runs smoothly and prospers. All board members, past and present, that have taken of their time to contribute to this organization, take a bow, you deserve it. Incoming President Doug Boyle, CGCS will provide strong leadership in the years to come. It is my wish and hope that more members become involved. Any organization only works as well as its membership. I also want to thank all the participants from Golf Day at Blythefield C.C. Golf Day is a prime example of membership involvement. A special thanks to Al Bathum, Roger Barton and Doug Boyle, your Golf Day committee. It is going to be a busy off season, with many meetings and conferences to attend. I hope to see all of you soon.

Best wishes,  
 Paul Schippers  
 President

## Thank You

*Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*I am writing to thank you for choosing me as the W. Bruce Matthews Scholarship Award winner. I was thrilled when I learned I was the recipient.*

*I am also writing to let you know that I am grateful that you offer this scholarship. I am leaving for Michigan State University next week to begin my studies in engineering.*

*I am both honored and grateful to have received this award. It is a memory that I will treasure the rest of my life.*

Sincerely,  
 Melissa Ann Magee

# WMGCSA Turf Student Award

## A. Purpose

1. To reward outstanding effort by a turf student associated with Western Michigan.
2. To identify a turf students with the greatest potential to become an active, professional golf course superintendent.
3. To choose a student to best represent the WMSGCSA.

## B. Award

1. \$1,000 award given to one student.
2. Engraved plaque recognizing the winner, year and association.
3. One year membership in the WMGCSA.

## C. Qualifications

1. Currently enrolled college student, pursuing a career as a golf course superintendent.

- December graduates are eligible
- Freshmen through seniors in four year programs
- First and second year in two year programs

2. Golf course work experience in Western Michigan at a member course.
  - Geographical area defined: West of US 127 and South of Mt. Pleasant
  - Consider any student close to these boundaries if superintendent is WMGCSA member.
3. GPA above 2.5.

## D. Criteria

1. Timely submission of cover letter and resume to scholarship committee chairperson.

2. Confirmation of qualifications by chairperson.
3. Successful completion of interview by Scholarship Committee.

## E. Deadline

Cover letter and resume must arrive by Friday, December 19

Mail or FAX to:

Kathy Antaya CGCS  
The Meadows G.C.  
4645 W. Campus Dr..  
Allendale, MI 49401  
FAX 616-895-1002

## F. Interviews

The award interviews will be held on Tuesday, January 13, 1998. Contact Dr. Trey Rogers, Dr. Jim Crum or myself to confirm your interview time.

If you have any questions, please call me 616-895-1005. Good Luck!

Kathy

## Welcome New Members

We would like to welcome the following people to our organization!

### Richard Hakken,

Pohlcat Golf Course

### R. Kirk Dohm,

Lincoln Country Club

### Erwin H. McKone,

LaGrange Country Club

## A Word of Caution

Never, never, ever fill a metal gas can in the back of a truck with a plastic bed liner. Why? A big boom can result. The plastic bed liner doesn't allow the metal gas can to become grounded to the truck.

As the gas fills the can, it creates static electricity. If this electricity is discharged and there is a spark - look out!

To avoid this, take the gas can from the truck, put it on the ground and fill it.

Thanks to the WSPCA's "The Pest Intelligencer" for the info.

# Don't neglect your course superintendent

GOLF WEEK, August 2, 1997

Ask any golf course superintendent and most will tell you the hardest part of their job is dealing with in-house politics.

Growing grass, dealing with drainage, making sure there's enough air and sunlight to keep their course in shape: these are the things they've trained years for. The best university program in turf management can't prepare them for all the nonsense entailed in responding to 400 bosses — all of them self-styled experts, and most of them accustomed to having their way.

Besides reading about poa annua grass and the percolation rates of various soils, it might be helpful to spend a semester studying Machiavelli and Carl von Clausewitz. Not that dealing with the vagaries of weather is easy. But at least in responding to Mother Nature you don't have to negotiate along the way with someone else — or worse, yet, a committee.

The image of the superintendent as country bumpkin greenkeeper — dressed in jeans and suspenders, with

little more than a few years as a farmhand as training — are long gone. You might not know it from the way some members treat their hired help, but superintendents today are among the most highly trained professionals in the golf business. Most of them are licensed by their states to deal with pesticides, and many of them continue their college education through ongoing seminars organized by the 18,000-member Golf Course Superintendents Association of America or its regional affiliates. With all the recent developments in golf equipment, swing technique and physical training, the single most dramatic changes in how golf looks and plays have come by way of refinements in golf course maintenance.

Whenever I have questions about a golf course, I go to the superintendent. The only trouble is finding them, because the good ones spend a lot more time in the field than in their office taking calls. Good superintendents know their course as well as — sometimes better than — they know their own children.

And why not, because they spend more time tending them?

That's why it's always awkward, if not downright rude, when some thunderous business tycoon of a member raises hell about, well, you name it. "There's not enough water in the ponds." "Why can't you get your mowers off the course earlier?" "The greens are too bumpy." "Whaddya mean I can't take my golf cart on the fairway?"

Many of these concerns come from excessive expectations. In the business, it's called "The Augusta National Syndrome." An awful lot of people expect their golf courses to look like the annual site of The Masters. Of course, they wouldn't be willing to fund the necessary maintenance budget. And little do they realize that tournament venues are primed to look a certain way for one week a year and don't look that way every day.

Superintendents under such scrutiny have virtually no job security. I know many superintendents who have

*Continued, back page*

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## Don't neglect your course superintendent, continued

been on the job a decade and still fear the wrath of a disgruntled member or clique. If the course gets highly ranked, they are told "it's about time." Should the golf course fall off in comparison to some neighboring layout, the superintendent's head is first on the chopping block.

The problem is compounded by the proliferation of management companies, most of them eager to cut costs. Many of these firms, interested only in short-term profits, try to force out a veteran superintendent and replace him or her with a low-paid newcomer just to save \$20,000 - 30,000 a year — while putting a multimillion dollar asset at risk.

To be fair, there are clubs that value who and what they have. It's crucial to extend long-term contracts so that a superintendent doesn't feel constantly under the gun. The main reason that golf courses are over-watered, for instance, is that greenkeepers are afraid to make a mistake and "lose" an area of the

course to brown-out or disease. They end up saturating the place just to cater to certain expectations about "green is better," even if this invites other kinds of turf trouble.

Besides long-term contracts, clubs can encourage — and pay for — their superintendents to attend annual training workshops. It would also help if superintendents are made to feel welcome, teeing it up occasionally with members or representing the club in area events. Clubs also can establish regular procedures so that complaints can be directed through a committee rather than having the superintendent respond to every complaint.

A long-term master plan to guide management and any renovation projects is the only way to avoid the nastier forms of in-house politicking. Perhaps most important of all is establishing an adequate budget so that the superintendent doesn't have to cut corners.

For their own part, superintendents

need to maintain regular communications. Proper signage at the first and 10th tees about pesticide application or cart traffic can forestall misunderstandings out on the course. A column in the club's monthly newsletter, or a note directly to the members, also helps.

What a pleasure it is to see a club that values its superintendent — and to see golfers acknowledging it, as well. The media in general, and televised golf in particular, do a lousy job of crediting the hard work most superintendents do. Among the many gracious touches in Justin Leonard's British Open acceptance speech were his words praising Royal Troon's superintendent, William McLachlan.

When is the last time a winner of a major publicly thanked the greenkeeper? Come to think of it, when's the last time you thanked your superintendent?

*GOLFWEEK* architecture editor Bradley S. Klein is the author of a new collection of golf essays, *Rough Meditations* (Sleeping Bear Press).



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