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# Stock Seed Farms

by Andrew Penner



They battled weather; the wind, the rain, the cold, and prolonged drought. They worked long hours in the blazing sun. And they relied on buffalograss to survive. Indeed, the early settlers on the Great Plains had plenty of things in common with many of today's golf course superintendents!

Thanks to its resistance to drought, its ability to stay healthy and strong with very little maintenance, buffalograss is well on its way to becoming a life-saving – well, ok, perhaps more accurately, a job-saving – turfgrass for many golf course superintendents in North America. And Stock Seed Farms, based in Murdock, Nebraska, is on the cutting edge of this new trend. They are one of the leading providers of buffalograss seed to golf courses throughout the Midwest and beyond.

Of course, buffalograss is anything but new. It's a native plant that has thrived on the plains – from Mexico to Manitoba - for centuries. The buffalo, naturally, were big fans of it. They ate it by the megaton. Hence the name. Early pioneers, too, used it to feed their livestock. They also cut it out of the ground in strips to make sod-walled homes that allowed them to survive the brutal winters. Without stone or timber, buffalograss sod, which was dense and well-rooted, was the best building material available. Jokingly, people dubbed it "Nebraska marble."

Buffalograss is a warm-season grass that is naturally resistant to pests and disease and has a slow growth rate. It spreads via stolons, or runners (like strawberry plants) and is fine-leaved with both male and female plants. It suppresses weeds well, is low-growing (four to seven inches), and, therefore, has the potential to work very well on golf courses. And many courses, especially in the US Midwest, having been using the grass with excellent results. (Mainly as their primary rough.)

Obviously, managing turf in a water-scarce environment comes with numerous challenges. And, while buffalograss may not be perfect in every soil type and every environment, its recent introduction is definitely turning plenty of heads.

"Buffalograss, specifically our recently-introduced Sundancer Buffalograss, is one of the hottest new turf grasses on the market," says Mike Fritz, Sales Manager at Stock Seed Farms, which has supported plenty of testing and development of this species. (Stock Seed Farms is a member of the Native Turf Group, which, in conjunction with the University of Nebraska, has developed a number of popular strains of buffalograss.) "Besides golf courses, it's ideal for lawns, parks, commercial landscaping, transportation corridors, and, basically, any other area where low-maintenance turf is desired. Growing buffalograss from seed isn't difficult and it's very economical. Courses can realize

significant savings each year with this grass. It can sustain itself for long periods of time with minimal water and nutrient requirements."

In this day and age, water supply is a critical issue. And this is where buffalograss really shines. "Unfortunately, there are many golf courses struggling to maintain quality turf because of water shortages. In many areas, the water supply is just not adequate to meet the demand," says Fritz. "Ongoing struggles with Kentucky Bluegrass, for example, which burns and browns quickly with heat and drought, has been a thorn in the side for countless superintendents across North America and abroad. A prolonged heat-wave can be devastating for a golf course that requires substantial water to remain playable."

Obviously, things like harvesting rainwater can go a long way to help a course cut costs and keep turf healthy. But that only addresses one part of the issue. "There is a massive upside for the golf industry to utilize turf that requires less fertilizer, less cutting, and, most importantly, less water," says Fritz. "Buffalograss is ideal for hot, dry environments. And, to top it off, it stays green, attractive, and playable during those prolonged droughts. Put it this way, there's a reason why this grass survived on the plains for centuries. It's about as hardy as turf gets."

While the tough-as-nails nature of buffalograss is a major selling point, there are some key aspects to consider. It requires six to eight hours of sun and does not do well in shady areas and sandy soils. So, yes, areas such as Florida, Washington State, and the upper Northeast States may not be the best places to seed buffalograss. However, Fritz is quick to point out that ongoing research and development is addressing some of the potential challenges when it comes

to planting buffalograss in areas where it doesn't grow naturally.

"In the past decade, or so, golf courses have typically used buffalograss in the rough and in areas that see relatively low traffic," says Fritz. However, that's beginning to change fairly quickly. Some of the issues, such as slow greening in spring, relatively quick dormancy after the first frost, its adaptability to sandy soils, color retention, and tolerance at lower mowing heights, are being addressed and alleviated.

"The development of buffalograss is ongoing and strains such as Sundancer are now being tested for use on fairways, tees, and high-traffic areas. The possibilities for the golf industry are very exciting. Courses that are using it are realizing a 50% reduction in water costs. That alone is fueling plenty of interest and excitement. At Stock Seed Farms, we believe that buffalograss has the potential to keep numerous courses sustainable and viable in the future. It can be a game-changer for courses that don't have enough water or simply can't afford to maintain traditional, water-hungry turf."

Unquestionably, if the golf industry is going to thrive in the future it will need to glean many lessons from a variety of sources. History can be a great resource. Including, of course, the people who settled the plains. And, yes, when it comes to turf, even the buffalo might have something to tell us.

*Andrew Penner is a freelance writer and photographer based in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. His work has appeared in many leading golf publications throughout North America, including Golf Magazine, Golf Digest, The Golf Channel, Golf Canada, and SCORE Golf Magazine. Contact Andrew at [andpenner@shaw.ca](mailto:andpenner@shaw.ca)*



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# INDUSTRY DIRT

## Construction starts on Wilczynski, ASGCA, design at Azario Lakewood, Florida



Chris Wilczynski, ASGCA, in conjunction with Ryangolf Corporation, has begun construction of an 18-hole golf course at national home builder and developer Taylor Morrison's Esplanade at Azario Lakewood Ranch community which is coming soon to Lakewood Ranch, Florida.

Wilczynski, who has worked with Ryangolf on six other projects, including two other Esplanade golf courses in Southwest Florida, said construction began in February and is expected to be completed in late first quarter/early second quarter of 2020. "I have been making periodic visits to the property and everything is off to a great start," Wilczynski said.

Five of the Esplanade at Azario course holes will be played along and through mature trees. "The treed holes, especially the par-3s, No. 12 and No. 17 will be particularly fun holes," Wilczynski said. "The green at No. 12 is in a private

enclave and No. 17 runs parallel to it, but in the opposite direction. Anytime you can build around mature trees the results are great golf holes."

The topography from which the Azario course is being created is typical of most Florida golf courses, relatively flat. "The golf course will be created by man and machine," Wilczynski said. "We are digging several large lakes and using the soil from the excavation to construct the golf course, lots pads and roads. It's a dramatic transformation given the scope of the earthwork and the process to build a project like this.

"It takes a lot of creativity to develop a terrific golf course," Wilczynski continued. "We work really hard to design and construct 18 different holes and greens. We want each hole to be unique while being fun, maintainable and aesthetically beautiful. The detailed planning process and hands on approach

during construction allow us to create this." The course will have six sets of tees and play from 6,900 to 3,600 yards. "One of our main goals is to create a course that will be enjoyed by players with a range of golf abilities from beginner to experts," stated Wilczynski.

"We are excited to work with Chris again as he understands our vision and helps us develop a golf course that complements and enhances our Esplanade community. Our residents want a fun, playable golf course. They also want to live and play within an inspiring location. Chris helps us deliver this goal," said Cammie Longenecker, Division President of Taylor Morrison Southwest Florida.

*Reprinted from American Society of Golf Course Architects*

## Trolleys=Push Carts



When I run across someone who's played golf as a guest at Hazeltine. One of the comments they almost always make is; "I love being able to take my push cart across the greens." Since my first season at Hazeltine, this is something we've asked our members to do in order to disperse traffic and wear across the entirety of the putting surface, rather than everyone making a path along the edge of the greens. The photo on the left, taken May 14th, 2013 is what got it all started. Note all the push cart tracks headed towards the edge of the seventh green. Many of my colleagues are surprised we allow this. My response; "It's never damaged turf, and I've never heard a complaint from a member." In fact, I'd wager that if we stopped allowing it, there'd be extreme disappointment, if not outrage.

While push carts across greens has been an unqualified success, as the season goes on, the weather heats up and the traffic compounds, it has tended to have a negative impact on some putting surfaces. Over the course of the season, you will occasionally see signage posted in the



manner shown below. (I couldn't find "Push Cart" signs, so I went with "Trolleys".) On occasion, we'll post these signs at the front of putting surfaces that tend to suffer more from season-long traffic. The fifth green is a perfect example. The nature of the design naturally funnels traffic into a very tight space. When the signs are posted, we're asking our push-cart using members to take their carts in the direct of the signs and around the outside of the bunkers, rather than simply going through the signs and along the edge of the putting surface. This will serve to give the putting surface and immediate perimeters an occasional break

We won't post these signs all the time, nor will we post them during



tournaments. We will also try to limit the number of holes posted to just two or three at a time. When you see this sign, know we're doing our best to keep the course in the best possible condition. Your help is much appreciated..

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# America's St George's

By Jay Flemma



When you ask golfers to name their favorite architect, you'll likely get several common answers. Many will say Mackenzie, Ross, or Tillinghast. Some will say Macdonald, Raynor, Banks or some combination of all three. Others may choose the progeny of those great classic designers, such as Doak, Hanse, Coore and Crenshaw, or Mike Strantz. And still others might choose the Joneses or Pete Dye.

Sadly, too few people know of Devereux Emmet, an important name among the Pantheon of Golden Age architects who created the iconic designs of that era. Instantly identifiable by his trademark planter's hat and bushy moustache, Emmet was more than just a contemporary of Macdonald, Ross, Tillinghast, and Mackenzie, they were all friendly, perhaps even friends. Meanwhile, architecturally, they would all trade ideas and riff off of each other, expanding upon or otherwise spinning ideas they gleaned from each other's work or writings. Emmet even traveled to England and helped Macdonald chart many of the great British courses in preparation for the latter's building National Golf Links of America.

Emmet's most famous designs include perennial top-20 ranked Garden City Golf Club, (which we profiled here in January 2018. <https://golfcoursetrades.com/green-and-gothic-garden-city-still-shines-118-years-later/>) Congressional Country Club Blue Course, host of three U.S. Opens and a PGA Championship, (but where much of Emmet's work has been erased by intervening architects), and Leatherstocking Golf Club in Cooperstown, New York, home course to the Baseball Hall of Fame, Glimmerglass Opera, and the historic Otesaga Hotel. But perhaps nowhere else will you find a more perfectly preserved Emmet design than Long Island's St. George's Golf and Country Club.

Now don't get confused. The original St. George's, host of 13 Open Championships since 1894, is in England, on the coast of Dover, within pitching distance of the famous white cliffs. According to author Ian Fleming, James Bond was a member there. (He played to a nine handicap.)

But America's St. George's is every bit as beguiling, enchanting, and fascinating as its twin across the sea. Like

the U.K. links whose style it emulates, it's an asymmetric out-and-back routing. When Emmet was designing, golf architects were not handcuffed by the hackneyed "Doctrine of Symmetry" (where you MUST have two par-3s and two par-5s on each loop of nine). Rather than force a routing upon the land, Emmet let the terrain dictate the routing, providing an accurate reflection – not interpretation, but reflection – of what the land gave him. There are no par-3s in the first six holes (4-5-4-4-4-5) then four in the next nine holes (3-4-3-4-3-4-4-4-3) before the magnificent 4-3-5 finish.

The 6,230 yards course plays about 350 yards longer because it's a par-70, not 72, but never feels overly long. Instead, the golfer must carefully think his way around the course to avoid cunning cross-hazards, fierce false fronts at several greens, and deep bunkers everywhere. The greens are tiny, but sharply contoured and canted. There are few trees, so the wind screams across the landscape, making a mockery of the yardages on the card.

"People always say two things in common about the course," said Head Superintendent

Adam Jessie. "First they say it's the hardest 6,200 yard golf course they ever played. And second, they say the course looks timeless, like you've been magically transported 100 years in the past."

That's the best compliment both a Golden Age course and a superintendent of a Golden Age Course could ask for. Jessie earned it. His pedigree in the industry is sterling; he's worked several major championships and USGA events as part of the grounds crew, including the 1995 U.S. Open. Born a humble farmboy from rural Colorado, his homespun knowledge of how to care for the land coupled with his open-hearted good nature brought him into the orbits of Brian Schneider and Mark Michaud, the former now a design associate with Tom Doak's Renaissance Golf Design, the latter being one of the pre-eminent superintendents in the history of the craft. Schneider helped Jessie secure an internship at Augusta National while also pursuing a degree in turfgrass management from Colorado State's superb program.

"Following working at Augusta I returned to school to finish my last year and was able to secure a job at Shinnecock Hills. The opportunity to be part of the U.S. Open preparation was exciting," Jessie said gratefully, recalling fondly the five-and-a-half years he spent there before coming to St. George's in 2006. "The reclamation that we implemented at Shinnecock included extensive tree removal, bunker reconstruction, and greens restoration, [and] the program that we implemented there was nearly the same as what we did at St. George's."

Enter Gil Hanse, right now perhaps the world's most in-demand architect. Together, Hanse's design team and Jessie's maintenance crew did extensive tree removal, rebuilt and repositioned the deep and whimsically-shaped bunkers,

*Continued on page 13*



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and corrected grassing lines. Best of all, they were able to complete nearly all the work in house and a greatly reduced price to the club.

“St. George’s was extremely fortunate to have nearly everything in place. It just needed to be cleaned up,” Jessie explained. “I equate it to finding a Monet in the attic and getting it dusted off and polished.”

Best of all, the club has been able to accomplish everything on a modest budget, setting a sterling example for small clubs all across America: a template for how to move forward with sustainability while also increasing conditioning.

“One of the things that I am most proud with regard to the work we have accomplished on the course is that...we do not have the latest and greatest equipment on the market; actually we have several pieces of equipment that we purchased in the early 1980’s,” noted Jessie. “We have a modest budget and equipment fleet, [but] we have everything we need to provide good conditions for the membership. I would say that our fleet rivals that of Shinnecock in the late 1990’s....I view it as an old school approach to maintenance, but with the tools to do our job properly.”

Architecturally, St. George’s says more in 6,230 yards than most courses can say in 7,500. Whether it’s the strategic par-5s with their randomly peppered bunkers, or the fearsome spectacles bunkers at the short but treacherous par-3 17th (a nod perhaps to the iconic par-3 16th at St. George’s in the U.K. where Thomas Bjorn dropped a Claret Jug on the ground for Ben Curtis), or breathtaking downhill approaches to the third and 10th greens, Hanse

and Jessie’s work has been hailed as a runaway success and the course’s name has re-entered the conversation of the greatest Golden Age courses in America. The restoration is so authentic and the course so perfectly preserved, that one irreverent wag of a guest once described the course as “if National Golf Links and Garden City had a one night stand”.

“If National Golf Links of America is Macdonald’s tribute to the game of golf, then St. George’s is Emmet’s,” Jessie declared proudly, and rightfully so. After all, he and his team are stewarding a club that’s an important mile marker in golf design history and a club that should be studied by every serious architect and student of golf design.

“Emmet may not have a long major championship resume, but his importance and impact on golf design still resonate strongly to this day and will continue because his work was so brilliant.”

*When not reporting live from major sports championships or researching golf courses for design, value and excitement, multiple award-winning sports writer Jay Flemma is an entertainment, Internet, trademark, and banking lawyer from New York. His clients have been nominated for Grammy and Emmy awards, won a Sundance Film Festival Best Director award, performed on stage and screen, and designed pop art for museums and collectors. Twitter @ JayGolfUSA*



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# What Would Taco Tuesday and Kids Movie Night Do for Your Golf Course?

by Linda Parker



Key ingredients in this recipe for success are three sisters who grew up in the Gates Mills community, just minutes away from the course. In 2015, Whitney, Lindsey and Kathryn Neidus, along with their father Stuart Neidus, became partners in the ownership of the golf course and the clubhouse restaurant, the Rustic Grill. Each sister brought a skillset to the collaboration about which Lindsey says, "It wasn't as much a plan as it was an opportunity."

## In Life, the Shortest Distance Between Two Points is Rarely a Straight Line

Lindsey's professional background started at Kent State University and included a year of study in Italy and then ten years in New York City where she worked first as a stager for photo shoots and later as an events and marketing manager for Dow Jones. Whitney, a graduate of Bowling Green State University, was a teacher before becoming a party and event planner.

Youngest sister Kathryn is a trained chef, who started out in life studying advertising at Kent State University before shifting her direction. After receiving her degree in hospitality management from Kent State, Kathryn entered the New England Culinary Institute in Montpelier, Vermont. There, she received two years of training, followed by a host of impressive internships and employment that spanned from biodynamic farming to a Michelin 3-star restaurant, a restaurant that served traditional French cuisine and a pub-style eatery renowned for its upscale tavern food.

With Stuart as managing partner, Lindsey handles marketing, public relations and business development, Whitney is the event director

Most golfers would say they are purists when it comes to the game. They yearn to experience the ambiance of Augusta, the spirit of St. Andrews and those rare and fleeting breakthroughs when they humble their home course with a flawless drive or a perfect putt. But they also want cold beer, good greens, golf carts with GPS, tasty food and a host of other creature comforts. For

directors of golf, superintendents, member committees and other facility decision makers, the struggle to balance the authentic golfing experience with modern-life amenities and indulgences is real.

The management at StoneWater Golf Club, however, seems to have struck upon the right recipe for supporting both the aesthetics of

the game and the preferences of those who play it. The eighteen-hole, public-private course, situated twenty minutes east of downtown Cleveland, Ohio, has a growing membership, a busy schedule of private events, top-notch playing conditions and a restaurant that's garnering awards while growing a loyal base of local patrons.





and manager, and Kathryn is the restaurant's head chef.

### Le Tre Sorelle

Launching their joint venture under the name "Le Tre Sorelle," which is Italian for "The Three Sisters," Whitney, Lindsey and Kathryn's first step was to close the restaurant at the golf club. In June of 2016, six months after closing the restaurant's doors, renovations were completed, and the restaurant opened for business again.

Club members and locals were initially skeptical about the new ownership. Lindsey describes the attitude as one of distrust, from a patron base that had seen a lot of turn over and limited success. "This has been more work than anything I have ever done," she observed, "but so worth it. We just had to earn people's trust."

With Whitney's event planning experience, supported by the talents of her sisters, StoneWater Golf Club now has a busy schedule of private events from weddings and receptions to reunions and retirement and special event parties, even clambakes, bar mitzvahs and corporate outings.

And the clubhouse restaurant is buzzing. Listening to the sisters describe activities that are now a regular part of life at StoneWater Golf Club, it's easy to tell how focused the sisters are on making the golf course a cornerstone of the community. How else would you account for the restaurant regularly serving up 200 or more burgers in four to five hours on Burger Night? Or on movie night attracting 70 to 80 kids who arrive wearing their pajamas and ready for a pizza and popcorn menu while their parents enjoy a quiet dinner in the adjoining dining room?



During the winter, the Rustic Grill now features \$7 Burger Nights, Pasta Thursdays and Live Music Saturdays. From June through September, there's monthly Rib Nights with "two bucks a bone" dining and a custom smoker built specifically for the restaurant, plus Taco Tuesdays, Sunday Brunch, and a very popular Wine Down Wednesday where parents do the wining while their kids work on their golfing skills.

"We're a modern club," said Lindsey, "not a traditional country club. We're located in a residential community that includes young families, empty nesters, couples and retirees. Our servers know people by name, and we're filling a role that is mutually beneficial to the community."



"Our approach is holistic. And what we're doing has not only grown the restaurant and event business, it has increased rounds of golf. Each area is a springboard for other aspects of the business."

### It's All In the Family

Of course, when the three sisters spend so many long hours, pouring their time and talents into this labor of love, we had to ask the obvious question, "Is it difficult to work with your family members day after day?"

Lindsey acknowledges they have their moments, like any sisters, but conflicts are usually forgotten in twenty minutes. "We're super close," she told us, "and we have similar senses of humor. We all bring our own area of expertise, and if there's a problem, we will figure it out, us three. If not, our parents are in-

involved in the business, and we can always turn to them."

Dad says, "They're the ones who run the place. And they're doing a terrific job."

### A Recipe for Success

When asked what insights she would share with other women seeking to get involved in the golf business, Whitney told us, "I would tell them to go for it. A golf course can sometimes be a male-dominated environment, but a woman puts a special touch on a golf course."

"Golfers are looking forward to their time on the course and with a great restaurant, they are looking forward

to extending that time. The Rustic Grill has become such a community gathering place golfers even go there on rainy days when they have no plans to get on the course."

Sounds like great advice from the talented trio behind a restaurant and event site that has doubled its business, become a popular community hub and inspired Cleveland golfers to go to the course more often and stay longer when they go.

*Linda Parker has been writing professionally since the 1980s. With clients in finance, sports, technology, change enablement, resorts and nonprofit global initiatives, Linda helps organizations communicate their stories in meaningful ways to the people they most want to reach. She has authored, ghostwritten or contributed to more than a dozen nonfiction books. Linda is a member of the Authors Guild and the Golf Writers Association of America. You can connect with her at Linda@GlindaCreative.com*



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# “Good Morning, Vietnam”

Tom Eubank



Robin Williams made that line famous in 1987 with the hit movie, but recently I had the opportunity to say that very line every morning for almost two weeks. For those who have not traveled to Vietnam recently it may seem like a country that is still forever tied to the war that ravaged it over 50 years ago, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Today, Vietnam is still a hotbed, but this time it is Golf and the country is exploding not only with golf courses, but GREAT golf courses. Some of the World's top architects have already left their mark on Vietnam with their design prowess and the latest course to be built is in a central area of Vietnam that has become a financial powerhouse, Da Nang City. While the city bustles with high rises, commerce, and business... on the outskirts lies a small town called Hoi An which is treading new territory.

Hoi An is a charming tourist hotspot where people from all over the world come to enjoy the culture, great food and endless activities. Prices are low, service is impeccable and personal services are a bargain. At night the town is spectacularly lit up with lanterns of all colors lining the streets and shops. Restaurants are full and the aroma of Pho, a local delicacy, fills the streets.

This area has had everything

for years, but golf and all that is changing now with the new Hoiana Shores Golf Club getting ready to open in September 2019. This was the reason for my visit. I came to map and survey the golf course for the owners to give them “proper measurements and 3D graphics of their holes”, but the remarkable beauty of Vietnam and its people ended up being a fringe benefit I hadn't expected.

As temperatures mid-summer are often above 100 degrees with little wind and high humidity you would think growing in a golf course would prove quite challenging. Throw in the rainy season that can yield 25 inches in just a couple of days and you have quite the challenge as a superintendent in the tropics. I caught up with the superintendent at Hoiana Shores along with a few other gentlemen at other courses that are helping create, grow in, and maintain these great masterpieces that are now being built here.

Rob Weiks is the Director of Turfgrass Management at Hoiana Shores and Rob has the task of growing in the golf course that Robert Trent Jones, II has designed here on the shores of Hoi An. As a true links course, it takes a beating from the sun and the direct wind coming off the ocean. Rob is no beginner as you might imagine and has a pedigree to match the stature

of this new design.

Rob decided early in life that he wanted to see the world. This has led him to work in different positions in Turfgrass Maintenance in UAE, China, Malaysia, India and Azerbaijan as well as his home country of Australia. The variety of places he has worked along with each course' varied needs has given him the ability to handle his task here in Vietnam with relative ease. But surely there have to be challenges that no experience can overcome?

Rob told me the number one challenge is staffing due to the fact that there has never been any formal Turf Grass education in Vietnam. What little people knew about turf grass care had been handed down by other unqualified individuals leaving a void in this growing market. Rob was asked to write a syllabus for the local government and now they have created an accredited certification program to properly train people for a “trade” in golf course maintenance.

Clean water here comes from ground water filled by the rainy season. The reservoir is fed from a large open ground water lagoon which is filled by artesian streams coming from nearby mountains heading toward the ocean. Rob stated “we are only allowed to use what is topped off by rainfall and

this is closely monitored by local government authorities”. This can pose a big problem in the dry season as rain is very seasonal in this region. If they go too long without rainfall it means no water for the golf course.

Often, we think of the rest of the world not being so strict on environmental issues but then you would be wrong like I was. In fact, in many places it is quite the opposite. GEO certification for Environmental Stewardship construction has been in progress for the entire period of construction at Hoiana Shores and the site has had to follow strict environmental guidelines and set up parameters throughout construction to adhere to these guidelines to achieve accreditation.

Linkshape, who are the contractors for the golf course construction, have been critical in achieving this goal. Our ongoing environmental management system for golf course maintenance will be Epar, an Australian / USA based company that covers in detail the specific requirements for Golf course EMS applications.

In the past, equipment has been a problem, but in today's economic climate, the builders of these great golf courses in Vietnam all seem to understand the need for great equipment and a budget that will allow the Superintendent to do his job properly. The only real challenge is the amount of time it may take to get an order shipped in from the USA or abroad. Hoiana Shores uses a lot of Toro Equipment and chemical products from Syngenta and Sustane. At times it may take months to get a new shipment so planning is critical.

While driving the golf course and exploring this new design I noticed there were quite a few women involved in all areas of golf course maintenance. It soon appeared there were more women than men so I decided to ask Rob about this when we sat down. Rob stated, “I found out early on that the women in Vietnam are both dependable and focused. They pay attention to details and as soon as we increased our staff in the number of women we found productivity went up as well.”

*Continued on page 21*



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After Hoiana Shores I spent some time at Laguna Langco, a Nick Faldo Design on the north side of Da Nang City that sits on another piece of pristine shoreline. Laguna is a unique blend of links golf and parkland style that is littered with rice paddies throughout the middle of the course. Rice Paddies? On the golf course? Well.... there is a reason for that.

According to Adam Calver, who is both Director of Golf and the Director of Golf Course Maintenance, the course grows 80,000 kilos of rice to give away to the local communities. What a beautiful idea to maintain the rice paddies and be generous with the community versus the destroy and rebuild motto of most developers today. It is visually stunning as scenery as well.

Adam carries the pedigree you may expect from someone in his position but I did not expect it from someone so young. He is not quite 40 years old but has already worked in his home country of Canada before he got the job growing in Jumeirah Golf Estates in Dubai and the course has gone on to world class status hosting the European PGA Tour. Adam was also hired for the head spot at Cabot Links, a world class new design in Nova Scotia and finally, for Bukit Pandawa on Indonesia's Tourist Island of Bali.

Adam seems to find success wherever he goes and some of his talents are more than his grass growing skills. Adam has taken the unusual approach of learning everything he could from the World Class Architects he had the privilege of working with on each design. To walk a golf course with Bill Ceour or to discuss design strategies with Tom Doak, or watch "The Shark" carve a top course out of desert sand are simply a once in a lifetime opportunity and Adam was determined not to waste one second of that time.

Upon his arrival at Laguna, his first mission was to see where the course was having its struggles and how could changes be made easily. The other trick was making sure nothing done to the course would not be well received by Sir Nick Faldo who spends a week here each year.

That proved not to be so difficult as working with Nick Faldo proved quite easy and he was very receptive to Adams suggestions.

First, they cleaned the edges of the bunkers to give it a much more manageable finish and a more appealing look for both golfers and photography. The original shaggy edge bunkers with tons of little fingers were consuming massive amounts of time in maintenance. Mission accomplished and after having seen the prior pictures I believe that this was an amazing transformation that even Mr. Faldo appreciates.

Next up was clearing hundreds of trees. Under the guise of being able to grow grass easier, Adam was able to get approval to remove these trees in various locations on the course. But, there was an ulterior motive that is brilliant. Yes, we all know too much shade makes growing grass a challenge but that was not the real problem. A lack of views of the ocean was a problem. With only two holes directly on the ocean and one of those holes having the majority of the ocean blocked by massive pine trees, Adam saw potential here and got to work.

Now you can see ocean from a half dozen holes and it is crystal clear from the two ocean front holes as there are only low sand dunes between the golf and the deep blue sea. Mission accomplished and now the views are beautiful from all the holes on the south end of the course as the Links Style section of this course comes alive.

Adam along with Rob have achieved their dreams of traveling the world while working in the field they love.... GOLF. But these two gentlemen have far more ahead of them in their future than in their past. They will both leave their mark on the courses they represent today but in the near future I am sure they will be on a plane to the next location in the world that holds another Golf Masterpiece just waiting to be discovered.

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# Ironwood Strong: Getting Creative with Storm Debris

by Kimberly J. Davidson



When a tornado and a straight-line wind event hit Ironwood Golf Course in Byron Center, MI, within one year of each other, the course faced a major dilemma; : Wwhat to do with all of the tree debris? With some creative thinking the course not only benefitted from the downed trees but was also able to re-purpose some of them into lasting treasures.

It was late August 2016 when a F-0 tornado touched down on Ironwood, a family owned, 18-hole public course set in the suburbs of Grand Rapids, MI. "Within a half an hour our world was turned upside down," said Kim Davidson, course horticulturist and daughter of course owners, David and Joy Bradley. "We had been hit hard by winds from a previous storm in 1998, but that was nothing

compared to this." Trees were snapped off and uprooted everywhere throughout Ironwood's 80 acres. The course's main buildings were spared, but the damage to the grounds was devastating. "This was like nothing we had ever experienced before. Wewe were totally overwhelmed," explained Davidson.

After a constructive meeting with the insurance-adjuster, a plan of action was put into motion. "We were told that everything would be alright and that we needed to take our time with the clean-up, be smart and "get creative" with how we handled things," said David Bradley, owner and superintendent. The course closed for the rest of the season and a request for bids from tree service companies was put out. A phone call was also made by Davidson

to a local forest product / sawmill company. Many of the trees that came down were native Michigan species. Davidson knew that there was potential with the "timber" at hand and that it could possibly be salvaged for other uses. A forester from the company came out and evaluated everything. With instructions in place on how to properly cut the logs to lengths for processing, Ironwood was able to turn its lemons into lemonade. Logs were cut and hauled up to a make-shift lumber stock yard set up in Ironwood's overflow gravel parking lot. "We filled 3 ½ log trucks full of salvaged timber that went directly to the company," said Davidson. That equated to funds being made from the situation at hand.

Other "creative" methods were also implemented during the clean-up that

generated monetary savings. The tree company that was hired used firewood to heat one of their maintenance buildings. They worked that into their bid and didn't charge Ironwood for hauling that wood away. It was a win-win situation for both businesses.

Smaller brush that wasn't salvageable for lumber or firewood was chipped up into mulch that was either later used for the course's landscaping, taken to a neighboring tree nursery or, as a last resort, blown into piles in adjacent wooded areas where it was left to decompose naturally.

Ironwood had gotten creative with its storm clean up and the course opened the following spring. "We were all so thankful to have made it through the challenge and be back in business," said Joy Bradley, course owner and manager. But just when things seemed to be returning to normal Ironwood was struck once again by Mother Nature. A straight -line wind event hit the course hard that July. "It was like we were re-living the August 2016 storm all over again. Trees that had become stressed from the previous storm came down and once again there was a huge mess to be cleaned-up," said Davidson.

Experience was on their side this time around, though. A call was immediately placed with

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the tree company that helped in the past. "They couldn't believe we had been hit again when we called. We had a good repertoire with them and knew they would work fairly with us through this mess, too," explained Joy Bradley. The same clean-up plan that was used in the past was put into place and the course was able to re-open within a week.

Of all the interesting ways Ironwood came up with to deal with the storm debris, the one that did not necessarily generated the most monetary savings or value, but the most lasting impression came from owner and superintendent, Bradley himself. He dabbled in woodworking and occasionally got lumber milled from trees that had either come down or he had taken down at Ironwood in the past. With so much salvageable timber at hand from the 2016 tornado, Bradley realized he had prime picking rights to some wonderful woodworking opportunities.

He saved some of the best logs for himself in his own personal stock pile. Logs of prime Michigan lumber including Black Cherry, Shagbark Hickory, Hard Maple and others were milled by a mobile saw mill. Bradley then stacked and stored the boards for future use and when he was ready to use them for a project, planed them himself outside his home wood shop.

What were once trees gracing the grounds at Ironwood have now become special treasures

for family and friends. Cutting boards, serving trays, photo frames, tables, and a fireplace mantel have all been painstakingly crafted by Bradley during the winter off-time in his shop. A special memorial tribute for the family's beloved dog, Max, -- whom was also Ironwood's official greeter --, was carved out of a prime black cherry board with the use of a fellow woodworker's CNC machine. "It's something I enjoy doing. I like the challenge and seeing the beauty that comes out of the different wood species," replied said Bradley.

With the 2016 tornado and straight-line wind event of 2017 behind them, Ironwood continues to be a local favorite among golfers in the West Michigan area. "It was a challenging year for all of us, professionally and personally. There was a huge learning curve involved. We are better prepared, plan and equipment-wise, to handle things when weather challenges arise now. We like to think we are "Ironwood Strong," but you never know what good old Mother Nature has in store for you. You just have to do your best to be prepared, especially when you are in this type of weather-dependent business," said Davidson.

\*Kimberly J. Davidson is the horticulturist at Ironwood Golf Course in Byron Center, MI, and a Michigan certified green industry professional. Follow Ironwood Golf Course at [www.golfironwoodgc.com](http://www.golfironwoodgc.com)

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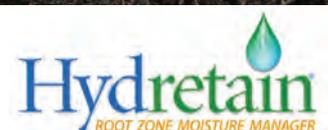
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## Darren J. Davis, CGCS



### How did you get your start in the golf industry?

My first job in the golf industry was on the grounds crew at Golden Eagle Country Club in Tallahassee, Florida. I can still remember strapping on my boots for my first day on the job as if it were yesterday. Although it has been over 25 years and my job responsibilities have changed significantly, my passion for the profession remains equally intense today. I feel blessed to have stumbled into the golf industry!



After high school I was undecided on what I wanted to do in life. My father insisted I continue my formal education so I attended Tallahassee Community College where I obtained an Associate in Arts Degree. Unfortunately this experience didn't add clarity in choosing a career path. I was debating several professions, including civil engineering when a friend told me I should get a job working on the local golf course. He had just finished a summer job on the grounds crew. He said his boss (the golf course superintendent) had attended a school in Pennsylvania that taught you how to build golf courses. He added that golf course experience was a prerequisite for acceptance into the program. The timing was perfect. I was bored in the classroom and I loved being outdoors so I cut my rather long hair and I applied for a job at Golden Eagle Country Club. Jeff Vietmeier, the golf course superintendent, saw my passion and dedication, so he quickly took me under his tutelage. As it turned out, "the school in Pennsylvania that taught you how to build golf courses" was Penn State and the program was the two-year Winter Course Program in Turfgrass Management.

My passion on the job carried over to my formal turfgrass education at Penn State, and I graduated with Highest Distinction. At Penn State I was fortunate to meet one of my most influential mentors, Dr. Joseph Duich. My first day at Penn State is equally vivid in my mind as my first day at Golden Eagle. It was on that day that Dr. Duich taught me a lesson that has afforded me success in the profession.

After my classmates and I were all seated, Dr. Duich walked into the room and went straight to the chalkboard. Without a word and without facing us, he drew a circle on the board. He then drew a small triangle inside the circle. Inside the triangle, which encompassed about 10 percent of the circle, he wrote the word "turf." On the remaining 90 percent he wrote the word "people." He then turned to address the 25 eager turf students and said, "You have come from around the world to learn how to become a highly skilled and educated golf course superintendent." After a well timed pause he continued, "Unfortunately in the next two years we will only be able to teach you 10 percent of what you need to know, the other 90 percent of what you need to be successful will be determined by how well you manage and interact with people, and that we can not teach you."

My classmates and I were a little dumfounded, which was obvious to Dr. Duich by our blank stares. After another lengthy pause he said, "You will all call me within five years to tell me I was correct." It took a little while for this to sink in, but Dr. Duich was obviously correct. The golf industry is a "relationship business" and in less than two years I made that telephone call and he was there to talk me through a problem I was facing.



I have coined the term "the Duich pie" for the drawing Dr. Duich made that day, and it was just one of the many invaluable lessons he taught me. I have countless "Duichisms" rolling around in my head.

### Can you tell us a few things about your early life, where were you born, what high school, first jobs?

I was born in Huntsville, Alabama, but 22 days after birth, my mother flew me to our new home in Florida. Other than college at Penn State and an internship at Augusta National in Georgia, Florida has been my home since I was less than a month old. Just prior to my birth, my father had transferred from Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville to Cape Canaveral in Florida. Before I entered grade school my father accepted a job with the State of Florida, and after bouncing back and forth between Tallahassee and Jacksonville, Tallahassee became my home from 5th grade through community college.

I attended Lincoln High School in Tallahassee where I played four years of basketball and was on the cross-country team. In my senior year, I was co-captain of the varsity basketball team. Because of my length of residence in Florida, I like to joke that I have orange juice in my veins.

Among many other positive personality traits, my father instilled in me a strong work ethic. While not in the golf industry, throughout high school and college, I always held a part time job. My father passed away last year from Alzheimer's disease, but my mother and brother still live in Tallahassee. Mom is a retired educator and my brother is a sergeant with the Tallahassee Police Department where he has been employed for 25 years.

### How do you work with people to create a team?

My philosophy in managing a team is to surround myself with talented and dedicated individuals



and practice good delegation skills. I treat my staff with the same respect and appreciation that I am afforded by my employer. Consequently, members of my team take ownership in their work.

**What achievements are you most proud of?**

I am extremely proud of my volunteer service to the golf industry. It is an honor to give back to a profession that has been so rewarding. I am extremely proud to have served as President of the Everglades GCSA, The Florida GCSA and the Florida Turfgrass Association. However, my current service on the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) Board of Directors is especially meaningful. National board service was never an aspiration of mine, but it's particularly meaningful because of the admiration I have for the gentlemen who have served our great association. Beginning with my first job at Golden Eagle, I have taken advantage of all the services and benefits of GCSAA membership, so I am proud to be able to give back to the association and my fellow 17,000 members.

I am also extremely proud to have obtained the designation as a Certified Golf Course Superintendent (CGCS). I was a 25-year member of GCSAA before completing the stringent requirements to become certified. I made the voluntary commitment to demonstrate to my employer and others my deep commitment to obtaining, and maintaining the highest level of credentialing available.

**What item or person could you not do without at your golf course?**

It would be impossible to pick one item or one person I could not do without, but it would be easy to pick one group. I would not be nearly as successful at Olde Florida if it were not for the loyalty and dedication of my management team. My assistant superintendents, my equipment manager and my office manager are all dedicated individuals who are passionate about the job they perform. Their efforts and support enable me to remain focused on the big picture and the long-term goals of our

operation as they relate to providing the membership and their guests with a red-carpet experience every time they visit our facility.

**What is your favorite part of the job, least favorite?**

My favorite part of the job is providing the membership a playing surface and overall golfing experience that they enjoy and are proud of. A close second is watching my assistant superintendents learn, grow and advance their own careers.

My least favorite part of the job is the potential volatility. I compare the golf course superintendent profession to that of professional football coach. Both can be a "what have you done for me lately" job and the fate of your employment is often based on your last season.

**Do you collect anything? Hub caps, license plates, signs...**

Earlier in life I was an avid coin collector. I still have the collection, but I have not significantly added to it for many years. Collecting coins has since been replaced with collecting pictures of me holding fish that I actually do catch! What would you do if you won the lottery?

Obviously it would depend on the dollar amount. If it were less than a couple million, I would continue working as the golf course superintendent at Olde Florida. I truly love my job. However, I won't kid anybody; if my earnings were significant enough I would invest wisely and enjoy a winter home in Naples and a cabin in the mountains of Tennessee or the Carolina's. If I "hit the big one," there are a number of individuals and groups that I would quickly provide a significant gift. I would also establish a charitable foundation. It gives me great satisfaction and joy to bring happiness into others' lives.

**Few people know I like to...**

Very few people know that I thoroughly enjoy cooking, dining at unique restaurants and watch-

ing cooking shows. The Cooking Channel and Food Network are on my remote "favorite list," and I also set my DVR to record Diners, Drive-in's and Dives, Man vs. Food and Eat St. When traveling I try to visit the restaurants that I have watched on these shows. When cooking at home, the Big Green Egg is one of my favorite tools. I have mastered the cooking of Lechon Asado (Cuban citrus and garlic roast pork) and barbecue pulled pork.

**What do you like to do away from work? If you have time to yourself what do you like to do?**

The first and easy answer to what I enjoy away from work is to fish. I enjoy all types of fishing. Deep sea fishing for grouper, backwater fishing for snook and redfish, freshwater fishing for large-mouth bass and fly fishing for trout, to name just a few. I have a 16-foot Carolina Skiff that I keep in my garage and whenever I have the opportunity, I use it to fish in the 10,000 islands and Everglades National Park. I also enjoy a good fiction book. James Patterson, John Grisham, Stuart Woods, and David Baldacci are a few of my favorite authors.

Darren J. Davis, CGCS  
Golf Course Superintendent  
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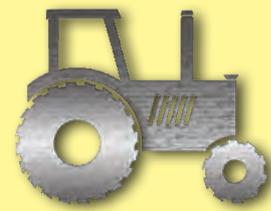
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TSP THE TRADES 18 R2\_09-10-18

# Ready... Willing... Abell Turf and Tractor



Toro 3300 Triflex mowers... 6 to choose, 2015 models with under 1000 hrs!



Demo model Ryan Jr. Sod Cutter



John Deere 8700, 4wd!



NEW, SGM brushes with wireless remote



John Deere 7700 Fwy, 4wd...priced to move!



Toro 3420, 3WD Tri-Flex mowers, 2 to choose



Toro 5010-H Fairway Mowers, 2 to choose



Toro Pro Force Blower, fully refurbished



2016 Toro 4500-D, 1k hours!



Demo Model Smithco V62 sweeper...like new



Late Model Toro 1250 Sprayers... fully refurbished



HDX Workman, 4wd, 2 to choose low hours!



Late model Toro 5510's, some with 4WD



**Seats for Sale!**  
only \$100 ea  
+ shipping

Fit's any Jacobsen, John Deere, or Toro machine and utility vehicle in the mfg.'s color (grey or yellow)



Arag Sprayer Valves -- for Toro, Jacobsen John Deere Sprayers! Much cheaper than OEM.

## Abell Turf Rents!

Toro 648's, Toro 1298 w/tractor, Fairway Verticutters, Material Handlers, Greens Rollers...and much much more!

Call for details!

## PARTS SPECIAL!

John Deere 1200A Carb -- \$155  
Best Starter prices around... Call to check pricing

John Deere Aercore 800 lift actuator direct replacement!!!  
Only \$325 each! Plug and play

Progressive Pro Flex PTO shafts complete!! Replaces # 521738 ... \$560 plus shipping!

Progressive Pro Flex 120 complete blade sets!! Replaces # 522374 and 522372... \$125 plus shipping per set!

Pro Gator Radiator Fans!! Replaces# AM129853... \$175.00 plus shipping!

**TWO LOCATIONS TO SERVE!**

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